

Intro: Picture of Paul

*I love this picture.

*Other than that fact, why show it this morning?

*Because of the gospel this picture is an advent picture.

*My (our) friend has a future that extends beyond his physical death last Spring...because of the advent (coming of Christ).

*To look at this picture and to see present and future not just past...is to understand the power of the gospel.

*I show you a picture of my our friend Paul because he is a picture of the gospel.

*First...as I have mentioned...he lives, even though he has died.

*Second...he was a crooked stick that God used to somehow draw a straight line.

*Paul knew he was a man in need...he frequently felt deep pain, loneliness, failure...and he felt these things deeply...he was incapable of saving himself...yet death did not win in his life.

*I would venture to guess that some of us, some of the time...have a **feeling** that we don't need saving...this feeling is wrong.

*But I would also guess, that all us, some of the time, and some of us most of the time...feel utterly unworthy and therefore...cannot be truly valuable to God.

*One of the most destructive and common of the thinking distortions is "emotional reasoning."

***If I feel it, it must be true.**

*While it is may be true **that** I feel it, it is not necessarily true just **because** I feel it.

*When the feelings are powerful enough...most humans have trouble not believing them.

*Let's talk about "worth" or "worthiness"

*When you feel "unworthy" or "worthless"...how often would you say that feeling becomes reality for you?...colors how you see the world around you?

*It is of vital importance that we learn to "feel what we feel" without letting feelings become tyrants that dictate what we must believe and how we must behave.

*We feel what we feel and this is how God has made us...but we put our faith in facts because this is how God has called us to live.

*Not cold, unfeeling facts...but facts that are full of passion.

*Facts and feelings are not enemies...in the best cases...they collaborate.

*If you feel you are thinker...then you love facts.

*If you think of yourself as a feeler...facts can be cold tools, useful but not beautiful things.

*But every single feeler...thinks.

*And every thinker...feels.

*And both struggle with knowing what it means to be thinking/feeling/choosing children of God.

*So let's look at some facts...about "The Passion(suffering) of the Christ"

*These dynamic facts speak directly to our deepest needs, longings, feelings...they transform us if we allow them to.

*We are speeding to a conclusion of our year in Mark.

*For 8 chapters Mark took us on a leisurely stroll with Jesus through the villages and backcountry.

*Jesus was in no hurry...speaking to this person and that...Healing, calling, teaching, praying, walking, sleeping, eating.

*Then at the halfway point...Mark 8:31, everything changed.

*He began to teach them that he would suffer and die and rise again.

*His pace quickens, he is moving resolutely toward the cross.

*The last 1/3 of the book is the last week of his life.

*We will spend this week and next in chapter 15...then we will finish the last week of the year in the last chapter of the book.

*This morning, versus 33-37.

Mark 15:33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” — which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” 36 One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said. 37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. 38 The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

*NT Wright "We need, regularly, to find ways of making the story strange again, so that we can hear it once more as though it were new to us."

*Why? Because it is a strange story.

*True, but absolutely strange...there has never been one like it before or since.

*There are myths out there that resemble these facts...(dying and rising gods) why wouldn't there be.

*Myths are echoes of real things.

*But there is nothing of myth in this narrative.

***There is a lot that is strange here.**

1. Three hours of midday darkness.
2. A cry of despair from the Son of God.
3. A curtain torn top to bottom
4. A brutal unbeliever making a confession of faith

***Let's look at these strange goings on and how they impact (or can) our lives today.**

1. Three hours of midday darkness.

*On my weather app I have Wichita (I live here), Denver (my daughter lives there), Norfolk (I go there some) and Nome (I went there once and I love to see how long the days are in the summer and how short in the winter).

*On Thursday sunrise was 11:47 and sunset was 4:01...4:14 minutes of daylight.

*In the gospel we see that the critical events of Jesus's death happened in the dark.

*The betrayal, the mock trial before Jewish courts, now at the actual time of his death even though it is daytime, there is a deep darkness.

*The sun will come up at noon today in Nome...but in Jerusalem, when the Savior died...the world went dark at noon.

*From the 6th hour (noon) until the 9th hour (3:00) as Jesus was dying, there was total darkness.

*There was no solar eclipse...this is Passover the time of a full moon...there are no solar eclipses at this time.

*Maybe a desert windstorm?...I have been in some that created a brown world, but not a black one...it couldn't have created this darkness.

*It was supernatural darkness.

*In the Exodus midday darkness was God's judgment on Pharaoh and Egypt...but who was God judging here?

*Second strange thing...

2. A cry of despair from the Son of God.

*Jesus cried out **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**

*He cried out in a "megas" voice...loud, intense, violent voice.

