

The man who cries out in despair trusts God Matt 27: 43-51a & Acts 10:34-43

Easter egg quiz

Who would like an Easter Egg? All you have to do is answer an easy question - about horses - and people?

One day, a person went to horse race, Instead of counting the number of humans and horses, he instead counted 74 heads and 196 legs. Yet he knew the number of humans and horses there. How did he do it, and how many humans and horses are there?

Answer:

Let's assume that HM = Human and
HR = Horse

$$HM + HR = 74$$

$$2HM + 4HR = 196$$

$$(2HM + 4HR) - (2HM + 2HR) = 196 - 148$$

$$2HR = 48$$

$$HR = 24$$

$$HM + (24) = 74$$

$$HM = 74 - 24$$

$$HM = 50$$

So, the solution is **24 horses and 50 humans**. Easy.

Did you, by any chance get that sinking feeling of despair at any point? Did you give up hope of having an Easter Egg? Don't worry, here you are – call it a bonus prize.

But you're not alone, most of us feel despair at some time.

Don't we love Ikea? All you need is this simple tool and you can construct anything!

Well, thankfully not “anything” - Imagine if Ikea did make everything. What if you bought a car from them.

That and an allen key is pretty much the point at which I would despair!

And you can see people despairing most weeks on TV. The TV cameras often pick them out. It might be at big matches or local games. It might be five minutes before the end, 10 minutes, quarter of an hour, sometimes it is even half time. I’m talking about the people who leave football matches in despair because their team is loosing – sometimes badly, sometimes its total humiliation.

Have you seen them? Men and women who have paid good money but who give up in despair and walk away. “It’s all over” they think.

But as they get outside the gates and past the turnstiles they hear a roar, then a cheer, then their team’s supporters chanting. What’s happened? What’s gone on? Then it happens again and again. If only they could see, if only they had stayed. If only they hadn’t given up hope because against all their expectations they realise that their team has pulled off a stunning victory.

Was it by chance? No. The supporters might have given up hope, but when that happens you just know that the players never did and that is what we have (albeit on a much grander scale) on Easter Day.

Cast your mind back to Good Friday and Jesus alone and abandoned on the cross apart from a few relatives and a couple of friends at best.

They might have been there in the back ground, but in the main he was surrounded by mockers – the chief priests, the teachers of the law of God and elders; the respected members of the community, not to mention at least one of the criminals being crucified with him, they all have a dig at this man on the cross, they all try to rub salt into the wound; “He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'”

Is it any surprise then that Jesus cries out; “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?— which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Clearly Jesus trusted God and God has abandoned him.

Ahh, but if you think like that, if you join with the mockers then you have left the ground before the game is over, before the whistle goes, before the winning captain has been crowned victorious.

You see, Jesus does trust in God, his heavenly Father and I'm going to prove it to you. First of all, when he was in Gethsemane Jesus struggled with the terrible reality of what he was about to face on the cross (not the mere physical torment and death of crucifixion, but the overwhelming weight of the world's sin on his shoulders and seeping into every cell in his body) and yet what was his resolve?

To trust God; Jesus prayed “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” (Matt 26:42) Jesus trusts his heavenly Father – totally.

You see, it isn't that the cross was a terrible accident, a dreadfully inconvenient event in the life of Jesus, something which comes out of left field and takes him by surprise but which he just had to cope with and get through.

The cross does not shatter Jesus' trust in God because he is 100% expecting it and prepared for it.

Again and again the gospels make it clear that Jesus knew the cross was part of the plan and all the while, as the cross grew nearer and nearer, Jesus trusted in God, he knew that God would not rescue him there and then because on the cross Jesus had a job to do a task to complete – a cup of suffering to drain so that our sin might be paid for.

So what were Jesus' last words? Here's some more proof for you; not "my God, why have you forsaken me?", but actually, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." As Jesus died, as the price was paid, the relationship was restored.

As he breathed his last Jesus didn't call on "God" he spoke to his "Father". And you can't commit your spirit into the hands of someone who has abandoned you forever. Jesus' heavenly Father hadn't, the price was paid, the relationship was restored. Jesus trusted his Father because God was in control all along.

And that's what Peter affirms in our Acts reading, "We are witnesses of everything [Jesus] did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen— by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." (Acts 10:39-41)

Did you notice who was in charge there? God. It was God who raised Jesus from the dead and it was God who chose the witnesses who saw the risen Lord Jesus. That's why Jesus was able to commit his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father with utter confidence, that's why on the cross Jesus still trusted God even when God had to turn his back on his sin soaked Son who had become the sacrifice in our place.

So, what was Jesus doing on the cross? Not despairing, but praying, talking to God, quoting King David from Psalm 22, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?”

David wrote those words over a thousand years before Jesus uttered them, but in the agony of the cross Jesus is looking ahead to the “raising to life” work of his Father. It is as if Jesus is longing for the moment of death, for all that sin to finish coursing its poisonous way through his body so that he can die and then be raised by God his Father – “Why are you so far from saving me”? “Father God I know it’s going to happen – I trust you – I want it to happen soon!”

And on Easter Day we know that Jesus work on the Cross is done; it is finished. God has received the spirit of Jesus and raised him to new life (symbolised today for so many people by an egg) – the tomb is broken open it is empty – sin is defeated, God turns a hopeless end into an endless hope.

How is this possible? It is all because (as we have seen over the last week) the man who is mocked as king, is king. The man who is utterly powerless is powerful. The man who can’t save himself, saves others all because the man who cries out in despair trusts God.

Do you?

This Easter morning do you trust God? Do you believe that Jesus is King? That Jesus is powerful? That Jesus can save you from your sin?

Perhaps you are too wrapped up in the seeming hopelessness of your life; your family problems, your finances, your job, your loneliness, your selfishness, your secrets. What can anybody do to help you out of that mess?

Well, Easter day reminds us that it has been done, it has been dealt with on the cross and that God offers us a new and a fresh start with him. It doesn't mean that all our problems will go away, but we can have the total assurance of God's forgiveness, God's love and God's presence with us always through Jesus as we deal with life.

Because Jesus is alive, he is risen, he is King and just as he trusted in his Father to save him, we can trust in him to save us.
The Lord is risen!
He is risen indeed!

Amen.