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Easter Message

Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani? that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

The above verse from Matthew 27:46 is the cry of Jesus Christ on the cross moments before his brutal death. As a quotation from Psalm 22: 1, it could be Jesus declaring the Old Testament prophecy, or crying out in absolute anguish, or both. The point to consider here is that Jesus expresses the pain and suffering of his impending death.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” is the painful cry for many in the world today as they face a variety of sufferings in sickness, poverty, hunger, disasters, injustices, abuse and death. This is the cry of displaced people, refugees on the move, abused women and children, indigenous people, people with disabilities, the neglected, oppressed and downtrodden. Their plights are so unbearable that they often think that governments, friends, family and even God has abandoned them. In private and in public, in silence and aloud, they cry for help!

The world is in such a mess today as we reflect on the violence, conflicts, wars, corruption, political turmoil, economic injustices, climate emergency, and the list goes on. In such a context, some are prone to ask, “Where is God?” The thoughts of abandonment and despair are not far from our minds and hearts, even if it makes us uncomfortable to think like this.

Jesus gave up his last breath and died, but he rose again from the dead. In Christ is our hope and life. Our hope is not centred in some sentimental experience but in the deep realisation that hope, like faith and love, are eschatological gifts. Gifts that God gives us to overcome the present and to see the future in the midst of chaos, conflict and the feeling of being forsaken. Gifts that remind us that darkness, despair and death are not the end. Light, hope and life are within reach because the Risen Lord overcomes all things. The Apostle Paul tells us this most powerfully in Romans 8: 37-39 where he declares, “in all things we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us”, therefore nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Thus, when we are tempted in the midst of brokenness, pain, suffering, wars and death to ask why God has forsaken us, let us stop and be assured that in Christ, the Father makes all things new! In the midst of trials, turmoil and tribulations let us be reminded that in the power of the resurrection God is present with us in all things, through all things and at all times.

This assurance then must, instead of making us feel forsaken, stir and steer us into becoming agents and instruments of hope and light to the world. It should give us the energy and desire to continue to work toward God's justice, peace, reconciliation and unity, enabling a better world for all creation!

Whenever we are tempted to cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” let us know Emmanuel – God is with us forever!

Have a blessed and hope-filling Easter!

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General Secretary
World Council of Churches