*For the women who loved him, and unlike his male friends had not deserted him...this cry had to pierce their hearts.

*For the gawkers and soldiers...it had to startle them...maybe frighten them.

*They were confused and thought he might be calling for Elijah.

*This is the only one of Jesus's seven sayings from the cross that Mark records.

*Why did he choose this saying in his evangelistic tract to the Romans?

*The Romans worshipped gods of power.

*The Roman emperor was a god...more than human.

*Here the Christian Messiah was crying out in pain...he was not dying like a good soldier should...with stoic silence.

*These words demonstrate the horror of sin that Jesus felt as he experienced separation from the Father.

*Jesus had asked if he could be spared the cup of God's wrath...he was told "no" there is no other way.

*So why was he shrieking out "why" the very next day?

*It wasn't because he suddenly had intellectual doubts regarding God's goodness, existence, or power...he didn't.

*It wasn't a cry of confusion...He was not suddenly wondering if there was purpose for this suffering? He knew his purpose and was resolute in it.

*He wasn't feeling sorry for himself, it wasn't a classic "why me" cry.

*What was it?

*Of course the truth is much more profound than my thoughts and words...but what is at least true is that is Jesus...in his humanity, was doing what humans do when they suffer.

*At least humans who love God do when they suffer.

*He was crying out to God in his pain.

*In this case he was crying out to God even as God was turning from him.

*I watched a documentary on Jews who had survived the Nazi death camps or lost loved ones there and spent their lives seeking revenge.

*One group successfully poisoned the food supply of a prisoner of war camp that held former Nazi SS...thousands were killed.

*Not in an act of war...but of vengeance...war was over.

*In some of the cells of the death camps they had found in blood the word..."vengeance."

*This group of Jews that spent their lives getting vengeance had a Hebrew name that translated into "Avengers."

*Step aside Iron Man and Captain America...these people lived and breathed...and most eventually died...seeking to avenge...as I listened to their stories...clearly it was unfulfilling for them.

*When humans suffer, emotions rage...for some...that emotion is revenge, hate.

*When the Son of God suffered...his emotions raged...but he did not curse the soldiers or the Jewish leaders or his cowardly friends...he cried out in anguish to God.

*Was he looking for an answer? No...he wasn't confused about the "why."

*The "Why" of Jesus is the cry of his human heart as he experiences the weight of our sin.

*It's specific..."why have you forsaken me?"

*He knows why...but these are the words that welled up in his soul and poured from his mouth.

*Psalms is largest book in the Bible and one that Jesus likely had memorized and that he most often quoted...in fact here he is quoting Palms 22.

***Psa. 22:1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**

*Psalms, the largest book in the Bible, is full of "why?"

*Full of heartfelt, passionate "why?"

- *It is God who inspired the writing of the book of Psalms as well as the inclusion of it in our Bible...right in the middle.
- *God determined that a book that centers on human emotions and is full of prayers questioning him be positioned in the center and be the longest of all the book
- *Our ideas of faith and maturity are often out of sync with the Bible...at least mine is.
- *I had long hoped for a faith that would allow me to become dispassionate in the face of trouble...I wanted to be able to not be touched by trouble.
- *Not to escape it trouble, but to rise above it.
- *I had believed that resilience was a kind of toughness...a callous on my heart that cannot be penetrated by trouble.
- *My perspective had more of Buddha than Jesus in it.
- *For the Buddha...Life is suffering...suffering is caused by desire...you eliminate suffering by eliminating desire.
- *We see none of that here...Jesus is expressing his suffering with great passionate emotions.
- *He is suffering **because** of his desire for fellowship with God...which at that moment was broken by our sins.
- *It is important to note that while he showed us full bore passion and emotion...and that it is okay to despair, to feel deeply and to express those feelings to God.
- *He also showed us that he did not use emotional reasoning...to make his choices.
- *His emotions, based on the reality of his situation did not lead him to get off the cross.
- *It seems to me that what he felt and what he chose to do; were at odds on the cross.
- *He felt deep anguish, despair, pain...and yet unlike the other two dying on crosses beside him...he didn't have to stay there...he had a choice.
- *No one made him die...they did not take his life...he gave it willingly.
- *Matthew records Jesus telling his men in Gethsemane as he was being betrayed..."Relax, put your sword back...I could call on my Father and have an army of Angels here right now."
- *Not fat little cherubs but warriors with frightening power.
- *Here on the cross...the same choice was his.

*Here on the cross...we see passionate, searing emotion...and at the same time...a choice to live in line with...the will of God.

*It is so important to understand that we can be passionate people, who feel deeply and express everything honestly to God.

*While at the same time we do not have use emotional reasoning to live life.

