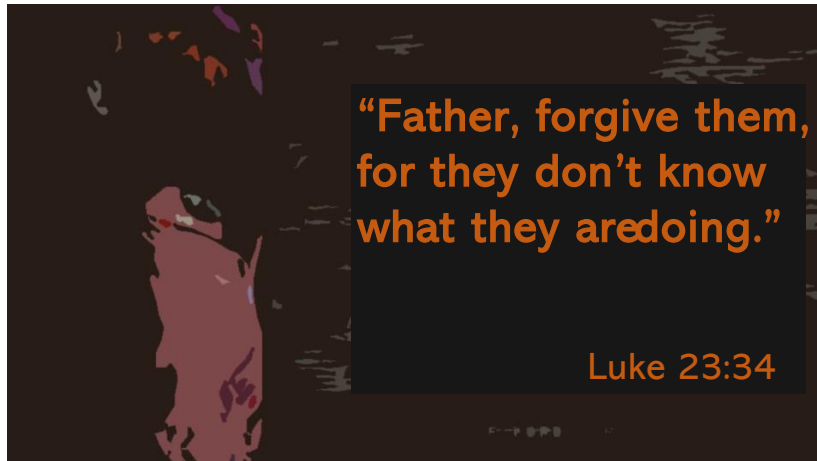


The Seven Last Words of Christ

adapted from [Richard Niell Donovan](#)

THE FIRST WORD:



Jesus had taught the disciples to love their enemies and to pray for those who abuse them (6:27-28).

Here we see Jesus practicing what he preaches.

For whom did Jesus pray?

Most likely his prayer includes not only **the soldiers** who drove the nails into his hands and feet, but also the **Jewish leaders** who instigated the crucifixion, **the crowd** that demanded it (23:18-25), and **the disciples** who are nowhere to be found (except for the women standing at a distance—verse 49 and John).

Meditation on the First Word:

Stop and consider how you would respond if someone were torturing you.

Would you suffer in silence?

Would you moan or cry out in pain?

Would you defiantly speak to your tormentors?

As he hung on the cross, Jesus didn't do any of those things.

Instead, he prayed, **“Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.”**

Was this prayer from the cross answered?

Fifty days later the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost. When the Spirit came, Peter was empowered to preach that day. He told the crowd that “God (had) made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

We are not to miss those last words—“this Jesus WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED!”

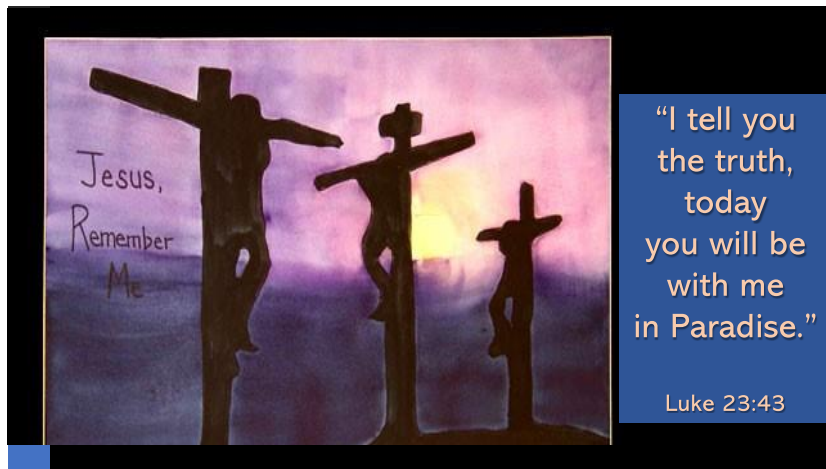
So many people that day were cut to the heart, and asked, “What shall we do?” Peter responded, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Three thousand people were baptized that day. Some of them must have been among the crowd that had earlier shouted, “Crucify him!” There must have been others who had stood by and watched without raising a hand to help Jesus.

But Peter said to all of them, without exception, “Repent, and be baptized...for the forgiveness of sins”—and that’s exactly what happened. Three thousand people repented, believed In Jesus and were baptized, and God forgave them!

As terrible as our sins might be, his prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing” ...includes us.

THE SECOND WORD:



Meditation on the Second Word:

Jesus wasn't alone when he was crucified.

On either side of him hung a thief.

One of those thieves shouted at Jesus, and said, "IF you are the Christ, save yourself and us!" (Luke 23:39).

