

John Makey adapted from Pastor Larry Florh

Good Friday, April 10, 2020

Christ's 7 last words from the cross

THE FIRST WORD FROM THE CROSS - Forgiveness

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Throughout His trial Jesus did not complain. He did not strike back with His tongue at the evil that was hurled at Him. He was silent, except when it was necessary to witness to the truth or proclaim the honor of God. Yet, hanging on the cross, He spoke treasured words. The first words were words of intercession. But for whom were they spoken? They were spoken for the soldiers who had taken Him in the Garden of Gethsemane as well as for those who had borne false witness against Him. They were spoken for the High Priest and the crowd that called for His crucifixion. Included were Pilate and Herod, and also those who crucified Him and mocked Him at the cross. They were spoken for all who denied and rejected Him as the Savior, the Messiah. Even as He prayed, Jesus witnessed to His relationship to God. He called Him, **“Father”**. He did not say to the people at the cross, “I forgive you.” The offenses against Him were directed at the Father who had sent Him. He implored the Father to forgive them, and thus showed that He had not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. When the crowd cried **“crucify Him”**, Jesus responded **“Forgive them, Father.”** When our conscience cries out against us because we have sinned, Jesus’ words still echo across the centuries, “Father, forgive them.” The message of the Gospel is this: “Where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation.” All who recognize the terrible burden of sin and its eternal consequence are thankful for the price Jesus paid for which reason the Father graciously forgives our sin. It makes sense that the first word Jesus spoke from the cross is a word of forgiveness. That’s the whole point of the cross, after all. **Jesus died so that we might be forgiven for our sins, so that we might be reconciled to God and live with Him for eternity.**

THE SECOND WORD FROM THE CROSS - Salvation

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43).

“And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on His right and one on His left”, (Luke 23:33). Now it is not just the religious leaders or the soldiers that mock Jesus, but even one of the criminals, a downward progression of mockery. Around the cross were representatives of all kinds of people. There were the proud, the self-righteous, the scoffers, and mockers. There were people sympathetic to Jesus. They were all there by choice. But

then there were two others who were not there by choice, who were suffering the same punishment as Jesus, though for a different reason. They were convicted criminals who were not there by choice, but whose life choices put them there. The one criminal mocked Jesus from the cross. He died with cursing on his lips. What a horrible way to die! But the criminal on the right spoke up for Jesus, explaining that the two criminals were receiving their just due, whereas “this man has done nothing wrong”. He was won by the power of the cross. He had heard the first word of Jesus in which Jesus implored the Father to forgive His crucifiers. “And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom”.” (Luke 23:42). The criminal who was facing death hanging alongside Jesus spoke from the heart. He confessed his sin and unworthiness. Isaiah 53:12 says that Jesus would be numbered with the transgressors, and indeed, He died on a hill between two thieves. But these thieves represent two classes of people with one thing in common: They were both helpless sinners. The two of them represent all of us. We have all rebelled against God in various ways. We are all guilty of sin and deserving of death. Yet one of the criminals being crucified asked to be remembered. Jesus’ response is also a comfort to us. This man did not plead his works or any righteousness of his own. How could he? He had wasted away his life in crime and was now receiving the just reward of his deeds. “*The wages of sin is death*”, (Romans 6:23). If ever there was a strong commentary on **the fact that salvation is by grace through faith without the deeds of the Law**, this is it. The gift of salvation is not earned; it is given. Jesus said to the penitent thief, “*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise*”.

THE THIRD WORD FROM THE CROSS - Relationship

“When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.” (John 19:26-27).

As Jesus hung upon the cross, there were many who hung around the cross. Besides His friends of whom there were fewer, there were the mockers and scoffers. Jesus and Mary are together again, at the beginning of His ministry in Cana and now at the end of His public ministry at the foot of the Cross. The sight of Jesus hanging upon the cross, as well as the sound of evil voices mocking her Son surely brought to Mary’s mind the prophecy of Simeon when he blessed them. Simeon had said to Mary, “*Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed*”, (Luke 2:34-35). ‘Mary’ means ‘bitter’. Here at the cross she tasted the bitterness of the helplessness of a mother who could neither take the place of her Son nor alleviate His suffering. She

tasted bitter sorrow as a sword figuratively pierced through her own soul. But greater than the love of a mother is the love of her Son Jesus, whom she also knew as her Savior. Neither she nor we have ever been called upon to exercise sacrificial love to the extent Jesus did. Yet in the midst of His suffering there is exhibited what the Scriptures record, He showed them the fullest extent of His love. In His last hours, He did not forget His mother but provided a protector for her. The Savior provided her with another 'son'. He said to his mother, "*Woman, behold your son!*" **Jesus called her 'woman' not 'mother' because He wanted her to think of Him in relation to her atonement by Him rather than in a narrower family relationship. Jesus is Mary's Saviour and your Saviour and mine.**

THE FOURTH WORD FROM THE CROSS - Abandonment

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34)

