

Service Transcript Sunday 9th May 2021

Service Leader: Mark Reid

Welcome to our Sunday Service for 9th May 2021. We have our fourth instalment of Unanswered Prayer before we take a couple of weeks off for special services: more on that at the end of the service, as well as introducing you to what we shall be doing for Thy Kingdom Come which starts this Thursday 13th May.

The series on Unanswered Prayer has been based around the period from Maundy Thursday to the time of His resurrection. Today's session is on Holy Saturday with the question *Where is God when heaven is silent?* Hopefully you will find the session helpful and uplifting as we realise as God's people, that even when things seem silent, God is active in our lives. Let's remind ourselves of that as we think again on Jesus the One who died and was buried. On that Saturday all seemed to have fallen silent – but then came Sunday!

Opening Song - In Christ alone

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty
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IN CHRIST ALONE my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Prayer

Father

As we meet to worship You today, we do so in the name of Jesus because it is in Christ alone that we have come to know and own you as Father, not of our own effort or merit, but by His shed blood on the cross. You know how our lives and our faith can sometimes be such a struggle and we find it difficult to hear Your voice and experience Your presence. By Your Spirit may you re-ground us in our faith as you show us the bigger picture of what You call us to be in Christ, give us strength to deal with those things in our lives which we struggle with and affirm in us that we are loved by You.

We ask this in Jesus' name

Amen

Matthew 27: 45-50

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. 46 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?').

47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, 'He's calling Elijah.'

48 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. 49 The rest said, 'Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him.'

50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

Jesus prophesied his own future to His disciples quite a few times before He died. He was going to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

But here on the cross we see His utter desolation – forsaken by God as He cries out '*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*' These words beg a question: if Jesus knew what the end was going to be, why was there this feeling of such desolation? How did He deal with it in that moment? Pete Greig is going to talk about this in a few moments.

Sometimes it's difficult to face the trial even though we know the outcome is good. We know the promises of God, we remind ourselves of Jesus and what He has done for us, but we find it difficult coping with doubt, with silence, with prayers we don't see being answered. What shall we do? Do we give up as many we know have done? Or do we call out to God?

Song 2 Jesus I've forgotten

Steve Merkel
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JESUS, I'VE FORGOTTEN

The words that You have spoken;
Promises that burned within my heart
Have now grown dim.
With a doubting heart I follow
The paths of earthly wisdom;
Forgive me for my unbelief,
Renew the fire again.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy on me.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy on me, on me.

I have built an altar
Where I worship things of man;
I have taken journeys
That have drawn me far from You.
So now I am returning
To Your mercies ever flowing;
Pardon my transgressions,
Help me love You again.

I have longed to know You
And all Your tender mercies,
Like a river of forgiveness
Ever flowing without end.
So I bow my heart before You
In the goodness of Your presence,
Your grace forever shining
Like a beacon in the night.

Unanswered Prayer Session 4 – Holy Saturday

As in previous weeks we don't have a transcript for the Unanswered Prayer Course session. Here is the summary and discussion items we hope you'll find useful.

Key verse

"My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest." – Psalm 22:2

Introduction

Today we're looking at the mystery of Holy Saturday, and asking "Where" question; "Where is God when heaven is silent?", "Where is God in the midst of my unanswered prayer, pain and suffering?" We'll be exploring the uncertainty that often comes with waiting, and the struggle when it feels like God is silent.

Bible passage from the session: Psalm 22

Key points

- Most of us live our lives somewhere between the cross and the resurrection
- Have faith in the faith of others, even when you don't have faith of your own
- The paradox of real life is hurt and hope together; praise in spite of the pain

"... they tried to kill me; I don't know how I survived. But I always say that the reason I survived is just to be a testimony for others." - Helen Berhane

Holy Saturday calls for trust, patience and a certain defiant hope. We're going to finish now with a prayer from Alan E. Lewis, one of the few theologians who made it his life's work to study Holy Saturday:

Hear our prayer for a world still living an Easter Saturday existence, oppressed and lonely, guilty of godlessness and convinced of god-forsakenness. Be still tomorrow the God you are today, and yesterday already were: God with us in the grave, but pulling thus the sting of death and promising in your final kingdom an even greater victory of abundant grace and life over the magnitude of sin and death. And for your blessed burial, into which we were baptized, may you be glorified for evermore. Amen.

