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Jesus.....Our High Priest

Hebrews 4:14-15

Prayer: *Father, I just want to praise you and thank you for this day and again, I just pray for your grace, your goodness, and your wisdom. I pray that you would make this buzzing go away, and I pray for those fellows trying to do that. I just pray that you would just grant us this day the ability to open up your word, the ability to understand it, and the ability to, again, use it in our lives to make it a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Okay. Well, we have spent the last few weeks as you well know looking at the idea of God's perceived absence, and we've been doing a series and the series is called "Now You See Me, Now You Don't," and we've been examining just how it is that God grows faith in his children. And we stated that God's perceived absence is normative, that is it's not unusual, it's not strange, it's not odd to be in a position where your sense is that God is absent, where your sense is that you simply can't find him. Secondly, we said that it is necessary. Because we are children of Adam, we no

longer have the ability to relate to a perfect God in a state of our own perfection. Adam and Eve's rebellion changed their nature and ours so that we can no longer stand in the presence of God. God told Moses whom he regarded as a friend that to see him fully would cause him, that is Moses, to die. He said to Moses in *Exodus 33:20*, he said: *"You cannot see My face, for no one can see Me and live."* And thirdly, we discovered that God's perceived absence is natural. You see, God wants nothing more than to develop in us a life of faith, a life that is not governed by what our senses tell us. He says very clearly what that consists of in *2 Corinthians 5:7*. He says: *For we walk by faith, not by sight.* In *Hebrews 11:1* he says: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* Well, we develop the conviction of things not seen more in God's perceived absence than we do in his presence. As children of God, we recognize the great truth of *Romans 8:28*, that God causes all things to work together for good. You've all heard that many, many times. And the good that God has in mind here is not necessarily health, wealth or worldly success, they are not what makes, in God's eyes, the good. For that we only have to go forward one verse to *Romans 8:29* which says: *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.* See, God directs every single event in our life towards one specific end, towards one specific purpose, and that is that each of us would uniquely reflect the image of his Son.

And for the last five weeks we've been examining how God's timing, how his agenda, and how his discipline all work together with each of our unique life stories to produce in us that very thing. We've been looking at how God has worked out these things in the lives of his saints. We've examined the life of Abraham to see how God's timing could make us sense that somehow or other he has ignored or abandoned us, and we saw in Abraham that God's timing and our timing is vastly different. You know, the Eastern approach to time divides the day into four parts, it divides into morning, noon, evening, and night. For us Westerners that is way, way too crude. See, we in the West have reached the stage where we are literally slaves of time. We divide days into hours, we divide hours into minutes, minutes into seconds, and now many of our watches break seconds down into tenths of seconds. Well, God's approach to time is obviously rooted far more in the East than it is in the West. But even more so God tells us in *2 Peter 3:8* that: *With the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.* We saw God promise to Abraham that he would have a son and then deliver on that promise some two and a half decades later. We saw God drive Moses out of the court of Pharaoh into the wilderness and then go silent for 40 years. Joseph sat for over two years in a jail cell falsely accused of rape. And in each case, God was actively at work every single day, shaping and molding the lives of his saints according to his timetable and not ours. I pointed out

that probably half of the people that I counsel with who are convinced that God has somehow abandoned or ignored them are really just victims of the way we in the West look at time. And I tell folks all the time that God is not willing to adapt to our way of wanting everything yesterday and that he insists that we understand time as he does, and often times that is far, far slower than we are happy with. And that doesn't mean that God is even remotely absent. It just means that we need to be far more patient.