That was the word the devil used when he tried to tempt Jesus after a forty day fast in the wilderness, and before Jesus began his public ministry.

Though the devil did his best, Jesus did not succumb to his temptation.

Now, at the end of Jesus' ministry, the devil speaks again—this time through the voice of a thief—"IF you are the Christ, save yourself and us!"

Surprisingly, the second thief answered for Jesus.

He asked the first, "Don't you even fear God?"

He went on to tell the first thief that the two of them were both guilty, and they deserved the punishment that they were receiving.

But he said, "This man has done nothing wrong."

Then he turned to Jesus and said, "Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

Jesus responded to him and said, "Assuredly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:39-43).

In the days when Augustine lived some people were troubled by this story.

Augustine said to them: “There is one case of death bed repentance recorded—that of the penitent thief, that none should despair; and only one that none should presume.”

Augustine was right – none of us should despair and none of us should presume. If the Spirit of God opens your mind to understand and your heart to respond... then today... repent, believe in Jesus and receive forgiveness for your sins.

THE THIRD WORD:



“Therefore when Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing there, he said to his mother, **‘Woman, behold your son!’** Then he said to the disciple, **‘Behold, your mother!’** From that hour, the disciple took her to his own home” (John 19:26-27).

Meditation on the Third Word:

In the midst of his misery, Jesus dispenses grace on those around him.

He asked forgiveness for his tormentors (the first word).

He assured the second thief that he would find himself in Paradise that very day.

Now he turns to those who are closest to him—his mother and the disciple whom he loved.

Life had not been easy for Mary—not since the day the angel had visited her, saying, “Don’t be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Behold, you will conceive in your womb, and give birth to a son, and will call his name ‘Jesus.’” (Luke 1:30-31).

Make no mistake... God loved Mary and honored her by choosing her to be the mother of the Savior.

But what was asked of Mary was not easy.

Mary became pregnant before she was married.

She gave birth while traveling and had to cradle her baby in a feeding trough.

Simeon had warned her when she and Joseph presented at the temple... that a sword would pierce her soul.

She and her family had to flee to Egypt to escape the murderous Herod.

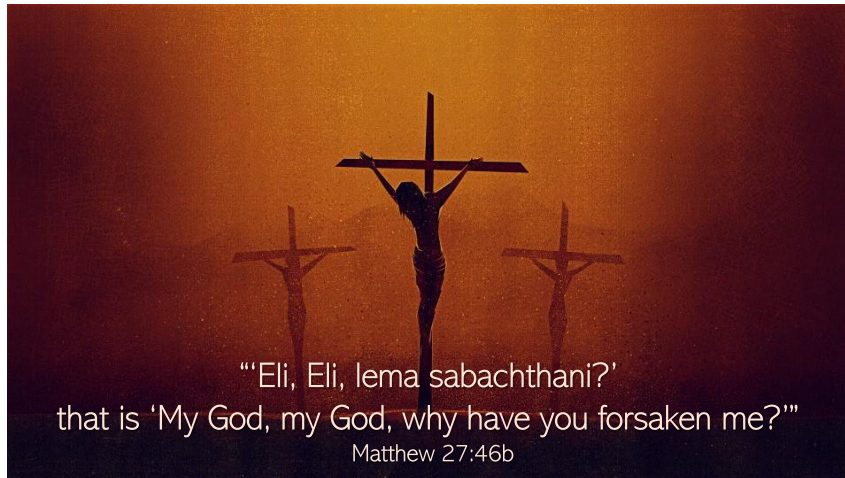
And so on and so forth!

Now, at the final chapter, she has to witness her son executed as a criminal.

At this moment Jesus had nothing to give his mother – nothing except the care of a loved and trusted friend.

Which is why he turned to Mary and said, “Woman, behold your son!” and to his friend, “Behold your mother!”

THE FOURTH WORD:



Meditation on the Fourth Word:

It shakes us to hear such words of despair come from Jesus’ lips.
He felt forsaken—abandoned—as the sin of the world was placed on him.

Those words which Jesus spoke come from the 22nd Psalm.
The psalm writer didn’t stop with that cry of despair.
He continued and reminded himself and all readers of the One he trusted in.

In verse 4 he says,
“But you are holy.... Our fathers trust in you. They trusted, and you delivered them” (Psalm 22:4).

He prayed again in verse 24,
“For (God) has not despised...the suffering of the afflicted one, he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.”

