

## EASTER: HOPE FOR THE WORLD

Scripture used: [Matthew 27:45-46](#) and [Mark 16:6-7 \(NLT\)](#)

### OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon led us through the Easter celebration today at a time of great challenge. Each one of us is facing economic uncertainty and disruption in our routines, unable to casually go out to restaurants, movie theaters, workplaces and classrooms; or even enjoy typical comforts, like watching sports. For many of us, we are even more deeply affected, either by illness, grief and loss, or the risk of harm as we continue to work. In the face of the pandemic, we realize that being in a rich and powerful country is not enough to shield us from adversity, and our personal assets or strengths do not offer real security. Thankfully, God truly is our ultimate hope. As Christ is on the cross, he cries out to God: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" It is the perfect verse for our times. It highlights how we can relate to Jesus: even He feels abandoned in the midst of his torture and pain, and we can learn from Him how to receive strength from God to move forward in hope no matter our circumstances.

### KEY POINTS

- 1) Jesus calls out to God in agony, and he allows us to relate to him and to know that he understands what we are going through. He says "**My** God". Jesus has not abandoned the Father. Death and suffering come in between what we know of God (powerful and good) and what we don't comprehend. Pastor Hurmon shared about an extended time when he pastored in Boston where it seemed like the world went dark, when he was surrounded by death and loss that he couldn't understand. Theologically, he knew that because people have free will and agency, brokenness results in the world. Yet when we personally experience loss or pain, we easily wonder where God has gone. We ask God for deliverance, but sometimes our circumstances don't change. When we look at Jesus on the cross, we realize that He can relate with us, and we can relate with Him, in difficult times. When Jesus cried out to God, the response of the Father was to empower His Son with strength to endure. We can channel this God-given strength in our thoughts and emotions and walk with Him with hope.
- 2) The pandemic we are going through is just one example not of the absence of God, but of the presence of evil. Guilt, regret, shame can be subsumed in the ultimate atonement as Jesus paid our debt. By His stripes, we are healed ([Isaiah 53:5](#)). Through Jesus' victory, death has been defeated. We should not be overcome with alarm and dread, but we should know Christ's risen life is a promise to whoever believes in Him and wants to follow Him that God will always have the last word in our lives.
- 3) Jesus goes before us. "He is going ahead of you in Galilee" ([Mark 16:7](#)). He is truly the ultimate hope. Because He lives we can face tomorrow. We can trust in the one who holds the future. We literally put our hand in the hand of Jesus. We will all be surprised by our own mortality. But we will be fine if we lean on the One who has authority over life and death and offers eternal life with Him.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - None of us planned to be living through a pandemic. None of us could have known the impact to our lives, families, or loved ones. Some of us are facing loss and grief that breaks our hearts. How are you doing with the unique circumstances of our time? What is your internal dialogue with God like? How are you feeling about God in this time? Part of the blessing we have in Life Group community is the opportunity to be honest and real with one another.
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Matthew 27:45-46](#). Have you ever simultaneously called out to God believing He is there, yet feeling like God was letting you down? How does the reality of Easter, that Jesus died on the cross and rose again in victory, change your perspective on your current circumstances?
- 3) **DO** - One of the hard things about this shelter in place season is the loss of our regular rhythms and healthy structures in our lives. Ask God for strength to persevere in this season, and the strength to create daily space to pray, to bring our emotions to Him, and to receive from Him the hope that we need to keep living with joyful purpose in our lives. Keep asking God where He wants us to be a light and to make a difference in the lives of others!