



# SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

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"Sabachthani: You Have Forsaken Me"- Hope Restored Sermon Series

Jenny Sung

**G**ood morning, my name is Jenny Sung, I'm the Executive Coordinator and one of the lay pastors on staff. Last week, at the Easter Worship services, we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! HE IS RISEN! (HE IS RISEN INDEED!) The worship exploded with the first song when Leon Williams led us through Jesus' final moments. He sang, "Were you there, when they crucified my Lord... Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?" "Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?" And the last verse ended with- "Were you there when He rose up from the dead?"

Sometimes I feel like shouting 'Glory, glory, glory! At the end of the song, people were shouting and cheering! HALLELUJAH, HE'S ALIVE! So here we are, a week after Easter, the next Sunday, we come to our verses today... and we read, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Whaaat? Wow, that's kinda down man, there's darkness, abandonment, and pain. But isn't that what happens sometimes? There may be this big party, or a big retreat, a big high, and it's so awesome... but after the

confetti has fallen, after the big high, there's still everyday life, and things can be hard. The struggles are still there. Maybe you're back with the person you don't get along with, the bills are still overdue, the negative boss is still a jerk, family members are still fighting, and it is amidst the struggle that we know that Jesus knows our pain, and is with us in our everyday lives. But it's not just that He knows our pain, it's way beyond that. It's that Jesus took our pain and sin and darkness, and He chose the path that leads us back to God. Jesus was forsaken so that we would never be forsaken. He was separated, utterly alone, SO THAT ultimately, WE WOULD NEVER BE ALONE.

When we celebrate Easter and the risen Lord, we remember that it's just the beginning. N.T. Wright, theologian and author of the book "Simply Jesus", wrote, "The Easter stories come at the end of the four gospels, but they are not about an "end." They are about a beginning. The beginning of God's new world. The beginning of the kingdom. God is now in charge, on earth as in heaven."

It is in light of this new beginning that we understand

where we stand in the world. Wright also shared that "Our task as image-bearing, God-loving, Christ-shaped, Spirit-filled Christians, following Christ and shaping our world, is to announce redemption to a world that has discovered its fallenness, to announce healing to a world that has discovered its brokenness, and to proclaim love and trust to a world that knows only exploitation, fear and suspicion."

Redemption, healing, love and trust- Now that is a purpose we can live out on Earth with expectation, passion and conviction. So as we remember the suffering of Christ on the cross, we also hold the power of the resurrection, the freedom and the proclamation of love and trust in the world.

Let us pray as we prepare to hear our message today. "Lord Jesus, we thank you for loving us, so much so that You gave your life for us. Thank You for choosing the path of the suffering servant, so that we would never experience an eternity of separation from You. soften our hearts and open our ears to hear Your truth". In Christ's name, Amen.

**W**e are in the sermon series called, Hope Restored. When we ponder what could possibly restore hope in this ever fallen, ever broken world- HOPE has ever been more apparent in understanding the significant, eternal cosmic consequence of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are in the fifteenth chapter in the book of Mark, which culminates in a series of events that puts Jesus on the cross.

There is so much to uncover in these passages, but I'd like to focus on three moments of significance—1) the forsaken Jesus, 2) the curtain torn in two, and 3) those who are mentioned at the scene of the cross.

The Forsaken Jesus at the beginning of our passage, Verse 33 is signaled by a physical darkness that spreads over the land, as well as a spiritual darkness that marks the separation of the Son from the Father, as Jesus bears the weight of all sin upon Himself. When we see the forsaken Jesus, we see Him utterly abandoned. Jesus was alone. In verse 34, Jesus cried out “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” The word “*sabachthani*” means = you have left me “You” meaning The Father. “Me” being the Son. What must this have felt like, this break from perfect relationship? At the Tenebrae service, the Thursday before Easter, we came together for an extended meditation on the passion of Christ. Our director of young adults, Jeff Page, reflected upon this verse. Some

of you may not have been able to go to the Tenebrae service, so I wanted to share a part of Jeff’s beautiful and piercing reflection, capturing the forsaken image of our Lord, hanging on the cross. He shared:

“It is in this moment that the weight of every evil and cowardly deed, every betrayal, every lie and every abdication of responsibility settles firmly on the shoulders of Jesus. And worse than that the Father turns His back on the Son. In this moment the fountainhead of all loving relationships dries up. The perfect harmony of God, the eternal loving interconnectedness of Father Son and Holy Spirit is torn. The Son is alone, without the face of God. God in the flesh is now Godforsaken. The divide between humanity and God is bridged as a bottomless chasm opens under Christ. The earth itself quakes as the Light of the world is extinguished.” Colossians 1:21 says this about us-

*21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now He (Jesus) has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation.*

Jesus chose the path of the cross, the path of separation and bore the weight of all our sin upon Himself through death in the physical body, so that we would be free from judgment and be reconciled back to God.