Though the Psalmist felt abandoned, his faith triumphed over his despair.
And so, it was with Jesus!

THE FIFTH WORD:



“That the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, **‘I am thirsty’**” (John 19:28).

Meditation on the Fifth Word:

An emphasis of all four gospels is the fulfillment of Scripture by Jesus.

The scripture in question here is most likely Psalm 69:21, which says:

“They gave me gall for my food. In my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink.”

Thirst was part of the cruelty of crucifixion.

The Romans tormented their prisoners, in part, by denying them water.

They had flogged Jesus.

Then they forced him to carry a heavy cross a long distance.

Jesus would have lost a substantial quantity of both blood and sweat.

This is why he experienced such intense thirst.

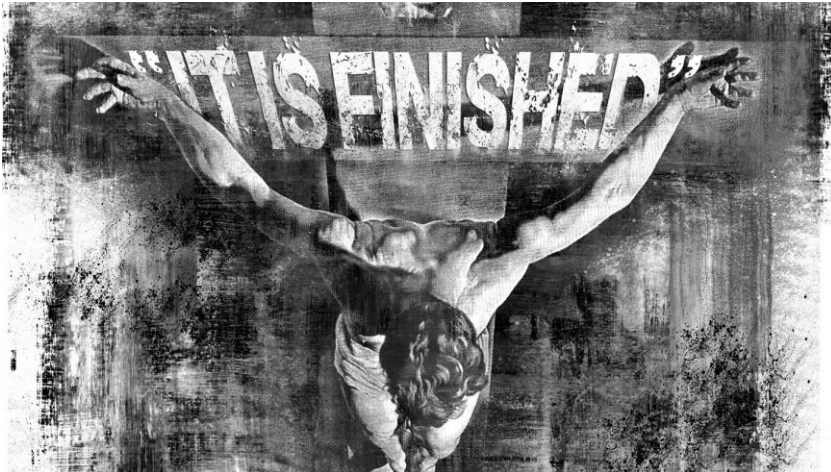
But it was not just physical thirst that Jesus suffered.

Listen to the prophetic word spoken in Psalm 69:3b – My eyes fail, looking for my God.

Jesus’ soul thirsted for the fellowship of his Father who had turned away from him when the sin of the world was placed on him.

He experienced thirst so that we could receive from him living water that would satisfy our souls now and forever.

THE SIXTH WORD:



“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **‘It is finished’**” (*tetelestai*— from *teleo*) (John 19:30a).

Meditation on the Sixth Word:

“It is finished!”

The Greek word that is translated “finished” was *teleo*.

Jesus was not a victim of treachery.

He willingly sacrificed his life.

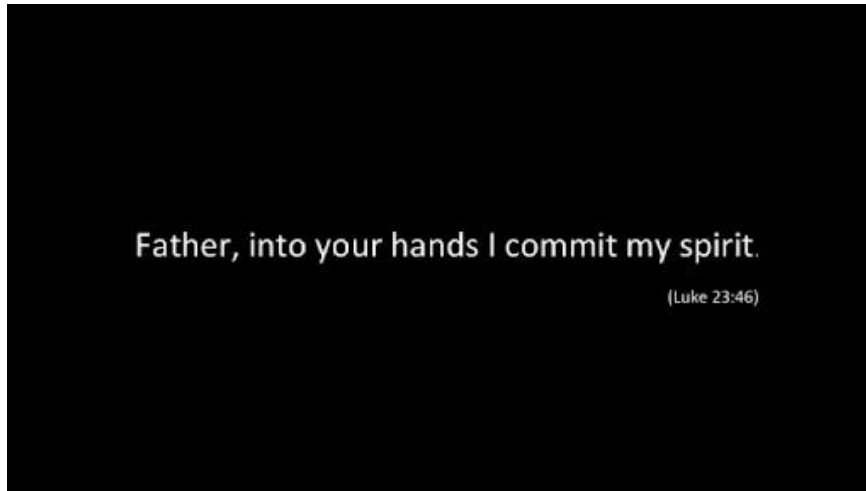
This is why and how we know that Jesus wasn’t saying, “It’s over and done with, in the sense, that he had failed.”

With these three words, Jesus is saying, “My work is complete. I have finished what I came to do. I have lived the life to which I was called, and I have set the stage for the salvation of the world. Everything necessary has been done.”

