

## “JESUS’ LAST WORDS ON THE CROSS”

In my first several pastorates the churches of the community would have a joint service on Good Friday. Seven different pastors from the community would each have a meditation on one of the seven last words of Jesus on the cross. Franz Joseph Haydn wrote a musical composition titled “The Seven Last Words of Christ.” It was commissioned in 1787 for the Good Friday service at the Grotto Santa Cueva near Cadiz in southern Spain. He explains,

“...I was requested by a canon of Cadiz to compose instrumental music on the seven last words of Our Savior on the Cross. It was customary at the Cathedral of Cadiz to produce an oratio every year during Lent,...After a short service the bishop ascended the pulpit, pronounced the first of the seven words (or sentences) and delivered a discourse thereon. This ended, he left the pulpit and fell to his knees before the altar. The interval was filled with music. The bishop then in like manner pronounced the second word, then the third, and so on, the orchestra following on the conclusion of each discourse. My composition was subject to these conditions, and it was no easy task to compose seven adagios lasting ten minutes each, and to succeed one another without fatiguing the listeners; indeed, I found it impossible to confine myself to the appointed limits.”

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Seven\\_Last\\_Words\\_of\\_Christ](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Seven_Last_Words_of_Christ)

1.) Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. (Luke 23:34 NKJV)

Jesus’ first utterance from the cross was a prayer for the forgiveness of those who had accused Him, condemned Him, beat and tortured Him, and nailed Him to the cross. The response of the soldiers was to divide His garments. The response of the crowd was to mock Him. The forgiveness of God through Christ is not just for those who don’t know what they are doing, but for those who know they are doing wrong and do it anyway. We cannot plead innocent on the basis of ignorance or because we tried to make things right or any other excuse. We can

plead for God's mercy on the basis that Christ suffered and died for us. His prayer for forgiveness was made for us as well as the soldiers.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 NKJV)

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. (Psalms 103:12-13)

2.) Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

The Son of God came from heaven and became Jesus the Son of man. He died upon the cross so that men and women might go from earth to heaven. Though suffering and in agony Jesus responded to a sinner's cry. He gave him the promise that that day he would be with Jesus in Paradise. When we face death, we can leave this world with the promises Jesus has left for us in His word.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:14-16 NKJV)

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

The dying Savior thinks of His mother, a widow, and gives to John the responsibility of providing for her. "John, take my mother and care for her in my place as if she were your own mother." Those who have trusted Christ and have become His children are our brothers and sisters. Christ is trusting us to care for them as He trusted John to care for His mother. I thank God for the Christians who have given me clothes and food at those times in my life when I was in dire need.

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

This cry of Jesus came out of the darkness covering the earth, turning the day into night, and also out of our Savior's inner darkness as He felt forsaken of God. He took our sins upon Him, He was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin. God in holiness turned away from Him.

Charles H. Spurgeon the great English Baptist preacher wrote of this, "I do not think the records of time, or even of Eternity contain a sentence more full of anguish. Here the wormwood and the gall, and all the other bitterness are undone. Here you may look as into a great abyss; and though you strain your eyes, and gaze till sight fails you, yet you perceive no bottom, it is measureless, unfathomable, inconceivable."

5.) After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" (John 19:28 NKJV)

Here Jesus' true humanity is seen. He was losing bodily fluids in blood and sweat. In one word He tells His suffering. His cry prompts someone to put a sponge in a bowl of sour wine and lift it up to him with hyssop on it. His suffering fulfilled a prophecy that as the Son of God He had inspired:

Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. (Psalms 69:20-21 NKJV)

Jesus suffered thirst upon the cross in order that He might be able to fulfill His promises to us to satisfy our spiritual thirst.

Jesus...said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." (John 4:10) "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:38-39 NKJV)

6.) So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. (John 19:30 NKJV)

The cup which Jesus had asked to pass from Him had now been drunk to the last bitter drop. He was obedient unto death. He was sent to the by His Father to die as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Now that was finished. His death upon the cross was a full and complete sacrifice. All the punishment my sins deserve, all the punishment your sins deserve was paid by Him by His suffering and death.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 NKJV)

It is only because Jesus received the wages of our sin upon the cross, that we can be given the gift of eternal life.

7.) And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46 NKJV)

There are two of the seven last words which are addressed to the Father in heaven: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" and "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Clearly something happened between the time Jesus perceived that God had forsaken Him and now when He feels able to commit His spirit to God. What had happened was that God's justice was satisfied. Once the penalty for sin was paid by Jesus' death, the sins He bore for us upon the cross were cast away –as far as the east is from the west. They no longer were a barrier between God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son and our Savior.

Just that quickly we go from being at enmity with God and condemned to die because of our sins to being forgiven and accepted as His child and brothers and sisters to Christ when we accept Him as our Savior and Lord.

