

# Our **GUIDE** for little ones

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IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

## Lesson 52

### Forsaken by the Father

*John 19:25-27; Matthew 27:45, 46*

It seemed that *everyone* at the cross hated Jesus of Nazareth. The chief priests, the soldiers, even the passersby — none of them showed even a little bit of sympathy. Not satisfied with just *killing* Him, they all want to *ridicule* Him, *mock* Him, even while He is dying. Did He have no *friends*?

Ah, yes, where *were* Jesus' friends? Many of them, perhaps, knew nothing at all about what was happening to Jesus so quickly and so early on Friday morning. So they weren't there. What about those who *did* know? Why weren't they at the cross? It was because they couldn't bear to watch. Think of the disciples. The treachery of Judas, and Jesus' giving Himself over to His enemies — it was as if their whole world

had collapsed around them. What could all this be, they thought, but a dreadful mistake, a terrible tragedy? Confused, discouraged, they were on the brink of despair. They stayed *far away*. Except for John, who watched from a distance.

Think, then, of the women who had so often followed Jesus. They were not at the cross either. When they learned that their beloved Master had been captured, they did come. But the cross was too awful. They couldn't bring themselves to get close. They watched from afar.



**Note to Parents:** These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the “off” season.

Finally, however, four of Jesus' friends did come to the cross and stand before Jesus. One of them was John. We would expect that, wouldn't we? He and Jesus were, we might say, the best of friends. Another was Mary, the mother of Jesus. We would expect that too. Imagine how Mary's heart must have ached to see Jesus, her *son* ... dying ... on the cross. Mary Magdalene was there too. She had at one time been tormented by seven devils. Jesus had cast them out. To Mary Magdalene, therefore, nobody in the whole world meant more than *Jesus*. She loved Him more than life itself.

There they stood. Four of them. Hearts broken. John sees his best friend ... dying. Mary sees her son ... dying. Mary Magdalene sees her beloved Master ... dying. Earthly ties, earthly relationships, are about to be *broken*.

The pain of separation was great. But these four friends of Jesus were troubled by other things too. Mary remembered well the *virgin birth*, and the words of the angel Gabriel that foretold it: "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the *Son of God!*" And John remembered three years of *proofs* that Jesus really was the long-awaited *Messiah*. And here He *hangs on a cross*. What, now, can come of all their hopes? If only ... if only they could whisk Him away from this terrible place, and keep Him always with them ... as son, as best friend, as Master — and as Messiah.

Did Jesus know that their hearts

were breaking? And did He care? Or was He suffering so much *Himself* that He hardly even noticed that four dear friends were standing quietly by His cross? Jesus *did* care. He knew the anguish in their souls, and His own heart ached for them. So what did Jesus do? Did He teach them, from the cross, why His death on it was *necessary*, why He *had* to die? Wouldn't they feel better about this terrible cross if they understood that it meant *salvation for sinners*? No, Jesus didn't talk to them about that. Not now. Sometime *later* they will be better able to learn that. Not while Jesus is dying before their eyes. Instead, Jesus tells them something about *relationships*.

Relationships are about *family*.

And about *friends*. Think about *yours*.



You have *relatives* — brothers and sisters maybe, father and mother, uncles and aunts.

And you have *friends*. You have, then, *relationships* with people. Jesus had them, too, when He was on earth. He called Joseph Father, and Mary Mother. He had brothers and sisters. And He had dear friends. The Bible tells us, for example, that He loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. And John was the "disciple whom Jesus loved."

Standing now at the cross are four of those whom Jesus dearly loved, and who loved Jesus dearly. They wanted that *special relationship* to go on and on. But it will not. It *can* not. Why can it not go on? Not simply because Jesus is going to *die*. But because Jesus will soon

be *different*. They will see Him again, in just a couple of days, but they will find that He is not the same. No longer *earthly*. His work on *earth* will soon be *finished*. Never again will Martha be able to cook for Him a delicious meal. Never again will He call Mary *Mother*. Never again will He have a small circle of friends who will follow Him wherever He goes. No, the relationships like *that* will soon be past — and changed to something far better.