— **taken from *God on Mute* by Pete Greig, chapter 12**

For Discussion & Reflection

1. In *God on Mute*, Pete Greig talks about our tendency to "rush the resurrection"; to "leapfrog Holy Saturday"; to tidy up the mess too fast. What is it that makes waiting with unresolved questions such a hard thing to do?
2. People often say that God's timing is perfect. Do you agree with this? Why does he sometimes seem so slow?
3. In *God on Mute* Pete Greig says that "God's silence is not his absence but rather his presence in another form". In what ways have you experienced God's presence in the midst of silence in the past?
4. In the midst of your pain and silence, have there been moments where you have been able to say, like Elie Wiesel, "There is God?"
5. Pete Greig shares about the significance of developing spiritual muscle memory to carry us through the darker and more difficult times of life. What does this mean for you? What 'holy habits' have you cultivated – or would you like to cultivate – in your life?
6. The Bible articulates the reality of life; the pain and hope coming together. Are there any partic-

ular Bible passages that have sustained you during times of trial or struggle?

Reflection and Prayer

As we reflect on what Pete and Gemma have shared with us today, let's first bring before God those things in our life that we are struggling with. In the silence let's be honest before God, laying before Him our doubts our fears, our anger, our struggle with faith, any feelings we have that He has not heard us, or is not responding to us.

Silence

Then let's remember the words, the readings and the songs this morning all of which remind us of a God who has purchased for us in Jesus a future and a hope. Ask His Spirit to fill you anew to give you strength for the now and the ability to praise God for all He has made you in Christ, for how He shapes you now, even though you may not understand right now where that is going, and give Him praise that there is so much to look forward to.

Silence

Let's draw these thoughts together as we sing this song.

Song 3 At the foot of the cross

Kathryn Scott
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AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Where grace and suffering meet,
You have shown me Your love
Through the judgement You received.
And You've won my heart,
Yes, You've won my heart.

*Now I can trade these ashes in for beauty,
And wear forgiveness like a crown.
Coming to kiss the feet of mercy,
I lay every burden down
At the foot of the cross.*

At the foot of the cross
Where I am made complete,
You have given me life
Through the death You bore for me.
And You've won my heart,
Yes, You've won my heart.

Thy Kingdom Come

This week we commence TKC for 2021 with an Ascension Service that premieres on Thursday evening and is available on demand thereafter. As in previous years, we are going to be spending

time in prayer most days in the 10 day period and you will find details of what and when we are doing things each day. But what or who do we pray for?

God build His kingdom person by person as men and women boys and girls come into a living and personal faith in Jesus Christ. TKC is based around praying for specific individuals each day during that period – and afterwards. That may be new folks on our prayer radar, some may be the same as last year, others who the Lord is challenging us to pray for. It may be more than 5. We pray that they will come to trust Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

During this period, we also take time to pray together as well as individually for ourselves, for others, for our mission as the body of Christ. We encourage you to be involved and allow God to move in your life as you pray that He will be involved in the lives of others.

Let's pray for Thy Kingdom Come.

Father,

we thank You for the privilege of prayer. Because of our personal faith in Jesus, we can talk to You anytime, anywhere. Thank You for Your love demonstrated for us and for all in the death of Jesus on the cross. As we come to another TKC, we pray that You will lay on our hearts those we should be praying for, not just in the next 10 days, but as an ongoing commitment. Help us by our Spirit to pray expectantly because You have promised that You hear and answer our prayers. Help us to be persistent in prayer for those we pray for. May TKC also be an encouragement for us as we have been challenged and encouraged by the Unanswered Prayer Course in the last few weeks, that we will grow in our faith and bring glory to Jesus.

We ask it in His name

Amen.

Next Sunday our service is going to be very different. We will be joining with the Baptist Assembly which is on this coming weekend and the service at 10-30am will have a special speaker Shane Claiborne as well as hearing about the Baptist Union and BMS World Mission. It promises to be an encouraging occasion so do tune in. We will circulate connection details during the week.

The Assembly is three days long and you can also join them for other sessions too, so take the opportunity to do this and be encouraged by what God is doing through Baptists Together in this country and worldwide. To log on for the whole weekend involves a cost and details can be found on the Baptists Together Website, details of which are below and also coming up now.

Finally, Thy Kingdom Come ends with a Pentecost Sunday service on Sunday 23rd May, which will be on the MRBC website as usual from 10-30am.

Let's close by again affirming the hope we have in Jesus.

Closing Song This love this hope (Now is the time)

Geoff Bullock.

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THIS LOVE, this hope,
This peace of God, this righteousness,
This faith, this joy,
This life complete in me.

Now healed and whole,
And risen in His righteousness,
I live in Him,
He lives in me,
And filled with this hope in God,
Reflecting His glory.

Now is the time to worship You,
Now is the time to offer You
All of my thoughts, my dreams and plans;
I lay it down.
Now is the time to live for You,
Now is the time I'm found in You.
Now is the time Your kingdom comes.

Blessing

As we close, let's say this blessing together.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.