It was at three o'clock in the afternoon, the very hour when the lambs for the evening sacrifice were slain that Jesus said, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" that is, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" Jesus experienced the full weight of our sins and the ultimate separation and abandonment from God that they cause. For us, Jesus was forsaken by God. Christ, our High Priest and Sacrifice, was announcing, *'I am the Lamb. This is the Passover'*. As both our High Priest and spotless sacrifice, He is reading and living a Passover psalm. Jesus was forsaken by God for us. He is the true Passover Lamb. If there is nothing else that strikes the penitent sinner with the enormity of sin, surely it is these words that express the forsakenness of Jesus by His Father. There is no hell on earth when we understand what hell really is. There may be things on earth that mimic hell, but hell, in the real sense, is being forsaken by God. Being forsaken by God is the epitome of punishment. So great is the Father's love for us that He forsook His own Son! ***Who can grasp it?*** Penitent sinners cannot fully grasp it but are thankful for it. This question of Jesus underscores the reality of His suffering and shame. In this question, we can appreciate the severity of what we have been delivered from. Jesus was abandoned and forsaken so that we might be reconciled and redeemed. **In that moment, He experienced something far more horrible than physical pain. The beloved Son of God now knew what it was to be rejected by the Father.**

THE FIFTH WORD FROM THE CROSS - Distress

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), ‘I thirst.’” (John 19:28)

The fifth word of Jesus is the only human expression of His physical suffering. The wounds inflicted upon Him in the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the nailing upon the cross are now taking their toll, especially after losing blood on the walk through the city of Jerusalem to Golgotha.

Obviously, Jesus is dehydrated from His long trials and the loss of blood. *“I am weary with My crying out; My throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for My God. Hide not your face from your servant; for I am in distress; make haste to answer Me”,* (Psalm 69:3, 17). *“I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted within My breast; My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay Me in the dust of death”,* (Psalm 22:14-15). If we want to know the enormity of our sin, we need only to sit at the foot of the cross, and recognize that the words above from the Psalms are a reflection of what our Savior suffered. When originally offered the drink of myrrh and gall that would have alleviated His suffering and hastened His death, Jesus refused to receive it. **He must be in full control of His senses to drink the cup of suffering to its fullest, for only by doing so could He satisfy the demands of the Law which pronounced death upon the sinner.**

THE SIXTH WORD FROM THE CROSS – Triumph

“When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished”, and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” (John 19:30)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”, (Romans 6:23). *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast”,* (Ephesians 2:8-9). Thank God! ***“It is finished.”*** Jesus had become human to live a perfectly sinless life and die on the cross as the Lamb of God. *“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world”,* (1 John 2:2). The Greek word translated as ‘finished’ (tetelestai) has a wealth of information about this word of Jesus. **This word means that everything has been accomplished; the price of rebellion has been paid in full.** There is nothing more that needs to be done to redeem humanity from its lost and condemned situation. Christ satisfied God’s justice by dying for all to pay for the sins of all people of all time. These sins can never be punished again since that would violate God’s justice. Sins can only be punished once, either by a substitute or by the one who sinned. Because of what He finished, you and I are never lost. We have hope for this life and for the next. We know that nothing

can separate us from God's love, (Romans 8:39). One day, what God has begun in us will also be brought to completion by His grace. Until that day, we live in the confidence of Jesus' cry of victory: ***"It is finished!"*** He accomplished everything He came to do. And why did He come? **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"**, (John 3:16).

THE SEVENTH WORD FROM THE CROSS – Reunion

"Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!" And having said this He breathed His last." (Luke 23:46)

Jesus died at the ninth hour (three o'clock in the afternoon); about the same time as the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the Temple. Christ became the Paschal or Passover Lamb. For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. (1 Corinthians 5:7). The innocent Lamb was slain for our sins, so that we might be forgiven. *"Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews'"*, (John 19:19). After Jesus announced that *"It is finished"*, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. The Romans were actually surprised that Jesus died so soon because criminals often languished for days on the cross. Jesus expired after about only six hours. At the ninth hour, He let out that last breath. Do you remember the first recorded words of Jesus? In Luke 2:49, Jesus reminded His earthly parents that He must be about His Father's business. At such a young age, He already knew that His purpose, from the time He went to that first Passover, was to fulfill the will of the Father as the Lamb of God. And now He closes His ministry by acknowledging again that His life was about doing the Father's will. His last words are words of complete faith. Straining under the crushing weight of the world's guilt and staring into the abysmal portal of the tomb must have appeared hopeless. Yet by faith, Jesus laid hold of the Father and on all of His promises. We learn from His last words that our faith needs to go beyond feeling. Jesus knew His mission, knew the prophecies that He would rise again, and even though He felt He was facing eternal separation, He said, ***Father, I trust you.*** That is why Jesus' spirit could be at peace when He died. This is a perfect example for us. As a child of God, we can be confident that our spirit will also be at peace when we are called home to be with our Lord. Our Savior has reconciled us to God. As we are reconciled to God through the death of Jesus, we have nothing to fear from God. **No matter how violent our death may be, no matter how fierce the struggle may be between life and death, our heart can be at peace in our Lord, Jesus the Christ.** Amen

May the peace of God which surpasses all of our human understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Crucified and Risen Saviour. Amen.