

# Fourth Sunday of Lent – “My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?”

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March 25/26, 2017

When I was a very little child, my Mom and Dad taught me so many things so that I'd be able to grow up and be happy. Mom taught me how to hold a fork, how to say my ABC's, how to fold clothes, how to brush my teeth, how to make a cherry pie on George Washington's birthday, how to tell time, even how to use the potty. Dad taught me how to ride a bike, how to throw a ball, how to figure out what was going on in a football game, how to use a knife to cut brightly colored fall branches to bring inside to give to Mommy, how to comb my hair, how to tie a tie, and how to laugh at Wylie Coyote and Road Runner.

Both Mom and Dad took me to church every Sunday and they read Bible stories to me. Every Christmas they explained the manger to me and every Easter they colored Easter Eggs with me. But most of all, before every long journey in the car ... and there were lots of them ... they taught me to say a prayer for a safe trip; before bed every night, they would pray with me; before dinner, especially on holydays, we'd say grace before we ate. They hung a "Prayer To My Guardian Angel" plaque over my bed to watch over me, to help me feel safe and protected.

When I was a tiny child, my Mom and Dad did everything good for me, gave me so much, taught me so many things, but the best thing they ever gave me was a friendship with God and how to talk to Him in

prayer. I still say prayers for a safe trip. I still say a prayer of thanks when I'm grateful. I still turn to God when I'm sad or in trouble or when I've messed up. I hope that someday, my last word will be a prayer.

When Jesus was a very little boy, His Mom and foster Dad gave Him everything He needed to grow: Joseph kept Him safe when powerful people would threaten Him. He taught Him how to carve, and hammer, saw, shape, and build. Mary taught her little Son how to be kind and respectful, how to play and to sing. She told Him the great stories of their people and how to hope that the Messiah would one come for them. Joseph and Mary took their Boy to synagogue on Sabbath, and to the great Temple of God in Jerusalem for the big feasts. They taught Him to read so He could be bar-mitzvahed and read from the Torah. And most of all, they taught Jesus to pray, especially the great prayers of their people, the Psalms of David the king. Jesus learned from them psalms, prayers of praise, prayers of need, prayers asking mercy, prayers in time of celebration, prayers in time of war, prayers of thanksgiving, and prayers when trouble was great.

Now the God Man hung upon a cross, in awful pain, rejected by His friends and His own people, so all alone, abandoned, His heart at the point of breaking. And in that excruciating agony, the Man of Sorrows, the King of the Jews, became the little boy in Nazareth again and He did what His parents had taught Him thirty years before. He said His prayers. He turned to the One Person who would be with Him no matter what, the One Person who would understand, and care, and help. He turned to God and He prayed in the simple Aramaic language of His childhood village, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" ... "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" He had no strength to pray the whole 22<sup>nd</sup>

Psalm, but He whispered these words and left the angels to finish the prayer. In His darkest moment, the Good Shepherd was, even then, leading His sheep in to the safe arms of the Father, His God and ours.

Was Jesus in despair at that moment? Was He forsaken, abandoned by all? "Like a child rests in its mother's arms, so will I rest in You, like a child rests in its mother's arms, so will I rest in You."

"Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's House?"

He wasn't alone ... He was home, home with His Father.