That’s what Jesus meant when he said, **“It is finished.”**

He did for us what we could never do for ourselves.

THE SEVENTH WORD:



Meditation on the Seventh Word:

Jesus' final words in Luke's Gospel are very different from those in Matthew and Mark where Jesus asks why God has forsaken him (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

Luke reports that Jesus' last words on the cross were—**“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”** which is a quote from Psalm 31.

On an obvious level, Jesus put his life beyond the grave into the hands of the Father.

But when we look carefully at the psalm Jesus quoted, we see there is something far, far greater that he was saying.

Psalm 31 begins in verse 1 with a cry to God for help – **In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness.** But then the psalm proclaims in verse 5, God's strength and faithfulness – **Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth.**

By quoting from Psalm 31 Jesus said that not only did he entrust his future to the Father, but that he was confident that the Father would redeem him, that is, that the Father would raise him from the dead.

Jesus' mood was not of despair, but of confidence—confidence that the Father who sent him into the world with a mission is now prepared to receive him back again.

The day Jesus died was a dark day—the darkest day that anyone had ever seen, and the darkest day that anyone will ever see.

But Jesus' last words were a spear of light that shattered the darkness. He said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Those weren't the words of a man who had suffered ultimate defeat. They were the words of a man who was going home—who was putting his spirit into the hands of his beloved Father—who was getting ready to rejoin the Father in the unseen realm where he had dwelled with the Father from before the beginning of time (John 1).

The cross was not the end.

These words spoken by Jesus are the hope of all his followers when our time comes to leave this life and enter into the next.

But these words also describe our hope in this present time...

...whenever we are troubled—whenever worry threatens to consume us...

...whenever we are faced with problems that defy solution...

...when we're caught between a rock and a hard place...

...whenever doubt casts a shadow across our faith...

...whenever we are tempted to wonder whether God exists...

...whenever we doubt that God loves us...

...we too breathe out this prayer... Father into your hands I commit...

This is why we called the darkest day of human history, good Friday.

We will never have to face what Jesus faced.

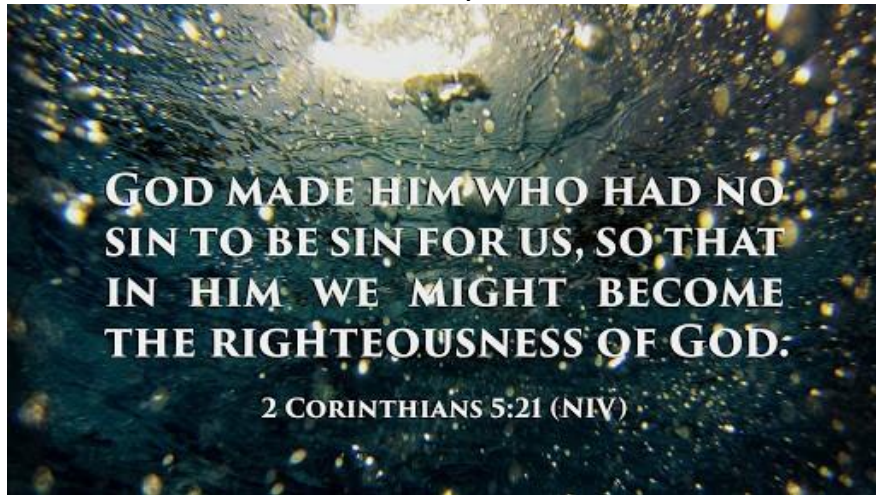
The cost he paid is beyond our comprehension.

Because of his great love for us, he vanquished the second death and paid our sin debt in full.

Because of him we can go free.

Because of him we can come home to God and be assured of his welcome.

We remember Jesus – his body broken and his blood shed.



Give thanks for the bread and the cup.
In remembrance of him.

On the other side of Easter morn, Jesus will breathe again.

On that occasion, the disciples were gathered behind locked doors... “for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be to you.” Then “he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit!” (John 20:19-23).

Just as God breathed into Adam the breath of life (Genesis 2:7) Jesus breathed into his disciples the Spirit of life.

This gift of the Spirit renewed the life of these disciples just as Godly breath gave new life to dry bones (Ezekiel 37:9).

The disciples had been afraid and confused—hidden in a locked room to escape danger. But after Jesus breathes on them, they find strength to stand up, unlock the door, go outside, and begin their proclamation.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

That’s the story for Sunday.