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March 24, 2021  
Sermon Text: Mark 15:37  
A SHOUT OF SALVATION

Let us ponder this evening verse 37 of Mark chapter 15 which states: *Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed his last.*

Something about this doesn't seem right. I have been with people when they have died. Perhaps you have too. At the risk of sounding irreverent, unless a person is going down in a crashing airplane or being attacked by a grizzly bear people don't usually die with a loud voice. Whether death comes suddenly as with a heart attack or slowly and restlessly with disease, a person's final moments tend to be quiet. A family may even be surprised how long the death process takes and may not even be sure when and if their loved has died.

For someone being crucified it could take days to enter death. Most often the crucified died of asphyxiation. Being stretched out on the cross the diaphragm became more and more exhausted causing breaths to become increasingly shallow until finally the person suffocated. Perhaps you have heard of the death rattle. That is a soft rattling or gurgling sound in the back of a person's throat as their final breath leaves them.

But there was no death rattle from Jesus. Mark 15 says *Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed his last.* This is significant as nothing is mentioned in Scripture merely by chance.

What is this shout? What is its significance for you and me? The Gospel of Luke records Jesus' final words as being: *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.* But here in Mark we are only told He died with a shout.

The Gospel of Matthew adds that at the moment of Jesus' death there was a great earthquake. Rocks split. Tombs broke open and many dead people came to life. The curtain in Jerusalem's temple was torn in two. The manner of Jesus' death was so startling that a Roman centurion overseeing the execution exclaimed, *Surely this was the Son of God.*

What is the significance of Jesus dying with a shout?

It wasn't shock or surprise. Jesus knew all along that His life was to be sacrificed in this way. Think of His conversation with Nicodemus which we heard the Sunday before last – that as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.

Nor was Jesus fighting it. He had once declared that no one takes His life from Him. He lays it down willingly.

It wasn't fear or fright. For Jesus is the author of life and announced Himself to be the resurrection and the life and had personally raised people to life.

May I suggest that this loud voice at the moment of Jesus' death was deliberate, that it was for our benefit, that this shout was a shout of salvation? Whenever Jesus speaks, salvation speaks!

Have you ever been afraid of death? Maybe in the middle of the night you woke up gripped by a dread of its cold fingers. Maybe you've suffered PTSD as a result of a close brush with death. Maybe the weakness of old age or terminal illness presses you with the finality of it all. Maybe just the general thought of it is something you want to avoid. Look at what kind of effects the dread of a pandemic has had on people. What is that but a dread of death?

But we have a Savior who did not bow to death. He did not feebly fade into death. He did not fall prey to death. Death did not overcome Him. He charged into death with a shout like a fierce warrior, like He was on the attack. Death was the final enemy He set out to conquer and destroy for us. Death tried to swallow up Jesus, but Jesus swallowed up death.

The Bible says, *The sting of death is sin*. But Christ atoned for our sins on the cross. He announced the success of that atonement with the words, *It is finished!* Therefore the sting of death is taken away by Jesus.

With His final shout going into death He is inviting our confidence in Him, in His saving power. There is no second-guessing now whether Jesus fully intended to be there or to have it happen this way. He was fully aware of what He was doing. This was a shout of salvation.

Therefore, be comforted. God will not take you to heaven on the basis of how well you die or how courageous you are in facing it. He saves you from death only on the basis of how well Christ died. And Christ's death was perfect and victorious. The Lion of Judah roared and death crumbled.

You and I can adopt the same mindset as King David: *Yeah, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil. For Thou art with me.* Our Champion, our Warrior, is alongside us... what's to be afraid of? Death should be afraid. Jesus is with us. Death itself falls apart and lies in ruins. For anyone who trusts in Christ, life does not stop at death. It isn't even slowed or hindered in the slightest. No, life continues except only in a greatly improved and superior way.

A Bach chorale that I sang in college choir declares: *Death! Death! I do not fear thee, though thou standest near me. Grave! Grave! I calmly spurn thee, though to dust thou turn me!* Let Christ's shout of salvation cheer your heart and calm your dread of death. For He is fearless and He promises to lead us from life into life. Amen.