And secondly, we looked at the problems of God's perceived absence and understanding God's twofold agenda for each of our lives. See, God is not only shaping and molding us into the image of his Son, he is also using each of us uniquely to advance his kingdom on earth. And sometimes God works that agenda in ways that suggest to us "now you see me, now you don't." And we saw that, we saw that in the life of Joseph. I mean, God's will for Joseph was that he would move from being this simple shepherd boy to being the vice regent in all of Egypt, responsible for saving the lives of the nation of Israel. But to accomplish that, God's agenda for Joseph included abandonment, kidnapping, enslavement, a false accusation of rape and imprisonment. All of these events were precisely orchestrated in Joseph's life and yet walking through them day by day must have been incredibly difficult for Joseph. Well, sometimes it is God's agenda in our lives that gives us pause, that

makes us think that somehow God has abandoned us when God may simply be moving his puzzle pieces around in a particular way so that you and I could not only grow our faith but also advance the kingdom. And what God wants from us is what he wanted from Joseph, it's the ability to trust him long enough to see that he really did have Joseph's back all along.

And thirdly, we looked at God's perceived absence in the way he disciplines us. I pointed out that God's discipline is never, never done in anger and that God makes it very clear that he chose us before the very foundations of the earth were ever established and that he paid for our sins over 2,000 years ago while he hung on the cross so that every sin you and I would ever commit, it was 2,000 years in the future when Jesus paid our penalty. And God makes that clear in *Romans 5:6*, he says: *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* For reasons known only to God he has chosen to fix his love on you and me as his children, and he is determined to shape and mold us into the very image of his Son by disciplining us. That's not fun. *Hebrews 12* says: *For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the*

peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. I pointed out last week that young Gideon needed an orthopedic brace because his leg was growing in the wrong direction. So we, too, are born in the wrong direction by sin. We are bent that way because of our fallen nature, and God uses his discipline to re-bend us in the right direction. I pointed out that Gideon may well have interpreted his brace as punishment because he's too young to understand that it was simply necessary for his own good. And so, too, we often misinterpret God's discipline as punishment. We assume that an angry God is taking out his anger on us when it is far more that a loving God is simply re-bending our lives heavenward rather than earthward. And we've seen Abraham, Joseph and the apostle Paul grow and develop lives of genuine faith as they responded to God's perceived absence.

Well, this morning I want to apply this same "now you see me, now you don't" approach, but I want to apply it to the Lord Jesus Christ. *Hebrews 4 says this: Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. God is saying there is nothing, there's nothing that his children will ever go through that he has not gone through as well. And this*

applies to God's timing, it applies to God's agenda, and it applies to God's discipline. The timing goes right back to our notion of the way that God uses time. I mean we know that even before the moment that Adam and Eve fell, God had a plan in place to rescue his people, and that plan was going to take thousands of years to fulfill. I mean, Adam and Eve were tempted by a serpent who told them that if they only rebelled against God and disobeyed him in this one area that he required of them, that they would not eat the forbidden fruit, that they, too, would be like God. And after they ate the fruit, their eyes were opened and they realized that they were naked and they had been duped into committing treason against the God who created them. God dealt with the serpent shortly thereafter, and this is what he said in *Genesis 3:14*. He says: *The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* See, way back in the Garden of Eden God made a promise. He told the serpent that there was going to be permanent warfare between him and the offspring of the woman because the offspring of the woman would be God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, who would meet and defeat Satan himself. And what follows next is literally thousands of years of ancient history.

We see Abraham being called out, we see the Jewish nation tested and tried through Moses, through David, through Joseph and all the patriarchs and the kings and all of it is according to God's timetable which is grinding forward ever so slowly. You know, if a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day, well, then God is waiting patiently four to six days or 4- to 6,000 years until the birth of Jesus who is the one born of a woman who would ultimately crush Satan. And God describes it this way in *Galatians 4:4*, he says: *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

