

Good News for Troubled Times

Part 4

Current events in our economy and workplaces call for extraordinary ministries - which must adapt quickly, as needs arise. May the following article encourage you. For the greater glory of God, I offer Part 4 in my five-part series in recognizing Good News in our troubled times.

Part 1 *Overworked and Overstressed*, the story of Naaman (2 Kings 5: 1-14)

Part 2 *When The Bottom Falls Out*, God's message through Isaiah (Isaiah 40: 21-31)

Part 3 - revised *God's Opportunities, New Directions and Beginnings* (John 3:14)

Part 4 *Why Have You Forsaken Me*, holy ground (Jesus' cry from the cross)

Part 5 *Stewardship*, living and doing by God's values (thematic)

Part 4 *Why have you forsaken me?* (Mt. 27:46, Mk. 15:34)

Jesus' cry from the cross deeply affected the witnesses who heard it. They remembered and recorded it as the desperate cry of Jesus' broken spirit, convinced that God had abandoned him. They understood his cry, not as a question but an accusation - a shot - understandable in paraphrase: *you have abandoned me, God. Why?!*

Jesus' perception of God's abandonment should not surprise us. If anything, it should encourage and assure us! His world had been turned upside down. His teachings were denounced as heresy. Public shouts of Hosannah had turned to Crucify! Roman law sold out to the will of the mob. Friends deserted him; one had plotted at dinner to betray him, and then had him arrested while praying. Some religious leaders had denounced him as a blasphemer. After having given hope, encouragement, food, healing and life to so many, he was being crucified. And finally, we cannot begin to imagine his physical suffering.

What Jesus accomplished through the cross, however, is Good News for everyone; but, especially for anyone faces *crucifying* experiences. When our worlds turn upside down, we may expect to meet Jesus on the holy ground of his presence, empathy, and transforming power. He greets us with outstretched arms of empathy, and wounded hands of blessing. I think his message is: *I know what you're going through. I've been there. It does feel like God has abandoned you. But let me show you what I've learned, and help you, and show you the way through it.*

Jesus' cry of abandonment was quickly followed with: *Into your hands, I commend my spirit.* God acted immediately and powerfully within Jesus. We don't know the details; but, we do know the meaning. Evil would not - and did not have the last say in Jesus' life. Death's power is limited; God gives resurrection and eternal life. Perceptions are convincing; but, they are not reality. Perceptions of God's abandonment are evil's deceptions. God's reality transcends evil's distortions.

Sometimes, life events knock us flat. Our abilities to cope are spent. Intuitively, we recognize that only God can help us. But, will God help, and how? From Scripture, we

have eye-witness accounts of Jesus' experiences. They assure us that God will help us. As Jesus did, we need to let God be God, and let God do as only God can - and will.

We also have Jesus' Church: a safe place to come and be, without fear or shame or stigma; a community of people to walk with and encourage us; a network of caring people to help us find new beginnings; and above all, a place of worship to encounter the resurrected, all-caring and loving Jesus Christ.

God, you have abandoned me! Why? Jesus' cry is our cry when life isolates and crushes us. Jesus' experience is our Good News. God has no interest in anyone being isolated or crushed. God has no interest in allowing perceptions and evil's deceptions to triumph. When we cry as Jesus did, we may expect God to bless us as Jesus was blessed - personally, deeply, and unmistakably. We have the Gospels to proclaim this point. We also have Jesus' personal experiences to assure us and lead us.

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