Knowing that we would have eternal separation from God in our sinful state, Jesus became the sacrifice, and took on the horrors of the sin and pain and darkness.

I’d like to share a real life story about a 15-year old boy named Anthony Borges, who in a life and death moment, chose to barricade a doorway with his body to save his fellow classmates. He miraculously survived.

Fifteen year old Anthony was shot five times in a school shooting in Parkland, Florida, which killed 17 people on Feb. 14, 2018. Many news stations and media covered the story, CNN, NBC, New York magazine, etc. Anthony’s father described the details of the day- “Anthony was shot first in the leg and then hauled himself into a classroom, keeping the door shut by propping his back against it. There were around 20 other students inside the classroom at the time. The gunman then opened fire through the door, hitting Anthony a number of times in the back, before moving on.” Anthony was the last of all the survivors to leave the hospital.

He suffered massive injuries: he lost a third of his lung. One bullet came dangerously close to his liver, and three bullets went through his legs. He has yet to regain full feeling in one of his feet, which doctors came close to amputating.

He will forever be taking shots of vitamins for his body can no longer process on its

Own, after 10cm of his lower intestine was removed.

Thirteen operations later, Anthony is on the road to recovery and has learned to walk again. He hopes to play soccer again, and has dreams of playing professionally one day.

In an interview, the soft spoken teenager shared what was going through his mind at that moment. Anthony said, "That was the moment that I thought I was going to die and closed the door, and I did it because, as I was going to die, I wanted to give my last moment to the people, so that they could save themselves and enjoy life for longer."

As we hear this story, we may be horrified to hear of the pain Anthony went through as he chose to barricade a door and become a human shield. I teared up reading his words, that he wanted to give his last moment to the people so they could enjoy life longer. Through his act of sacrifice, Anthony saved about 20 of his classmates who were inside the room.

Reading the story about Anthony, I thought about Jesus, who chose to be the human sacrifice, but not just for 20 people, not just for those who chose to believe in Him or was worthy of saving, but for everyone. Jesus chose to save all of humanity, the just and unjust, for all of eternity.

Last week, Pastor Dan shared during the Easter sermon that Jesus was blindfolded,

...and then brutally beaten  
...and then hit with a stick,  
...and then whipped  
...and then stabbed  
...and then was crucified  
with nails put in His wrists and ankles onto standing wooden beams to make Him suffocate and die over six hours.  
*2 Corinthians 5:21 says "that God made Him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."* With a loud cry, Jesus breathed His last after finishing the mission He came on Earth to do. It is finished. Because of what Jesus did, we are forgiven and restored, and made righteous. We can have intimate communion and friendship and personal relationship with God of the universe. This is what the sacrifice of Jesus removed-the barrier. We now have unfettered access to God.

### The Curtain

This leads me to our next point, which is about the curtain. Verse 38 says, *The curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom*". Back then, everyone reading this would have known that this is the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Author of the book "Upside-down kingdom", Donald Kraybill, described the temple like this:

"The temple was the pinnacle of religious life, the very heart of Jewish worship, ritual, and emotion. It was the seat of wisdom, law, and Scripture. It housed the one Jewish altar (in the Holy of Holies) on which the high priest

performed the sacrificial rites of atonement once a year for the entire Jewish world. Here and only here was forgiveness possible with the proper sacrifice."

By the way, it's too long for this sermon, but I highly encourage you to go watch the video on sacrifice and atonement in the bible project. It's about eight minutes long, free and really good. It explains the sacrifice and atonement and how Jesus came as a living sacrifice.

Link to video: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/sacrifice-atonement/>

Verse 38 says that when Jesus died on the cross, there was a veil in the temple – the veil that separated the Holy of Holies, the inner chamber where God's Spirit dwelled- that was torn in two. Before, only the high priests could go behind that veil once a year. Tim Keller notes in his book, "Jesus the King", that the curtain said loudly and clearly that it is impossible for anyone sinful—anyone in spiritual darkness—to come into God's presence. At the moment Jesus Christ died, this massive curtain was ripped open. There was no longer a barrier. We now have direct access to God- that was the symbolic message of the ripping of the curtain.