Now if you look at Jesus's life, you'll see that it, too, follows the same pattern as Moses and Abraham and Joseph. We see God being quite willing to have Jesus labor in obscurity for some 30 full years before he begins a public ministry that only lasted three. We get introduced to Jesus's absolute submission to God's timing in an incident that we see that took place when Jesus was only twelve years old. See, the scripture says that Jesus grew in knowledge and understanding. It says that he learned obedience through suffering. It paints a portrait of Jesus voluntarily choosing to discover his mission by understanding what the Spirit revealed to him through scripture, by having to discover on his own through the very same scripture that we have, the full extent of his identity

as Messiah. Well, that included understanding God's timing in his life. I mean we know that at the age of 12 Jesus had already discovered through the scripture his unique relationship with his father and the role that he would have in reconciling the world to himself. We also know that his understanding caused a substantive break with his earthly parents over his true father. If you remember in Luke 2, there's this story of the boy Jesus in the temple. You know, Mary and Joseph and Jesus, they go up, they've gone up to the Passover ceremony in Jerusalem, and somehow or other in the confusion of the caravan, Mary and Joseph both leave, each thinking the other has Jesus. And after three days in a complete panic, they return to the temple and there they find Jesus, this young boy of 12, and he's instructing the great leaders in the law. Now Jesus had been attending the Passover celebration and it had meant so much more to him than it did to the Jews who were attending it because Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the scripture, understood exactly what the Passover was about. See, the Jews thought they were just remembering their escape from Egypt and you know all about that, it was an escape marked by the worse of the ten plagues when the angel of death swept into Egypt killing all the firstborn but passing over -- that's where Passover came from -- but passing over all those protected by the blood of a lamb that had been smeared on their doorpost. They didn't realize that they were picturing the

sacrifice of the Lamb of God on the cross whose blood alone would save us from death itself. You know, it was said that during the Passover celebrations in Jerusalem that the stream that ran past the temple turned completely red with the blood of all of the lambs that were being slaughtered. Well, only that 12-year-old boy in the temple understood that all of that blood was a picture of his blood. It was a picture of his blood that would be shed for sins to be paid for. You see, by the time Jesus had reached the age of 12, he had come to fully grasp the enormity of who he was. *Luke 2* describes it, it says: *After three days -- this is his parents -- they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. Jesus's earthly parents, they didn't get it. They didn't understand but Jesus at age twelve did. He fully understood that twelve years earlier he had left heaven itself to enter into the womb of a peasant woman and be born in a barn in Bethlehem. See, Jesus had come to fully realize that he was the Messiah come to earth and that he had the very mind of God inside the body of a*

12-year-old boy. Solomon was considered to be the wisest man who ever lived, and we have Michelangelo and da Vinci and Einstein and maybe even Stephen Hawking who this world considers to be extraordinary geniuses. Their minds were barely a thimbleful compared to the limitless oceans of wisdom that was inside the mind of this little 12-year-old boy. But Jesus also understood God's timing and he was completely obedient to it. The prophet Isaiah thousands of years before had predicted this about Messiah in *Isaiah 42*. He said this: *Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street.* Jesus at age 12 had every opportunity to cry aloud, to lift up his voice, to be heard in the street. At age 12, Jesus was astounding the teachers, but Jesus was completely obedient to God's sense of timing. *Luke 2:51* says: *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. That's his parents. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.* Understand something, Jesus had the greatest teachers in Jerusalem hanging on to his every word. I mean he could have begun his earthly ministry right then and there at the center of Jewish thought and culture at the actual temple. He would have been instantly famous. Well, the scripture says he did otherwise. *Then He went down with them and*

came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother kept all of these things in her heart.

Now, do you know anything about Nazareth? Do you know anything about what it cost Jesus to go back to Nazareth? We know a little bit, the scripture gives a little bit about that town. And when Jesus was first calling his apostles he found Philip and Philip found Nathanael and Nathanael was appalled, appalled to find that this Jesus that he had heard of had come from Nazareth. This is what Nathanael said about Nazareth in *John 1:45*, it says: *Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth!" "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael asked him. "Come and see," Philip answered. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"* John Gills in the 18th century wrote a commentary. He said this: "The whole country of Galilee was had in contempt with the Jews; but Nazareth was so mean a place, that it seems it was even despised by its neighbours, by the Galilaeans themselves; for Nathanael was a Galilean, that said these words. It was so miserable a place that he could hardly think that any sort of good thing, even any worldly good thing, could come from thence."

