



## WEEK 1

by Aaron Smith

*From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."*

--

*Matthew 27:45-49*

These words, cried out in a loud voice by Jesus on the cross, should stagger us: 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?' They are an expression of anguish and surely a natural reaction to one of the most excruciating death sentences devised by man. But being whole man and whole God, Christ suffered more than physically, and His words here are all the more telling of His character.

His crying out to God was not to find an answer to a question, for He knew that He was to bear the sins of His people – our sins – in a way only He could. What made Christ's suffering so immense, and His sacrifice so complete, was that he bore the sin of the entire world – the sin that separates us all from the Father. Jesus was with the Father from the beginning, and their relationship was so intimate it is difficult for us to comprehend the very nature of it. Thus, Christ expresses His greatest suffering to be enduring the very thing which separates us from God. He cries out with the words of the Psalmist, identifying with our humanity in every way, feeling forsaken and abandoned by the Father. We can only

begin to draw parallels in our lives to help us understand this level of intimacy and the pain that comes from a break in it.

While these words of Christ teach us that true suffering is separation from the Father, they also teach us that the reverse is true. That is, nothing can be more life-giving than our relationship with the Father. As the season of Lent begins, don't take for granted the relationship we get to enjoy with our God every single day. May these words inspire us to a deeper level of spiritual intimacy with our Lord.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What can be learned from Christ's relationship with the Father? In what ways do you put into practice your dependence on the Father on a daily basis? Try writing down a few ways that you could grow more like Christ in this way during this season of Lent.
2. Read Psalm 22, and notice Christ's direct quote of the Psalm and the numerous fulfillments of the Psalm in His Crucifixion. What aspects of this passage shed light on the passage in Matthew and the character of Christ?



Aaron Smith  
Member of the Leadership Team  
Community Church of East Gloucester