Sometimes, during the week I have breakfast with my parents after I drop off my kids at school. I go and park at their place, take the elevator and pop in, sometimes without permission. I just let myself in

**A**nd present myself, like “Hi!!! Good morning”! They never go, what are you doing here? I didn’t say you could come here! They usually smile and say, “Hey, Jenny’s here!”

My mom runs into the kitchen and starts cooking eggs and empties about every item that is in her fridge so that I have a mountain of food on the breakfast table. And you know how this happens, that I can park and pop in whenever I want? They gave me the FOB and keys to their place. Their place is quite inaccessible, like the Holy of Holies. They live in one of those high-rise condominiums where you cannot access their home without a special key-FOB. You can’t get into the lobby without one. You can’t get into the elevator. You can’t get onto their floor. You really can’t get anywhere without the FOB.

When they first moved in, they asked for multiple keys and FOBs. They paid the price for those FOBs, which they gave to their children, giving direct access to their place. Mom gave me the FOB and key and said, “Here, I paid for this, it’s yours. You can come anytime you like”.

So this may be the weirdest analogy, but Jesus paid for your FOB, so you have direct access anytime you wanted to have the relationship with God. Rick Warren in his devotional, Daily Hope, says it pretty simply - “You now have direct access to God. You don’t have to pray through anybody else. You don’t have to confess through

anybody else. You don’t have to fellowship with God through anybody else. Read your Bible, talk with the Lord, and fellowship directly with Him”. That is possible because of what Jesus did. That is why the Bible says in *2 Corinthians 5:17-18* 17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[a] The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation!”

Hallelujah! Those at the scene of the cross. In our last part of our passage for today, we look at the people who are mentioned at the time of Jesus’ death. We don’t find the disciples, but read about two characters- The Centurion and the women. These are two types of characters not NECESSARILY popular or important to mention.

The centurion represented the oppression of the Roman regime. The enemies that oppressed Jewish life. He is an outside observer. The centurion was posted there, as a guard, and yet, he comes to say, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

We also see women who are mentioned, by name. Women, back then, were considered second-class citizens or property. They were not important to mention. So this is unusual to see names of the women mentioned- Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. These

women had cared for Jesus during His ministry. Here, two of the most unlikely characters are included in these final passages, but I think that is quite significant. At the cross, we find those on the outside and those considered insignificant, but we know that Jesus died for all.

The blood of Jesus was shed for all, the just and the unjust. The veil was torn, just as much for the Jew and the Gentile, those who cared for Jesus and those who rejected Him, those placed high in society and those on the bottom. The all-embracing love of God knows no boundaries.

As we contemplate the suffering of the forsaken Christ on the cross, we know that through His death, we are forgiven. We see the veil that was torn, breaking down the barrier, bridging the chasm, reconciling all of us back to Him.

So, what does that mean for the way we live out our lives? I want to take you back to the quote by N.T. Wright, when he claimed that our task as image-bearing, God-loving, Christ-shaped, Spirit-filled Christians, following Christ and shaping our world, is to announce redemption, healing, love and trust to a world in need. Many of us are doing that daily, bringing redemption, healing and love to those in need. For those of us who like down-to-earth practical steps of application, here are five habits that starts that quote into action.

**#1)** This is from Michael Frost, pastor and author of the book, “Surprise the World”.

Bless three people each week—at least one of whom is a member of your church and at least one of whom is not. The third can be from either category. The term “to bless” can have various meanings, such as acts of kindness, words of affirmation, or gifts.

#2) Eat with three people this week—at least one of whom is not a member of your church. Build relationship and share a meal together.

#3) Foster listening for the Spirit’s voice. Find at least one chunk of time, preferably at the beginning of each week, to stop and create space to commune with God. The Daily Examen, Pray As you Go, and Lectio Divina are great practices for this.

#4) Spend at least one period of the week learning Christ. Study the Word through Just Show UP, take Pastor Steve’s discipleship videos on Right Now Media, or attend a bible study.

#5) Begin to identifying yourself as a missionary—a sent one—by journaling the ways you’re alerting others to God’s reign. You might have done this in your workplace by mediating between warring colleagues. Or you might have reconciled with a friend or relative from whom you’ve been estranged. You might have shared the Good News with someone that God reconciles us

to Himself through his Son, Jesus.

Let’s close our eyes, and take a few moments of quiet reflection... Ask, what are you saying Lord and what will we do about it?

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*Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at [fpchawaii.org](http://fpchawaii.org)  
The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by visiting: [fpchkoolau@gmail.com](mailto:fpchkoolau@gmail.com)*