So instead of staying in his father's house in the temple in

Jerusalem with all of its grandeur, the boy Jesus returns to Nazareth with his stepparents Mary and Joseph. And do you know why? It's because Jesus was determined to live by his father's timetable and not the world's. This 12-year-old boy was the most brilliant genius the world and the universe would ever know. He was astounding the greatest teachers in Israel and yet even though his own mother and Joseph didn't even understand him, Jesus leaves the temple with them. The temple could have been the launching place for a worldwide ministry of fame and power. But Jesus goes back to a life of absolute and complete obscurity working in a carpenter's shop for his stepfather. And we go back to Isaiah's prophesy: *He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street.* So for 18 more years, Jesus submits to God's timing and he serves his earthly parents. And you have to put that into perspective or think the one who laid the cornerstone of earth itself is planing boards for his stepfather. The creator of Orion or the chain of Pleiades is doing household chores for his mother. You know, the humility and submission and obedience of Jesus is literally incomprehensible. And he is our model. He's the one whose image we are being shaped into. Now we might be tempted to say if Jesus could turn the whole world upside down and he did it in only three years, then why did God wait 30 years before opening the door to his public ministry? Only God knows God's timing. But suffice it to say that Jesus himself was subject to that timing as

are you and me.

Next was God's agenda in Jesus's life. And there were three different aspects to God's agenda for Jesus. Number one, he was to bring light into the darkness; number two, he was to bring sight to the blind; and number three, he was to bring life to those who were dead. First the light. *Matthew 4:16* says: "*The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.*" See, God referred to the world before Jesus arrived as literally the darkness. That's what he referred to the world as. That's what the world is without Jesus. Mankind is left to an animal existence just like Darwin defined it. If you're strong, you're going to survive, you're going to thrive, but you do so on an animal level by exacting pain and death on those who are not as strong as you and that's just the way life goes for animals. We just have a more sophisticated system, but it's the exact same thing for humans. And this world makes perfect sense if you understand that there was a war in heaven and that that great angel Satan was cast out and that he landed here on earth and he made this place his kingdom. He's the essence of darkness. And his essence defines this world without Jesus. *John 1:4* says: "*In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*" The darkness certainly could not

overcome the light, but understand the problem, the problem was mankind was fallen. The fall had so changed our nature that we wanted nothing to do with God and his light. We embraced the darkness because as fallen creatures, it was natural for us. After all it was the darkness that hid our wickedness and so we welcomed the darkness. *John 3:19* says: *"And this is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil."* Well, Jesus was the light of the world coming into a world that decided that darkness was its preference. You want to talk about a difficult agenda? God entered into a world of darkness that was antithetical to the world of light that he had occupied and he had occupied it for all of time. And the people that he came to serve hated, they hated the light that he was.

Well, the second part of God's agenda in Jesus's life he stated very clearly at the beginning of his ministry. He said he was there to give sight to the blind. This is how Jesus began his public ministry according to *Luke 4*, it says: *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good*

news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and he gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Now it is fascinating to think of how tied into God's timing and God's agenda Jesus was as he read this scroll, because what you might not realize is that Jesus was actually editing what he was reading. See, as he's reading Isaiah, he makes a pause, it's a cosmic comma, if you will, it's a comma that's lasted over 2,000 years. It was a comma in what God's agenda was to be. Let me read you the actual quote from Isaiah. It says: *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor.* So far so good, that's exactly what Jesus read. But then he left out this part: *And the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.* See, Jesus stopped before that sentence because he knew God's agenda was for him to come first as the Lamb of God sent to this world to take on its sin. He also knew quite well that he was coming back no longer as lamb but as the lion of the tribe of Judah, come to exact God's just punishment on a world that rejected and slaughtered him. God is going to come back and justify and

rectify all those who had cause to mourn during their lives, but for now, Jesus understood that his job was to open up the eyes of the blind.

