**Job 23:1-9,16-17 & Psalm 22:1-15 & Hebrews 4:12-16 10/10/21**

**Video Link:** [**https://youtu.be/BddfRefIHVQ**](https://youtu.be/BddfRefIHVQ)

It had been a good life. He had been blessed with 10 children, seven sons and three daughters. He had worked hard and had built up his property and his wealth. He was one of the wealthiest landowners in the whole region. He was well-liked by everybody, a humble and genuine person, respected by all.

He lived his faith openly and actively, worshipping regularly. People said he was such an honest and faithful person, so devoted to God, that he deserved all the blessings he had received. He was the perfect example. Perhaps parents even said to their children, if you are good and honest and work hard, you too could end up like Job.

Life was going well, everything was good, and then it all came crashing down.

First, a band of marauders killed all his donkeys and his workers as they were ploughing the fields, then bolts of lightning killed his sheep and the workers taking care of them, then raiders killed all his camels and their handlers. Before he could comprehend what had happened, he received the worst news of all. A tornado destroyed his house, and all ten of his children were killed.

As you can imagine, he was devastated and yet not once did he curse God.

Then just when you would think things could not get worse, he broke out with terrible sores and ulcers all over his body. This was before modern medicine when people with such skin conditions had to separate themselves from their family and friends. He ended up living out of town at the local rubbish dump.

Even though things seemed unbearably bad, he still said nothing against God.

Three of his best mates came out to visit him. At first, they did the only thing they could do. They quietly sat with him. For seven days they sat with him. Sometimes the best thing you can do when someone has been struck with tragedy is to sit quietly with them.

Eventually, he spoke up and when he did, he didn’t curse God but he did curse the day he was born. He wished that that day would never have happened and that he never had been born. He wished that he could die and leave behind the grief of losing his children. He wanted to be set free from the emotional pain as well as the physical pain of his skin disease.

That is when his friends began to talk, and unfortunately, they should not have opened their mouths. They saw life in black and white. Live a good life, do the right thing, be faithful to God and you will be showered with blessings. If tragedy and calamity fall upon you then there must be a good reason. Unable to break out of their black and white view of the world, Job’s friends were less than helpful.

Sometimes when people try to be helpful, they do say terrible things. Things like, “God needed your child in heaven.” “Everything happens for a reason.” “God is testing you.” “You must have some sin in your life that you need to confess and ask God to forgive.” ‘You just need to pray harder, believe more, trust God more.”

Not one of his friends was of any help.

He had always tried his best to be faithful to God, he had tried to live a good life, he had worshipped regularly and trusted in the Lord. What had happened to him was not fair. What was still happening to him was not fair and he wanted to put his case before God. He wanted a hearing in the heavenly court. Job was convinced that if God heard him he would find him innocent.

The problem was that it seemed as though God was nowhere to be found. Job started to express his frustration with God’s apparent absence, telling his basically useless friends how he felt:

If only I knew where to find him;
    if only I could go to his dwelling!
**4**I would state my case before him
    and fill my mouth with arguments.

‘But if I go to the east, he is not there;
    if I go to the west, I do not find him.
**9**When he is at work in the north, I do not see him;
    when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.

What can make things worse when you have lost everything even your health? Losing God can make things worse. Feeling like God has abandoned you can make things worse.

Bad things do happen to good people but when God seems to be silent at the very time you need him. When God seems to have abandoned you in your hour of need, then what hope is there.

David wrote a psalm about being abandoned by God, it starts like this,

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
    Why are you so far from saving me,
    so far from my cries of anguish?
**2**My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
    by night, but I find no rest.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+22%3A1-15&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-14207b)]

There is something familiar about these words, isn’t there?...

They are the words of someone who feels abandoned by God. They could have been the words that Job had in his mind while he was sitting on that rubbish heap. They could be our words too, whenever life throws bad things our way. They may be words that describe how we feel when we are at the end of our rope. Maybe a relationship is falling apart, maybe you are experiencing emotional or physical pain, maybe you are ill or terminal or if not you, someone close to you is.

Along with Job who has lost everything and sitting on the rubbish heap, along with David in his darkest hour, you too may one day find yourself calling out to God. Feeling God’s absence. Feeling God-forsaken.

But there is something familiar about psalm 22, isn’t there. We hear it almost every year on Maundy Thursday the night when Jesus was betrayed. “My God, my God why have you forsaken me.” Those words were spoken on Good Friday by Jesus as he hung dying on the cross.

Jesus experienced the God forsakenness that Job felt, what David at one point in his life felt, what some of you may have felt, may even be feeling now. Jesus, the ultimate good human being, knows what feels like when bad things happen to a good person. Jesus knows what it is like when God seems to be silent. Jesus knows what it is like when life does not seem to be fair, and God seems to have abandoned us.

When we feel abandoned by God. When we find ourselves in situations that feel unfair, we can speak those words with Job. We can speak those words with King David written when he was in despair. Most importantly we can speak those words with Jesus who spoke them on the cross.

“My God my God why have you forsaken me?”

When we speak those words. When we feel like God has abandoned us and can not be found. We know we are speaking with Jesus. The same Jesus who died for us and rose for us and now sits as God’s right hand for us.

Now because of Christ, as we call on God in Jesus’ name, our Lord speaks to God the Father for us. Jesus pleads for us because Jesus has experienced the worst that life can throw at a person. He knows how we feel and is able to sympathise with us. We have the ear of God through God’s only beloved Son and through the Son, our Immanuel, God is always with us, holding us even in our darkest hour, holding us even when we don’t feel his presence.

**Amen.**