

“The Seven Last Words from the Cross”

Jesus said 7 things as He hung from the cross.

One of which we already heard in our reading from Matthew’s gospel ---- the fourth word ----- “Matthew 27 verse 46 ---- “My God --- My God ---- why have you forsaken me?”

And we will conclude our service with a video called --- “It is finished.” ----- the sixth last words from the cross.

If you look in your bulletin you’ll find an insert including the 7 things Jesus said as He hung from the cross.

And so this morning we’re going to explore these ---- “7 last words from the cross”.

The First Word:

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

Luke 23:34

Father, forgive.

Jesus speaks the first words from the cross not to us but to God.

For three years He has spoken to us ---- preached, taught, exhorted, instructed us.

Now ---- as we have hung Him up to die --- Jesus, turning away from us ---- speaks to His Father.

“Father, forgive.”

Having been those who once were directly addressed --- we are now rendered into bystanders ---- overhearers of a conversation deep in the heart of the Trinity.

Now --- at the end ---- the once adorning crowds are gone.

No one is left to listen to Jesus but the Father.

And the word He speaks is a word that only God can dare to say to God --- for only God can forgive.

These are words for God.

God knows everything ---- but we are limited.

God can forgive everything --- but we are so often limited in our ability to forgive.

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

The Second Word:

“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Luke 23:43

Today --- paradise.

Jesus speaks the second words from the cross not to us but to a criminal.

He bypasses us and turns to the thief.

He ---- who was forever instructing his followers ---- He who was always in prayer to His Father, now converses with a crook --- in the disarmingly present tense.

Both Jesus and the thief were on their way to sure and certain death and therefore on their way to whatever life happens after death.

It sure didn't look like paradise from where they were hanging.

When Jesus speaks of “Paradise” --- He is not talking so much of a place where they may go someday ---- as He is a relationship that they entered that very day.

Today --- paradise.

A relationship they entered that day ---- now ---- in the present.

“Truly I tell you ----- today you will be with me in paradise.”

The Third Word:

“Woman here is your son. Son here is your mother.”

John 19:26-27

Family was always a challenge for Jesus.

As a baby His paternity was in question --- who was his real father?
His birth was an embarrassment for many --- and a mystery ---- an unwed
mother --- and a virgin at that.

When He grew up He and His mother were at a wedding --- and when the
wine runs out she asks for help --- and He replies ---- John 2 verse 4 ----
“Woman, what does this have to do with you or me?” --- not exactly the
kindest tone to take with dear old Mom.

In Matthew 10 He said ----- “I’ve come to turn father against son, and
mother against daughter” ---- and at times He did just this.

So ---- on the cross --- Jesus once again gets into it with His mother.

“Woman, behold thy son,” ----- He says to her.

Mary look at the child you are losing ---- the son that you are giving over for
the sins of the world.

It’s not easy being the mother of the Son of God.

Thankfully maternal love -- is love that loves ---- in order to give away.

But this is only the first part ----- “Woman here is your son” ----- the second
part is ----- “Son here is your mother.”

When Jesus says --- “Son here is your mother.” ----- it’s far more than just -
----- “John, do me a favour and look after my Mom when I’m gone.”

When Jesus says ---- “Son here is your mother.” ----- He’s saying “Mother
I’m giving you a new son --- and son, behold your new mother.”

Jesus ---- the one who disrupted conventional families --- is --- on the cross -
---- forming a new one.

As we all gather ---- here today ---- now ---- at the foot of the cross of Christ
----- we are each others siblings ----- brothers and sisters in Christ ---- we
are a new family ---- a family of faith.

He who had no conventional family ----- is busy forming the largest family
the world has ever known ---- even as He hangs on the cross.

The Fourth Word:

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Matthew 27:46

What words --- what terribly frightening words ----- this middle dark word
from the cross --- “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

This is the word that sets all the other words in context.

Dereliction --- loss ---- and abandonment --- words of doubt even.
Hardly the words that one expects from the Son of God ---- the Messiah.

The fourth word couldn't have been the first word ---- or we likely wouldn't
hang around for the other 6.

And yet curiously these words --- “My God, my God, why have you
forsaken me?” ----- are words of hope.

In our darkest times ----- times of deep despair --- maybe we too have
blurted out some words similar to these ----- in anguish and pain.

To hear these words upon the lips of our Lord --- is well ---- great comfort.

Of course these are not words original to Jesus --- they come from the 22nd
Psalm.

