Devotional Reflection, Wednesday, July 29, 2026
Proper 12, the week of the ninth Sunday after Pentecost
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Born to Begin

Key phrases for reflection from today's Gospel.
45From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 46And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

You will find the full text of today's Gospel at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (*BCP*, 977)
AM Psalm 72; PM Psalm 119:73-96
Judges 3:12-30; Acts 1:1-14; Matt. 27:45-54

Today we celebrate the feast of the Ordination of the Philadelphia Eleven. (See below.)

David's Reflections

Jesus' life crosses over into our experience repeatedly. His cry of desolation, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", echoes the cries of suffering people for centuries prior and precedes the as yet un-wept miseries of all centuries to follow. Jesus' cry quotes the first verse of Psalm 22, a classic lament, the first portion of which expresses feelings of divine abandonment. Our attempts to fire the wick of theological explanation of what this cry meant feel like candle flickers compared to the floodlight of emotional connection we feel with Jesus' sense of forsakenness.

The last poem found in the notebooks of the Polish poet Anna Kamienska (1920-1986) reached into that deep well of connection.

On the Cross

He was dying on the cross

on a hospital bed
loneliness stood there by his side
the mother of sorrows

Lips closed
and feet tied
My God my God
why have you forsaken me
Sudden silence
All had happened
that was to happen
between someone
and God.

8 May 1986 *

I grew up hearing preachers say that God abandoned Jesus when he became our sin-bearer because God cannot look upon sin. That explanation now seems so wrong-headed. We cannot step behind the curtain and know with certainty what actually happened; however, our speculations need to be theologically sound. What I just shared compares to a half-painted wall, full of flaws. John 16 quotes Jesus saying the Father never leaves him alone.. Can we not speculate the the Triune God suffers in Jesus' suffering, that the Triune God depends into the depths of our forsakenness and experiences it? That cry of desolation then becomes the ultimate moment of divine suffering for us.

Whenever you and I feel lonely, alienated, defeated, hopeless, or put upon by an unfair existence, we can repair to this shared moment with Jesus. The most incredible life ever lived, the life with the purest intent and focus, near its end felt empty, alone, and abandoned by God. I feel stunned by that scene, one who lived utterly committed to God feeling abandoned in his most painful moments. How incongruous!! How shocking!! How human!! I think of the writer of Hebrews saying that Jesus prayed to God "with loud cries and tears," perhaps a reference to Jesus' prayers in the Garden the night of his arrest and to his moments of agony on the cross (Heb. 5:7).

Of course, those notes of loneliness and abandonment did not end the concert. Jesus lived through that darkness into the light of assurance before he died, and then he rose from the grave. Those moments in which I feel so connected to his cry may precede and follow a death—the death of a relationship, of a friend, of a dream, of an attachment. But, beyond even death faith finds her way through the tomb to a new beginning and a new life. I can resolve that, by God's grace and Christ's loving presence, those feelings of loneliness and abandonment will not be the last notes in my symphony.

As Paul Ricoeur put it, quoting Hannah Arndt, we "are not born to die but in order to begin." +

* Cited by David Curzon, *The Gospels in Our Image: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Poetry Based on Biblical Texts* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1995), p. 231.

+Paul Ricoeur, *Living Up to Death*. (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2009), p. xiii.

Collect of the Day, Proper 12, the ninth Sunday after Pentecost
O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*. (BCP, 231)

Today we celebrate the feast of the Ordination of the Philadelphia Eleven.
http://satucket.com/lectionary/ordination_women.htm

Collect of the feast of the Ordination of the Philadelphia Eleven
O God of Persistent Grace, you called the Philadelphia Eleven to the priesthood and granted them courage and boldness to respond, thereby opening the eyes of your church to the giftedness and equality of all: grant us so to hear, trust, and follow your Holy Spirit wherever she may lead, that the gifts of all your people may flourish throughout the earth, through Christ our Savior. *Amen*

Prayer of Ignatius Loyola
Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve;
to give, and not to count the cost,

to fight, and not to heed the wounds,
to toil, and not to seek for rest,
to labor, and not to ask for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do your will.
http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/Ignatius_Loyola.htm

A Collect for Grace
Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 100)

In the Order of Worship for Evening
Almighty, everlasting God, let our prayer in your sight be as incense, the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. Give us grace to behold you, present in your Word and Sacraments, and to recognize you in the lives of those around us. Stir up in us the flame of that love which burned in the heart of your Son as he bore his passion, and let it burn in us to eternal life and to the ages of ages. *Amen*. (BCP, 113)

A Collect for Mission
Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.* (BCP, 101)

Daily Office Gospel, Matthew 27:45-54
45From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 46And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' 47When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' 48At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. 49But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.'

50 Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. 51At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints

who had fallen asleep were raised. 53After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. 54Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

Daily Offices in the Book of Common Prayer
Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *The Book of Common Prayer*
Noonday Prayer, page 103, *Book of Common Prayer*
Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p 109, *Book of Common Prayer*
Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*
Compline (Night Prayer), page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*
Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*