The third part of God's agenda for him was to bring life to those who were dead. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus said this in *John 11:25*, he said: *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."* We all know this Jesus literally raised the dead. And when he brought Lazarus out of the grave, the response of the Pharisees to this miracle, it was not worship, it was not even an acknowledgment of the obvious. You see, the extent of the darkness that Jesus was willing to step into is revealed by the reaction of the Pharisees to Jesus's actual raising of someone from the dead, someone who was rotting, someone who when Jesus said, "Open it up," his sister said, "But, Lord, he stinketh" and there he was alive. Well, the response of the Pharisees to this miracle defines how deep the darkness is that all of us were part of by the fact that we're living in this world. This was the Pharisees' reaction in *John 11:39*, they said: *"What are we to do? for this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."* So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. See, when faced with

the obvious proof that this Jesus has the power to raise someone from the dead, they decide that instead of worshiping him, they're going to kill him. That's the world that Jesus entered into. That's the agenda that God had Jesus attend to.

Jesus willingly attended to God's sense of timing and he obediently kept God's agenda. And finally, Jesus willingly submitted to God's discipline. When you think about this, you might have the same problem that I had when I started first considering this, and that is, how do you discipline someone who's perfect? I mean the very idea of discipline implies something less than perfect, something that needs to be corrected. You can say the same thing about obedience in the scripture in *Hebrews 5:8* says: *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.* How could Jesus even need to learn obedience? I mean doesn't that imply some level of disobedience that needs to be corrected? Well, no. You see, what God is referring to here is learning and knowing and understanding by experience. I can read a dozen books about Greco Roman wrestling, I can learn all of the terms, I can study all of the moves, I can even learn the strategies, but none of that head knowledge can compare to what I learn when I actually get in the ring and start wrestling. There's a huge difference between knowing something and experiencing something. And Jesus learning obedience through what he suffered does not mean that he went from

some state of disobedience to obedience. It means he learned by experience what it means to continue to trust in his Father even as he suffered. He's our model. He is our model for enduring discipline.

Just before Jesus began his public ministry he experienced something absolutely horrific, something that was a necessary discipline in order for him to truly experience as a man something he already knew as God. You might say this was Jesus's first taste of "now you see me, now you don't," and the gospel of Mark describes it. This is *Mark 1:9*, it says: *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God. See, Jesus as our high priest had to experience everything, everything that we as human beings experience and that includes temptation. Right after his baptism, God acknowledges how pleased he is with his beloved son, but then it says that the Holy Spirit then drove him -- didn't*

say "led him," it said drove him into the wilderness. Jesus spent forty days absolutely alone. Well not alone, he was surrounded by a habitation of demons. And they were confronting him one on one and he did it so that he could know by experience what we know every time we are tempted. This was the point of God's discipline for Jesus. Time and again, Jesus would learn by experience what it feels like to learn obedience through suffering. He would learn by experience what it feels like to be lied about, to be mocked, to be misunderstood, to be abandoned, to be betrayed. And that discipline also included now you see me, now you don't. And no one has ever undergone that discipline the way Jesus has.

Jesus once said in *John 16:32*: "*Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*" Even that for Jesus was temporary. There would come a time when Jesus would take on our sin and because of that sin, he had to be utterly rejected by his Father. *Psalm 22* expresses his agony at that, says: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel.* Those verses have a great deal to teach us about the nature of God and of his communication with his son. And

here Jesus is beginning to flesh out for us some of what "now you see me, now you don't" meant to him. You see, for us God's absence is a matter of, okay, we don't get God's timing, we don't get his agenda, we don't get God's discipline. For him it was all about God's abandonment. Not only was Jesus thrust into the outer darkness, he was thrust away from his Father's presence and completely cut off. He was exactly what that word means when we say "God forsaken." Jesus is using the words that David spoke when he wrote Psalm 22 to express what it felt like not only being forsaken but being cut off. Jesus details what it feels like to have the lines of communication suddenly go dead. *"Why are you so far from helping me?"* Jesus asks, *"and from the words of my groaning?"* The word "groaning" can also be translated "roaring" or "moaning." So you had to picture Jesus thrust into outer darkness desperately calling for help. And picture him repeating that call again and again and seeing and hearing absolutely no response. This was no longer God's perceived absence, this was the real thing. Picture Jesus's cry descending into an agonized muddled groan that sounded almost animal like. Now picture a split screen and you've got the Son on one side thrust out and he's sore amazed at the horror of it and he's desperately crying for help. And the Father's on the other side and he has no choice but to turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to the cries of his Son because his perfect son has now become sin itself. Now hear what Jesus next says in *Psalm*