3. The Tearing of the Curtain.

*Jesus cries out again...John tells us this time he said "It is finished."

*Then he died.

*At that moment while the land was dark...in the Temple a few kilometers away the Curtain was torn top to bottom.

*If this was myth it would have been easy to disprove it...thousands would have been in the temple in the days following Jesus' death...and when the gospels were written just a few decades latter...many of these eye witnesses would have discredited the story.

*The movement would have lost steam as it lost credibility...it did not lose steam or credibility...it gained both.

*The curtain in the Temple, which was heaven and thick, almost like a wall, kept people from the inner chamber where God's presence was evident.

*Only priests could go there on behalf of the people.

*This tearing of the curtain (top to bottom...God, not man did this) means the Temple is finished.

*It will be physically dismantled 35 years later...but it's purpose has been taken over by the event that just happened.

*From now on, access into the presence of the living God is open to all through the death of his son.

*This access to God for us was gained by the price Jesus paid with his death.

4. A brutal unbelieving Roman making a confession of faith

*At first glance this doesn't seem to be in the same category of the first 3 strange things.

*Supernatural darkness, The Son of God in despair, and a miraculous remodeling of the Temple...now a man saying some words.

*But let's look at it.

*I have seen just three people take their last breath...and I will not forget them.

*In our culture, unless you are in health care or in combat its unlikely you have seen many people die.

*Here Mark, writing to a Roman audience says that a Roman Centurion made the first post-Passion confession of faith.

*Centurions were enlisted men who had risen through the ranks...they were battle proven and battle hardened.

*He was a hardened, brutal man...there can be no doubt of this...

*He had seen many die...and probably many at his own hand.

*Let's look again at what happened...

"And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

*Do you recognize this statement?

*Mark 1:1, almost a year ago..."The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

*Mark 1:11, as he came up out of the water at his baptism..."You are my Son, whom I love."

*Mark 9:7, mount of transfiguration "This is my Son, whom I love.

*Mark 14:61 the high priest asked "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am" Jesus replied.

*Now as the Passion of Jesus is complete the Soldier who was used to death was touched by this particular death.

*Mark says what touched him was "he heard his cry and saw how he died."

*We don't know all that was going on in his mind...or how Mark knew this.

*Perhaps he became part of the church there and he told his story over and over.

*At any rate a soldier who swore allegiance to Caesar, the only one he would call a son of god...was now calling this dead Jewish teacher the Son of God.

*A soldier...scarred from visible and invisible wounds...body and mind...taught to stuff emotion and be tough...

*....was touched by the cries of Jesus, the tenderness of the Lord as he prayed for the forgiveness of those who were killing him, as he ministered to others while he suffered.

*We don't know what became of this soldier...but we do know that the way Jesus died impacted the most unlikely person on that hill that day...and he came to the right conclusion in regard to what he saw.

*Jesus is the Son of God...the Savior.

CONCLUSION:

*John records the words of Jesus as he died..."It is finished."

*Not "I'm finished" "It's finished."

*"It" means he completed our salvation.

*It means we have a completed, objective standard by which to "measure" our current status and eternal destiny with God.

*All man-made religions leave you wondering about your current status with God and your final destiny.

*Since you must work to prove yourself somehow worthy to God, you won't know if you are good enough until the end.

*Last week a Navy Admiral was fired for a night of conduct unbecoming an officer.

*He asked to be judged based on his 34 year career and not a single night...the response was..."Thanks for your service you are fired."

*This is how humans think of God...I must, through my own life's work...complete my salvation...and I can at any time, blow the whole thing.

*If we think this way...we must come up with a scorecard.

*This means we measure our lives against a standard or a person, or both.

*If I measure against a standard...I will look at the Bible largely as a list of things either to be proud of or ashamed of...depending on how well I think I'm doing.

*Pride or shame...both poor approaches to living life.

*If I measure against others...same thing...I either do or don't measure up...I am either proud or ashamed.

*If I understand what happened on the Cross...what "It is finished" means, or at least I am understanding more and more...

*I can **feel** unworthy, like a failure, worthless to God and others...but in fact, if I have trusted Christ...those feelings do not have to dictate my life direction...my choices.

*The Bible is not something I use to feel proud or feel shame...it me how can I maximize my joy and God's glory?

*Others are not tools to measure my own worth by..."I'm ahead of her" "I'm behind him"...others are opportunity to love and be loved.

***The gospel has profound implications for your life at a very personal level.**

*Your feelings are powerful and important.

*You can and you should take them to God.

*But you do not have to let them dictate the course of your life...the "Passion of The Christ is the fact that tells you who you are and what you mean to God."

