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This week we continued our series looking to Easter in Jesus' 7 final words from the cross with 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'.

We began by noting that the closer the relationship with someone, the greater the pain of loss when they are gone. How much more for Jesus, as the eternal son of God, who's taken on human flesh, taken our sin upon himself and is separated from his Father?

We noted that Psalm 22 is a foundational text to understand as we seek to get a glimpse of what Jesus went through at the cross.
We looked at the Psalm through 3 lenses:

1. King David.

David was the initial human author of the Psalm, writing about an experience that he had. We initially said that the Psalm is not all dark - rather it alternates between expressions of trust, hope and belief alongside the darkness and despair. His key problem is that what he knows about God does not match up to what he's going through in life. The wider 'shape' of the Psalm is important and telling as we end up with a much more 'hopeful, world-wide, down the ages' call to worship God because of the Psalmists deliverance. It feels like this Psalm doesn't quite fit David's life - 'a couple of sizes too big' - it much better fits the true Davidic king - Jesus...

2. Jesus

This is the most alluded to and quoted Psalm that the NT uses at it speaks of the cross: 22v1 is in Matthew 27v46 and Mark 15v34, 22v7 is in Matthew 27v39, Mark 15v29 and Luke 23v35, 22v8 in Matthew 27v43, 22v15 - in John 19v28, 22v16 in John 20v20 and 22v18 in John 19v24,

Matthew 27v35, Mark 15v24 and Luke 23v34.

It's apparent though that Jesus was not the first person to be crucified - his physical suffering is not unique - his spiritual suffering of desolation and abandonment is though. He was punished for our sin and cut off from his Father - that we might call him Father. We also saw that the writer to the Hebrews uses Psalm 22 (v22) as he quotes from it in Hebrews 2v12. In Hebrews the quote is not so much in calling people to praise (as in Psalm 22) but rather in the new family whom he calls to praise with Him.

3. You and Me

The Psalms are real about the broken-ness and suffering in the world - both outside of us and within us. God gives us the Psalms that we might have words to speak out to him in times of trouble and distress. Psalm 22 is also a Psalm for us. We might feel something of the pain & desolation - intermingled with trust & hope that the Psalmist speaks of. The difference for us though is that because Jesus as a man is abandoned because of God's anger against our sin, we will never finally be abandoned. It may be that God feels distant - due to suffering or sin or simply to encourage us to pursue him and we may need to turn to him in repentance or be patient of pursue him - but we will never finally be abandoned because he was, for us.

We finished by seeing that Psalm 22 is followed by Psalm 23 - even in the darkest valley (23v4) we have a shepherd who guides and provides for us.

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Here's some questions to start things off...

- Give an overview of the Psalm - how does the structure work? Give a summary of each cluster of verses (our NIV seems to divide up the different sections well with paragraph breaks)
- Why does he alternate between the highs and lows?
- Why do you think Jesus uses Psalm 22 on the cross? What aspects do the NT authors allude to when recounting Jesus heading to the cross?
- How does Psalm 22 give us a shape for dealing with our suffering?
- What difference does it make that Jesus spoke these words?
- Can we ever be abandoned by God? Why / why not?