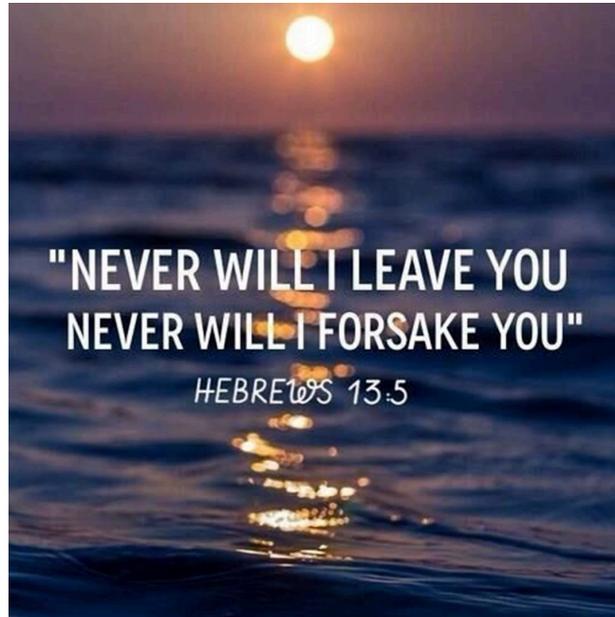


ForSake
Psalm 22
Westside Fellowship CRC; 1 April 2018
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Moses said it to the Israelites just before he died: God will never leave you and he will never forsake you (Deut 31:6). And then he said it to Joshua, his successor: God will never leave you and God will never forsake you (Deut 31:8). And then God said it to Joshua – right from God’s lips to Joshua’s ear: I will never leave you and I will never forsake you (Josh 1:5). And the psalmists echoed this in their prayers and songs.¹ God’s love that never forsakes resounds in the repeated line in the Jesus Storybook Bible: God loves you with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love. And we sing it when we sing How Firm A Foundation: God’s words to us - Your souls, “though all hell should endeavor to shake, I’ll never no never no never forsake.” This belief is at the heart of our faith in a good and loving God.

Yes. AND. Sometimes our faith does not match our experience... In the very same Bible that holds God’s commitment never to forsake and belief in God’s commitment never to forsake we find a person of faith crying out in Psalm 22:1: “My God, My God, *why have you*

¹ You, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you (Ps 9:10). I was young and now I am old and I have never seen the righteous forsaken (Ps 37:25). The Lord will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance (Ps 94:14).

forsaken me?” It doesn’t even say, “My God, My God, have you forsaken me?” It doesn’t even say, “My God, My God, are you forsaking me?” or “My God, My God, why does it feel like you’re forsaking me?” The psalmist says, MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

And what’s more – these words are the words we find on the lips of Jesus – who is one of the persons of the Trinity – who was and is and is to come – and is in neverending relationship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus says on the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” The faith of Jesus (that his Father would never forsake him) and the experience of Jesus Did Not Match and so he cried out in solidarity with anyone and everyone who has ever been plunged into unimaginable pain.

The rest of the first part of Psalm 22 is like the psalmist had read all the gospel narratives about the crucifixion and then wrote a song about it... From the Israelites who went from worshiping Jesus to despising him (v. 6) to the mocking and the insults of the soldiers (v. 7). From the taunts of ‘save yourself’ (v. 8) to the bones disjointed by crucifixion (v. 14). From the pierced hands and feet (v. 16) to the casting lots for his garments (v. 18)... this psalm foreshadows Jesus’ death and teaches us that Jesus suffers with all those who suffer.

But it’s more than that - - - Jesus does not just identify with us in our suffering. Jesus takes our place and takes on a suffering that he does not deserve. He takes on being truly forsaken by God and he does it For Our Sakes. Jesus is being forsaken by the Father For My Sake. For Your Sake. This is self-sacrificial love.

Stories of those who love self-sacrificially for the sake of another draw us over and over again...

- The story of a forest fire and a mother bird, whose petrified carbonized carcass was found after a Yellowstone National Park forest fire. A park ranger knocked the carcass aside with a stick, and from beneath, three tiny chicks started and took off in all directions... (Tim Keller, *King’s Cross*, p. 169.) Self-sacrificial love.
- The story of Lily Potter’s love for her son, Harry... she died protecting him and that placed upon Harry a protection like no other. (Tim Keller, *King’s Cross*, p. 143)Self-sacrificial love.

- The story of the people running down the hundreds of steps of the World Trade Center in September of 2001, while fire-fighters ran up the stairs, never to be seen again. (Rutledge, *The Undoing of Death*, p. 229.) Self-sacrificial love..

And then the story of Janusz Korczak – a famous children’s author and pediatrician, who began an orphanage for Jewish children in Poland in 1911.



This orphanage was different than most orphanages... It was like its own little republic... with a parliament and a court and a newspaper. An orphanage for the children, where the children contributed significantly to their own governing. In 1939, the orphanage was forced to move from its building into the Warsaw Ghetto... Because of Korczak’s popularity and status, he would not have had to have gone to the Ghetto, but he went. He wanted to be with his children. While in the ghetto, they even put on a play.