Theses words ----- “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” --- are
words Jesus learned in “Sunday School.”

Jesus turns --- returns to them --- just as we often return to familiar phrases and passages when we're at our wits end.

These words go something like ----- "God, where are you? ---- God ----- where are you? ----- I need you now."

In a moment of great despair Jesus turns to a phrase He learned at the Temple ----- at Sunday School.

Only a God who loved ---- who loves ----- forever and always ----- would be caught dead on a cross.

Today is not a day to theorize how we are saved by Jesus on the cross.

In listening to these seven last words of our Lord ---- we tell a story --- and relive a powerful ----sacrificial --- and saving reality.

Today we sit ----- and behold our salvation on the cross.

Today we gaze upon God's love and compassion ----- we experience it rather than trying to understand it.

Even when we feel all alone ---- even when we find it difficult to see God in our circumstances ----- He is there ---- and always.

He doesn't ever forsake us.

The Fifth Word:

"I am thirsty."

John 19:28

How can it be that the Son of God --- the second person of the Trinity ---- would be thirsty?

The previous words ---- "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" --- ----- were theological.

Now, as Jesus suffocates and bleeds to death ----- we turn to physical things ----- “I’m thirsty.”

It may be possible to think of Christianity as something only spiritual ----- ethereal ----- floating off into never never land ----- that is until we gaze upon this body ----- nails through sinew and flesh --- spear in side --- blood and thirst.

Hanging on the cross --- Jesus first speaks to his Father about forgiveness --- -- then He quotes from the 22nd Psalm ----- and addresses His mother and Disciple ---- and now He states a personal need ----- this is His first self referential remark ----- “I am thirsty.”

These words are a powerful reminder that Jesus is in the flesh ---- human.

His suffering is real --- just as real --- and painful and challenging as when we suffer.

As Christians we are not just spiritual beings --- we are physical ones too ---- this in the Incarnation.

But this ----- “I am thirsty.” ----- means far more than just I am human.

This ---- “I am thirsty.” ---- also speaks to the deep craving thirst for justice.

This ---- “I am thirsty.” ---- also speaks to the great thirst God has for us born out of His profound love for us.

The Sixth Word:

“It is finished.”

John 19:30

The sixth word is a word of completion and resolution.

When Jesus says ----- “It is finished.” ---- it can be read as words of desperate surrender --- a final relenting capitulation ----- “I give up.”

Yes ----- it can be read this way.

But in truth this isn't the case.

When Jesus says ---- "It is finished." ----- it is not a statement about surrender ----- or giving up.

When Jesus says ---- "It is finished." ----- it is completion ---- it is fulfillment ----- it is achievement even.

When Michelangelo finished the last touches on the Sistine Chapel --- he likely said something like this ---- "It is finished." ----- as in completion not surrender --- or ----- "I give up."

Jesus has fought the good fight --- and despite what some people may have thought ---- and still think -----

Soldiers ---- politicians ----- the howling mob in his day ----- secular humanists ----- skeptics ----- atheists in our day ----- despite what they think ---- the truth is Jesus did it ---- His work ----- His ministry was completed --- fulfilled ---- finished.

After all He did say ---- "It is finished." ----- and **NOT** ----- "I am finished."

The Seventh Word ---- The Final Word:

"Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit."

Luke 23:46

With this final word ----- Christ commits His life ---- and His death ----- to God.

We're at the end.

And at the end ---- when Jesus breathed His very last ----- He resumes the crucifixion conversation that He began with His Father.

He began with --- "Father, forgive them." ----- and He ends with ---- "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit."

Jesus does in His death precisely what He did throughout His life ----- committed himself into God's keeping.

He didn't simply die ---- it's the way He died.

He didn't die in His sleep --- they didn't put a bullet in His head or spear in His gut as He preached the kingdom of God ----- His anguish wasn't the last word.

His last word is giving over ----- commending --- and committing.

So now Jesus rests silent ----- He's said all He's going to say ---- at least with words.

Jesus is now silent ----- without having ended the lesson ---- He is silent.

Here ---- on the cross ----- is a story ---- a saving reality ----- so cosmic ---- so severe ----- so awful and tragic ----- so beautiful ----- and mysterious ---- ----- that only God knows how to end it.

How long will we have to wait for God to end this story?

Well ----- at least 3 days.

For now ---- on this day ----- we've heard Jesus' last word.

“Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.”

Pray to God that we might have the grace ----- and faith ---- to make it our words too ---- our prayer.

“Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.”

Amen