Soon, very soon, Jesus' followers will understand all of that. And be glad. But not yet. At the cross of Jesus they are still so very sad. Jesus will help them. He will show them the way — by bringing one of the earthly relationships to an end. Listen. "Woman," He says to Mary, (notice, no longer Mother but) "Woman, behold thy son (John)." And to John, "Behold thy mother." From now on, John, you must care for Mary as you would care for your own mother. And Mary, you must now look to John, in your need, as if John were your very own son. Thus did Jesus put away forever His own earthly relationship to Mary. At that moment it ended. John and Mary understood. And they obeyed. That very hour, John took Mary to his own home.

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Jesus meanwhile is still suffering on the cross. He had been hanging there since 9:00 in the morning, enduring the terrible pains of crucifixion. But the worst was still to come. The worst began at noon. You know what that was. All of

God's people know what that was. And yet ... no one knows. No one *can* know. All of the wrath ... all of the vengeance ... all of the judgment of God on the sins of all of His people — all of that came on Jesus alone. All of our sins — huge mountains of guilt — Jesus had taken on Himself.

And all of God's anger was directed at Him. We can't even begin to imagine what that was like. None of *us* could possibly have borne it. The *best* and *strongest* of us would have been swallowed up in a split second by that dreadful vengeance of God. Only a man who was Himself also *God* could bear *that* wrath. Only Jesus, the *Son of God in the flesh*, could do it.

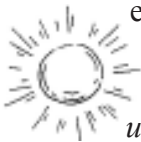
What do you think — did anyone at the cross of Jesus know anything at all about the *wrath of God* on Calvary? Could God's anger be *seen*? True it is that neither friend nor foe knew what Jesus was enduring on the cross from 12:00 to 3:00 on that Friday afternoon. But they *all* knew that *God* was present there — in His anger. They knew that, because it got *dark* — at *noon*. Not the darkness of a thunderstorm. Not the darkness of a sun eclipse. Nothing could explain that darkness. Nothing, that is, except this — that *God did it*. Even the Roman soldiers would know, in their hearts, that God did it, and that the God who did it was not *pleased*. But the Jews knew more. They knew from their Old Testament Scriptures that darkness was a



sign of God's *wrath* and of His *judgment*. The darkness was *terrifying*. Everyone at Calvary must have been sure that, whatever that darkness meant, it had something to do with the one who hung on that middle cross — the one who claimed to be the *Son of God*. No more did they mock. For three hours there was silence — while Jesus suffered the agonies of hell ... for us.

For three hours the suffering of Jesus just got worse and worse. It was like being cast away from the presence of God, into the pit of hell, and sinking deeper and deeper into the horrors of hell's pit — until He at last reached the bottom. At the bottom, when the darkness on Calvary must have been at its very blackest, there comes from the lips of the Savior a cry of anguish, the fourth cross word, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And then it was over. Jesus had endured the wrath of God to the very end. Then the sun began to break through the darkness. No more judgment — for Him ... or for us. The victory was *won!*



### How Well Did You Listen?

1. Can you name three of the four friends of Jesus who at last came to the cross?
2. To whom did Jesus give the care of His mother?
3. How did everyone at the cross know that *God* was present at Calvary in His anger?
4. What was the fourth cross word?

## The Death of Jesus

*Matthew 27:47-50*

Long before Jesus finally gave Himself into the hands of His enemies, He talked about His *death*. Maybe you remember that once He said to the Jews, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd *giveth his life for the sheep*." Then He said again, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

To the Jews, those were the words of a madman. That's what they said: "He hath a devil, and is mad." Power to lay down life? And then power to take it again?! A man who talks that way must be out of his *mind*. That's what the Jews thought.

Well, now the first part of Jesus' prophecy is happening before their eyes. Jesus is *laying down His life for His sheep*.

But ... it doesn't *look* like that ... *does* it? Had Jesus not been *captured*? Had He not been *tried*? Had He not been *condemned to death*? Had He not been *nailed to a cross*? And now He is near death. Does it not look as if His life is being *taken from Him*?