*Feel worthless

*Feel abandoned by God

*Feel like you are not doing enough, don't measure up

*Feel like God cannot be good, powerful, or present in the face of your suffering.

***Then believe** what is true about God and you...this belief, this faith is based on what Jesus did on the cross.

*You choose your life direction by continually choosing where you focus your attention and affection.

*Two cries of Jesus on the cross...shape the way we are to live our lives.

***"Why God?"**...tell us something of our relationship with God, our ability to approach him honestly, without faking or hiding.

***"It is finished!"**...tell us how we are to live our lives...not obeying our emotions but believing the gospel.

*Keith Green recorded a song in 1977 that I have either listened to, or sung over and over when I begin to "strive" to be worthy rather than resting in in Christ and his finished work.

*"My son, my son (daughter) why are you striving? You cannot add to what's been done for you. I did it all while I was dying..."

*The starting point for a full and productive life...a life of impact, relationship...is to "be still"

*Take your feelings to God with complete honesty...but live your life based on the reality of "It is finished."

"Terry you do not know what I have done, thought, struggle with."

"I don't measure up."

*None of us do...that's the point.

*My friend...you are not a disappointment to God...rest in your faith and understand that when God sees you he sees his Son.

*And his son did not disappoint him.

SMALL GROUP NOTES

Intro:

*Would you consider yourself more of a thinker or a feeler?

*Everyone struggles to varying degrees with "emotional reasoning." This is the belief that what I feel must necessarily be true.

*A thinker may be prone to believe that what he/she feels is "sound thinking."

*When we "feel" something strongly it is very difficult to not believe it is real.

*Be honest...talk about this in your own life.

*How does "emotional reasoning" cause problems in our lives, relationships, walk with God?

Read:

Mark 15:33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. **34** And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" — which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" **35** When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." **36** One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. **37** With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. **38** The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. **39** And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Discuss:

1. N.T. Wright said, "We need, regularly, to find ways of making the story strange again, so that we can hear it once more as though it were new to us."

*Read the passage out loud and try to "feel" how strange it was/is.

2. Why do you believe Jesus asked why?

3. Why would he be asking this now since he had already asked for another way in the garden of Gethsemane?

4. How does the fact that he asked "why?" and yet stayed on the cross (when he had the power to do otherwise) demonstrate a balance of honesty with God and commitment to the will of God?

5. The temple curtain (a sort of cloth "wall") was torn top to bottom. What did this mean? Why was it significant?

6. Have you ever been present when someone died? If you are able to talk about it what made it memorable?

7. The Centurion had likely seen many men die, what was it about the death of Jesus that evoked his response?

8. The gospel writers all spend a lot of time on the last week of Jesus and especially his death. What does this tell us about the importance of his death in the gospel message?

9. Jesus said "it is finished" then he died. What was finished? Discuss the implications.

Apply

*What have you "felt" the past week, or weeks? Alone, loved, strong, weak, successful, a failure? How has what you have felt influenced your life...good or bad?

*Apply the facts of the gospel message..."It is finished" to your life. How do these facts run contrary to some of what you have felt?

*Are you earning or enjoying God's favor?

THE GOSPEL OF

MARK



Mark 15

**“FOR EVEN THE
SON OF MAN
DID NOT COME
TO BE SERVED,
BUT TO SERVE,
AND TO GIVE
HIS LIFE AS A
RANSOM FOR
MANY.”**

MARK 10:45

J. STILL



Emotional reasoning... "I feel it, so it must be true."

While it is true that you feel it, what you feel is true is not necessarily so.

Mark 15:33-39 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*” — which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

- 1. Three hours of midday darkness**
- 2. A cry of despair from the Son of God**
- 3. A curtain torn top to bottom**
- 4. A brutal unbeliever making a confession of faith**

1. Three hours of midday darkness

Nome

Cloudy

Now	5PM	6PM	7PM	8PM
5°	3°	3°	3°	1°

Friday		16 12
Saturday		18 12

Today: Cloudy currently. The high will be 7°. The low tonight will be 0°.

Sunrise: 11:49 AM
 Sunset: 4:00 PM
 Chance of Snow: 0%
 Humidity: 50%
 Wind: NW 8 mph
 Feel Like: 8°

Noonday darkness = Judgment

2. A cry of despair from the Son of God

**“My God, my God, why have you
forsaken me?”**

**"My God, my God, why have you
forsaken me?"**

Psalms 22:1

3. The Tearing of the Curtain

**4. A brutal, unbelieving Roman soldier
making a confession of faith**

"Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Mark 1:1 "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Mark 1:11 - As he came up out of the water at his baptism - "You are my Son, whom I love."

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Mark 14:61 The high priest asked "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am" Jesus replied.

"It is finished"