22:2. He says: *"O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season and am not silent.* And then he says this: *"But You are holy."* See, Jesus is making a statement of fact of what was actually taking place and he's also making a theological statement here that is extraordinarily profound and it is something I think we often miss. You know, so many of us have an understanding of God that thinks that if we do our job, you know, if I'm a good Christian man or a good Christian woman, then he's got to do his job of making sure that my life works like I think it's supposed to work. That's not a relationship. That's a contractual agreement. You see, I do my part, and God better do his or one of us has failed. It makes matters far worse many times when life is failing to work like we think it should and God also appears to be failing to work like we think he should, and sometimes it seems that the worst of time we think God just simply checks out, the heavens turn to brass and I'm praying to a wall. Sometimes Jesus's words in *Psalm 22* perfectly mirror our feelings about God. Sometimes we, too, cry out, *"O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear."* You know it's those five words that give us a taste of the realm of the God forsaken. We feel frustrated and fearful and perhaps we think we're the only ones who feel like that when we cry out in the daytime, God doesn't hear. Now you see me, now I'm gone. I would ask you to hear what Jesus is telling us in these verses. Jesus had a perfectly unbroken and

eternal fellowship with the Father. It was shattered by the cross. He's telling us in verse 2 that he knows what it feels like to cry out to God and to hear nothing in response. *"Why are you so far from helping me and from the words of my groaning,"* asks Jesus. Well, if you've ever felt that way, just consider how Jesus felt and consider where he was when he felt that. He had been beaten to a bloody pulp, scourged almost to death, abandoned by every one of his friends, stripped naked and then nailed through his hands and his feet to a cross and placed on display to amuse his enemies. Worse, he had now become the very embodiment of evil. It is there that his cry for help goes up to his Father who cannot respond and so it bounces back like an empty echo. And Jesus is left groaning to an empty sky.

We know how Jesus's story ended. His sacrifice was accepted and three days later he rose from the dead, having triumphantly ransomed and rescued us from the penalty of death. We know he knows what "now you see me, now you don't" feels like. And so the next time you and I are in the midst of experiencing it, we need to do one thing and one thing only, we need to go to the cross. I've often said if there's any human being that has suffered physically, mentally and spiritually more than Jesus did, if that person suffered more than he did, then he would have the right to say to Jesus you were not in all points tempted as I was because I was.

But no one can ever say that. Our high priest knows exactly how we feel because he's been there and he's done that. And no matter what it is we have suffered, Jesus has experienced it.

Our take away from all of this is this: When "now you see me, now you don't" extends to God's timing, we model ourselves after Jesus and we ask for the patience to wait. When it extends to God's agenda, we ask for God's wisdom and trust that he's working out our place in the kingdom for our good and for his glory. And when it extends to God's discipline, we look to the cross and we understand that Jesus paid it all includes any feeling of abandonment we might feel. And so we ask God for the grace to endure his discipline, knowing that in the end it will produce the fruit of righteousness. Bottom line is we simply trust Jesus and we trust him for this very reason: *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.* Let's pray.

Father, we just praise you for who you are. We praise you for the gift of your Son. And Lord, I think of Jesus working out your timing, your agenda, and your discipline in his own life and the exquisite torment that he went through on our behalf, the abandonment that he suffered. Lord, I just again thank you and praise you for him, thank you and praise you for you being willing

to give us to him. We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.