True, in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus had showed the Jews that they could not take Him ... if He did not *let* them do so. They all fell backward to the ground — and stayed there till He let them get up. But is it not different on the

cross, especially after the three hours of darkness? Look at Him now. Does He look like the *master* of death? No, it looks as if He will soon be *overcome* by death — just like everybody else.

But it didn't end that way. Listen. "I thirst." Cross word number

five.

It was probably little more than a hoarse whisper — because by this time Jesus' lips and mouth must have been so parched and dry that He could barely speak. But somebody at the cross heard it and quickly ran to get something for

Jesus to drink. The man filled a sponge with wine, put the sponge on the end of a stick, and lifted it up to Jesus' lips.

Jesus drank it all. As much as He could suck out of that sponge. Why?

Was it only because He was dreadfully thirsty? No, there was another reason. It's this: Jesus wills to *lay down* His life for the sheep. If He is really going to do that, He must be *strong* to the very *end*. And after the three hours of suffering hell's agonies, He *wasn't*. He was *weak* — so weak that if His strength were not somehow *revived*, He would die just like the two malefactors. He would sink slowly into unconsciousness — and then never wake up. He would die — just like everybody else.

Jesus knew what He needed. "I thirst," He said. And then He drank the wine. The wine *revived Him*. Very soon He will die — but everyone at the cross will see that His death was not like the

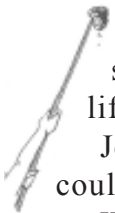
malefactors' — or, for that matter, like anyone else's. He will not die *defeated*. He will die the *victor*.

How did they know that? First, there was the sixth cross word. "It is finished!" That wasn't a whisper. With lips moistened and strength renewed, Jesus gave a *loud cry*. It was a triumphant, powerful, even exuberant (joyful) cry. Who at the cross had ever before heard a cry like *that* — from the lips of a *dying man*? No one. But never before had a man died like Jesus was dying. Jesus was *doing a work* on that cross. He was paying the price for sin. And that great work, His *Father's* work, was now *finished*. He could now go *Home to Father*.

And that's what He did. "Father," Jesus said, "into thy hands I commend my spirit." Another loud cry it was. The cry of a *victor*. The cry of one who *knew* that the work He had finished was *pleasing to God*.

And then He died. Immediately. Nobody would have expected that. Jesus' head was *up*. His voice was *strong*. His last words were *powerful*. Jesus did not appear to be right *at death's* door. Surely He would have to suffer yet, for awhile, before finally being delivered by death. But He didn't. He died *at once*. They all *saw it happen*. They saw His head, which had been uplifted, drop immediately forward. He was, in that instant, dead.

"Father, into thy hands I command my spirit." Those last words of the Savior were not just a pious *wish*. Jesus had actually *done* it. He had actually, at



that moment, *given* His spirit into His Father's hands. And that can mean only one thing — that death did not *overcome* Him. Rather, He *ordered death to take Him*. This man, who had called Lazarus out of a grave in Bethany, really *was* the Master over death. Even His *own*.

“No man taketh it from me,” Jesus had said, “but I lay it down *of myself*.” Those words were *true*. There were *witnesses* ... at Calvary.

### How Well Did You Listen?

1. What was the fifth cross word? How did someone manage to get wine up to Jesus' mouth when He was up on the cross?
2. What was the sixth cross word? What was the great work that Jesus had finished?
3. What was the seventh cross word? What did Jesus do right after He said that?

### How Well Do You Understand?

1. Why were Jesus' friends not at the cross when Jesus was crucified?
2. Four of Jesus' special friends did finally come to the cross. What was especially troubling them?
3. Jesus showed

His four friends at the cross that earthly relationships with Him must come to an end. How did He do that?

4. Why was everyone at the cross terrified by the darkness that came over the land? Was the darkness terrible also for *Jesus*?
5. How did wine help Jesus say the last two cross words in a loud, powerful voice?
6. How did the people at the cross know when Jesus died? How did His death at that moment show that He was really the master of death?

### Memory Verse

Matthew 27:46 “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Follow the maze through the sponge to the dot.



Color the path purple for the wine.