

SERMON

# Sermon: When God Feels Silent

*A full sermon manuscript on Psalm 22, Job 23, and Lamentations 3 -- the experience of divine absence and the faith that survives it*

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*Equipping pastors and leaders to serve with excellence, integrity, and lasting Kingdom impact.*



# Sermon Overview and Context

Primary Texts: Psalm 22:1-2 | Job 23:1-9 | Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-26

## Preaching Hook

There is an experience every honest believer knows but almost no one talks about in church: the experience of praying and hearing nothing. Of opening the Bible and finding words on a page rather than the living word. Of going through the motions of worship while feeling that the heaven above your head is made of brass. Of the God who was once so real, so present, so unmistakably near -- going silent. This is not the experience of the spiritually immature. It is the experience of the Psalmists, of Job, of Jeremiah, and of Jesus himself on the cross. It is an experience with a name, a theology, and -- crucially -- a path through it.

## The Reality of Divine Hiddenness -- It Is Not Your Fault

Psalm 22 opens with the cry that Jesus himself spoke from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This is not the prayer of an apostate or a backslider. It is the prayer of a righteous sufferer -- someone who has cried day and night (v. 2), who knows the history of God's faithfulness (vv. 4-5), who has trusted since birth (vv. 9-10), and who is experiencing what theologians call *Deus absconditus* -- the hidden God. The psalm gives us the most important theological permission available to the person in spiritual darkness: God has not abandoned them. The experience of his absence is not evidence of his actual absence. The darkness is a season, not a destination.

*"Psalm 22:1-2"*

-- Primary Text

## Job's Testimony -- When the Search Finds Nothing

Job 23:1-9 is one of the most searingly honest passages in all of Scripture: "If I go forward, he is not there, and backward, I cannot perceive him; on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him" (Job 23:8-9). Job has not stopped looking. He has not given up. He is actively, desperately searching for the God he knows is there, and finding nothing. This is not the testimony of someone who has lost faith -- it is the testimony of someone whose faith refuses to give up even when experience provides no encouragement. Job's search is itself an act of faith. The person who has truly lost faith stops looking. Job cannot stop looking.

*"Job 23:1-9"*

-- Secondary Text

## Lamentations 3 -- The Path Through the Darkness

The turn in Lamentations 3 is one of the most structurally significant moments in biblical literature. Jeremiah has been describing the devastation of Jerusalem with unflinching specificity -- there is no false comfort here, no premature silver lining. And then, right in the center of the most desperate book in the Bible: "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:21-23). Note carefully: Jeremiah does not say the darkness has lifted. He says he "calls to mind" something true that the darkness cannot change. The path through divine hiddenness is not the resolution of the experience but the decision to anchor to what is true about God regardless of what feels true in the moment.

"Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-26"

-- Third Text

## Application and Invitation

Invite the congregation to name their darkness honestly before God -- perhaps for the first time. Provide the language of lament as a gift. Pray together in the language of Psalm 22 and Lamentations 3: naming the absence, trusting the character, waiting for the morning that is coming. Close with the Easter declaration that the God who went silent on Good Friday was raised on Sunday, and the silence was not the last word.

## Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What did this sermon say to you personally -- not in general, but specifically? Where did it land?
2. Was there anything in the message that challenged or confused you? How did you engage with it?
3. What specific application is this text calling you to? Name it as concretely as possible.
4. Who in your life needs to hear what you heard today? How might you share it?

## Preacher's Preparation Checklist

- Have I allowed this text to preach to me personally before I prepared to preach it to others?
- Do I have a specific illustration that makes the central theological claim concrete and immediately recognizable?
- Is my introduction creating genuine need for what the text provides -- curiosity, tension, a felt question?
- Is my conclusion specific, clear, and calling for a concrete response rather than general inspiration?
- Have I prayed specifically for the individuals who will be in the room when I preach this?

*The sermon is not yours. You are the herald -- the one who delivers the message on behalf of the One who sent you. Prepare with everything you have, and then step behind the text and let it do what only it can do.*

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