In 1942, German soldiers came to take the children away from the ghetto to Treblinka, an extermination death camp. Kozcak was told he did not have to go with them. But he would not leave the children. He would go with them. In fact, "He told the orphans they were going out into the country, so they ought to be cheerful. At last they would be able to exchange the horrible suffocating city walls for meadows of flowers, streams where they could bathe, woods full of berries and mushrooms. He told them to wear their best clothes, and so they came out into the yard, two by two, nicely dressed and in a happy mood."



They boarded the trains to Treblinka together, side by side. And they were never seen again.²

Deep love is love that sacrifices. Deep love is love that absorbs pain for the sake of another. Deep love is the love that is with us even unto our deaths.

YES. AND... And for Jesus, the story did not end with that pain. The story of Jesus' death takes a startling turn – a turn that somehow no one was expecting. The turn of the resurrection.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janusz_Korczak



Resurrection Morning – James Martin

The Greek people would not have expected it. To them, death and the afterlife meant the release of the soul from the body. Woohoo! All done with the body. For the Jews, there was a belief in, perhaps, a general resurrection at the end of time, but not this. Nothing like this. They were not expecting this.

And somehow, even though Jesus told them three times that he was going to rise again (in Mark 8, 9, and 10), they were not expecting it – not looking for it – totally surprised by it. I think it's fascinating that the editors of our (NIV) Bibles even seem to miss it in the subheadings placed over the sections where Jesus told his disciples he would rise again. In Mark 8 Jesus tells his disciples that he must be killed and in three days rise again (8:31). Subheading? Jesus predicts his death. In Mark 9, Jesus tells his disciples he would rise three days after being killed (9:31). Subheading: Jesus predicts his death a second time. In Mark 10, three days after his death, Jesus says that the Son of Man will rise (10:34). Subheading? Jesus predicts his death a third time.

It's like the fact that Jesus was not only predicting his death, but his resurrection, went in one ear and out another for Jesus' followers. And even after it happened and the women saw that the body was not there – they ran away speechless and terrified because they just couldn't even. They were not expecting this.

Death is such a fear... is such an enemy... is so strong... that its undoing is more than we dare to hope to believe. We are so afraid of death, that when it seems to be near, we puddle up like water, we melt like wax, our tongues shrivel up like raisins. The psalmists saw death as an end. The end. The end to all the goodness of life and praise.

- “Among the dead, no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave” (Ps. 6:5)?
- Psalm 115 says, “It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to the place of silence.”
- And Psalm 88 asks a ridiculous rhetorical question, God, “Do you show your wonders to the dead?” (No!) “Do their spirits rise up to praise you?” (Of course not!)

But our psalm today... Psalm 22 shows that even the dead are caught up in the praise of the Lord. Verse 29 says, “All who go down to the dust will kneel before him – those who cannot keep themselves alive.” Even those who are not rescued from death on this side of the grave will praise God on the other side of death. True, it is only a whisper of what is to come in the death and resurrection of Jesus, but what a whisper it is!

The whisper in this psalm that even those who die will yet praise the Lord is only possible because of the resurrection of Jesus... the thing that no one was expecting. He cried out to God and on the other side of death, God answered his call! Just like it says in verse 24! “God did not despise or scorn the suffering of the afflicted one. He did not hide his face from him but listened to his cry for help!”

In Jesus’ resurrection, Death is swallowed up in victory! This still blows our mind. I mean, even our favourite stories of self-sacrificial love leave us with living baby birds, living survivors of the WTC, living Harry Potter, but a dead mama bird, dead firefighters, a dead Lily Potter, and certainly a dead Janucz Koczak. In the story of Jesus’ self-sacrificial love by death FOR OUR SAKES, the story CONTINUES with the LIVING CHRIST!

And where Jesus goes, as we’ve been teaching throughout this series, WE FOLLOW... Jesus went through the grave into resurrection life, and one day, SO WILL WE.

But until that time... we remember that Jesus loved us so much that he was forsaken by God For Our Sake. Because he was forsaken, we are not. That is the one place we do not have to go... Every place else... where Jesus went for our sake, we follow for his sake.

Where Jesus washed feet for our sake, we wash feet for his sake.

Where Jesus loved for our sake, we love for his sake.

Where Jesus proclaimed freedom for our sake, we proclaim freedom for his sake.

Where Jesus interceded and prayed for our sake, we pray for his sake.

Where Jesus spoke the truth in love for our sake, we speak the truth in love for his sake.

Where Jesus welcomed little children for their sakes, for our sake, we welcome little children for his sake.

Where Jesus fed the hungry for our sakes, we feed the hungry for his sake...

And in so doing, "the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him" (v. 27). "The rich of the earth will feast and worship" (v. 29) *and* "the poor will eat and be satisfied" (v. 26). And together – "we will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!" (v. 31).