

# Sermon Note: I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

### Introduction

This week in **God Is In the Radio**, we enter a quieter, more difficult space: the ache of loneliness, the weight of sorrow, the absence of answers. Psalm 22 opens with a cry that's both ancient and familiar: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" It's a question that still echoes—not only in scripture, and in us.

To help us sit with that question, we're listening to "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," a song made famous by Hank Williams and reimagined by others over the decades. With only a few verses and no chorus, it unfolds like a whispered prayer from someone who doesn't expect a reply. It doesn't offer resolution. It offers honesty. Some weeks, the Spirit moves with fire and wind. Other weeks, it shows up in silence—and stays a while.

This week's message isn't about rushing through the hard parts. It's about naming them. Because even when God feels absent, the act of crying out is still an act of faith. And sometimes, the most sacred thing we can do is tell the truth.

### Illustration Videos

"I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" - Hank Williams

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WXYjm74WFI>

Original recording, paired with archival photos in a fan-made video.

"I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" - Cowboy Junkies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJt9KFyJnbk>

Official artist video featuring a slower, more meditative interpretation.

This week's illustration includes two versions of "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry." The original, performed by Hank Williams, is sparse and emotionally direct. A fan-made video pairs it with black-and-white photos of Williams that echo the song's stark beauty. The Cowboy Junkies' version slows the tempo, deepens the mood, and draws out the ache of each line—turning lament into something almost liturgical.

Neither video includes on-screen lyrics, but both invite deep listening—not just to the words, but to the silence between them.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. How did you experience the two versions of the song differently? Did one feel more emotionally resonant than the other? Why?
2. The song never builds to a chorus or resolution. How does that shape your experience of its message?
3. Which image or lyric stayed with you the most—and what emotion did it stir?

4. Psalm 22 begins with a cry of abandonment. Do any lines from the song echo that kind of spiritual or emotional loneliness?
5. The song doesn't explain the cause of the sorrow—it simply names it. How might that be a form of honesty or even faith?
6. What role do silence and space play in the Cowboy Junkies' version? How do they contribute to the emotional tone?
7. In both versions, the melody avoids resolution until the very end—or never resolves at all. How might that mirror real-life experiences of grief or isolation?
8. How do you respond to songs—or people—that stay in sadness without offering a solution? Is that difficult for you? Why or why not?
9. What does it mean to say that lament can be sacred? How might that reframe the way we think about expressing sorrow in spiritual life?

### **Psalm 22:1-11 (NRSVue)**

<sup>1</sup>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

<sup>2</sup>O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
and by night but find no rest.

<sup>3</sup>Yet you are holy,  
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

<sup>4</sup>In you our ancestors trusted;  
they trusted, and you delivered them.

<sup>5</sup>To you they cried and were saved;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

<sup>6</sup>But I am a worm and not human,  
scorned by others and despised by the people.

<sup>7</sup>All who see me mock me;  
they sneer at me; they shake their heads;

<sup>8</sup>“Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—  
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

<sup>9</sup>Yet it was you who took me from the womb;  
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.

<sup>10</sup>On you I was cast from my birth,  
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

<sup>11</sup>Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near,  
and there is no one to help.

### **Scripture Study Questions**

1. Psalm 22 begins with a cry of absence: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” How do you respond to that kind of raw honesty in scripture?

2. In verses 3–5, the psalmist recalls the faith of their ancestors. Why do you think this memory is important in the midst of despair?
3. The psalm shifts between complaint and trust. What does that say about the nature of faith?
4. In verses 6–8, the psalmist describes deep humiliation and mockery. How might this help us understand the emotional and spiritual layers of suffering?
5. The psalmist cries out “Do not be far from me” in verse 11. What does that prayer mean to you in times when God feels distant?
6. Psalm 22 is quoted by Jesus on the cross. How does that connection shape your understanding of divine empathy or presence in suffering?
7. This part of the psalm ends without resolution. How do you sit with scriptures—or seasons in life—that don’t yet offer closure?

### **Weekly Action**

Set aside a quiet moment this week—during a walk, over coffee, before bed—and gently ask yourself: What grief am I carrying that I haven’t spoken aloud? It might be emotional, spiritual, or even physical. It might be vague or sharp, recent or long-held. You don’t have to solve it or explain it. Just acknowledge it. Write it down, whisper it in prayer, or let it rest quietly in your heart.

Then, think of someone else who might be carrying something of their own. Consider contacting them as a moment of connection. It could be a text, a call, or an invitation to sit together in quiet companionship. You don’t need the right words. Sometimes presence is enough.

### **Prayer**

God of sorrow and silence, you hear the cries we don’t always speak. When we feel forgotten, when your presence seems distant, when hope grows thin—still, you do not turn away. Teach us that lament is not weakness. It is trust enough to tell the truth. Be near to those who are lonely. Hold those who are hurting. And when we have no words left, let our tears be prayer enough. As we pray this day, we do not ask for quick answers. We ask for your presence. Be near, O God. Be near. Amen.