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Lenten and Easter Meditation: Voices of the Passion: The Seven Words from the Cross: The Fourth Word, 1944

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THE SEVEN WORDS ON THE CROSS

THE FOURTH WORD

"My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me!"

Oct. 44

Several years ago the public press reported the story of a man ~~known only~~ ^{known only as Mr. X, he had lived} as ~~Mr. X~~ ^{earlier} who twenty years ~~ago~~ had become a victim of amnesia. For two decades ~~he~~ lived in a small Southern town without any memory of his identity. Finally one of our nation-wide radio programs brought him to the microphone to tell his story. At the conclusion of his pitiful tale Mr. X said: "Won't someone please tell me who I am? I do not want to spend my remaining years alone." With these touching words he struck directly into one of the greatest problems of human life, especially in our hurrying and forgetful age. The problem of loneliness! How often does it not appear in our crowded years, "I do not want to spend my remaining years alone!". These words have been spoken in tears, in hidden corners, in crowded cities, and in lonely rooms. There is a deep loneliness in modern life which leaves many of us crying like children in the night. It is a strange fact that despite our great cities and rapid communications, our speed of travel, we are still essentially lonely. The crowds, the speed and the noise are like walls between us. There is no way we can explain the feverish search for company which is so often a mark of our twentieth century life. There is no other way to understand the popping corks and clinking glasses of urban living. We are lonely!

When all is said and done, the only answer to our loneliness is the long backward look to Calvary. We must return to Him Who was lonely that we might never be alone. In one sense our Lord's life was the loneliest that was ever lived. He was alone in the desert and on the mountain. He was alone in the crowds that followed Him. He was alone in the garden. He was alone on the Cross. "I have trodden the winepress alone." "I am despised and rejected of men."

On Calvary, face to face with the climax of His loneliness, He cries: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" In some strange way known only to God all the

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timeless sin and shame of the world, wave upon wave, deep calling unto deep, came over Him. He was forsaken of God. It is very difficult for us to understand what happened at that moment. All we know is that this was the ultimate loneliness. This was the only time it ever happened in the long and bitter history of man. A Man was forsaken of God! Let us see this very clearly. No other human being has ever been forsaken of God. No matter how degraded a human soul may become, God is always near. No matter how fast and far it may travel to the dark corners of the world, it is never alone. Here, however, for the first and the last time we come to the last loneliness of the human soul. He is forsaken of God!

There can be only one reason for His loneliness. He was alone that we might never be alone again. He was forsaken of God that we might never be forsaken. He went down into the ultimate depths of sin and shame in order that we might never go down alone. Since Calvary we are never alone. There is always the sound of marching footsteps beside us. There is always a warm hand in ours. There is always company on the road. He bore the terror of the ultimate loneliness in order in life and death, in youth and age, in joy and sorrow we might never be forsaken of God. that

This is our greatest hope and joy. Today we can turn to Him and pray with the faith of a child lost in the dark: "O God my King and my Saviour, bow down Thine ear so that through the voices of angels and archangels ^{Thou mayest} ~~they~~ hear the pleading whisper of a lonely soul.

'Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies,
Heaven's morning break, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!'