

The Seven Words of Christ on the Cross

Lk. 23:34, Jn. 19:26-27, Lk. 23:43, Mt. 27:46,

Jn. 19:28, Jn. 19:30, Lk. 23:46

Lent Evening VI, March 28, 2007

Beloved of the Lord....The words of our text this evening are included in tonight's sermon. Tonight we will hear the seven words of Christ on the cross. Please be seated.

1. Father forgive them; for they know now what they do. It is utterly impossible to contemplate and consider the terrible injustice God's own innocent Son experienced for our sake upon the cross. If He had wanted to, Jesus could've called down the wrath of God against all mankind! He could've rained down fire and brimstone, or opened up the earth below the feet of the people and swallowed them whole! Yet Jesus did not take revenge, nor did He curse mankind. He came to redeem! "In His greatest agony, He forgets Himself, turns His attention from Himself, and begins to speak of grace and mercy." (Ylvisaker) He asks His heavenly Father to forgive not only the sins of those who crucified Him, but also the sins of the whole world. He is "the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." We are forgiven of our sins because Jesus asked that we be forgiven of our sins. May we likewise remember to forgive those who trespass against us, and forgive as Christ has forgiven.

2. Woman, behold thy son!Behold thy mother! In deep and great agony, as Jesus bleeds for our sins, again He thinks only of others and not Himself. His thoughts are still of mercy, love and peace for His people. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Jer. 29:11 In this dire moment of pain upon the cross, in the heart and mind of Christ there are only thoughts of love, grace, and peace toward His enemies. His thoughts are directed especially toward His mother of the flesh, Mary. Ever the Provider for our daily needs, in His dying hour, Jesus provides a caretaker for His mother, His own disciple John. At this time, Mary is in great need of care, for a sword has pierced through her own soul, as she sees her own Son crucified. Years ago, Simeon had prophesied to

Mary, "Yea a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." Though no one comforts Christ, Christ comforts Mary. Mary now has a new son named John, and John has a new mother named Mary. From all of this we learn that even in our hour of grief, God provides for us.

3. Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise! There were three crosses on Calvary. Being numbered with the transgressors, Jesus works to seek and to save that thief which is lost! We do not know the full conversation between Jesus and the thief. We do not need to. But we know the thief was penitent, very sorry for his sins. The thief confessed that he deserved such a death as this. In like manner we deserve death and damnation because of our sins. Yet what does Christ say to this thief? "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise!" What glorious words these are! Not tomorrow, not next week, not a few years from now after you've suffered in purgatory....but TODAY shalt thou be with Me in paradise! When the believer dies, His soul is taken immediately into heaven, where all saints enjoy the everlasting company of their Savior! So also dear sorrowful sinner, God will take you immediately to heaven when you die, for you are saved by God's grace and not your own works. The Bible says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. 4:5

4. Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?.....My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? In these last four words of Jesus we see His attention is directed upward. While His first three words are directed toward those He will die for, His last four words are directed upward to His heavenly Father. It is now twelve noon, and "there was darkness over all the land" for three hours. It is at this time that a darkness also veils the soul of Jesus. Kretzmann writes, "In these three hours the Son of God was obliged to taste and endure the full force, the full horror of the divine wrath over the sins of mankind." God's own Son is forsaken and rejected by His heavenly Father. Jesus is suffering the torments of hell! This is when He cries out, being in the deepest depths of hell, "My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Why should the Sinless suffer for sin? Why should the Father forsake the Son who has always been faithful?

Yet even at such a moment as this, Jesus is still clinging to God, for He says MY GOD, MY GOD! And after all sins were paid for, the love and favor of His God returned to Him, God having accepted the sacrifice of the Son. Brethren it is by these stripes that we are healed today. That blessed Son of God has paid our stripes so that we do not need to fear being forsaken by God! Because of Jesus God will never forsake you, but you are ever and always in His grace. You are His chosen, His beloved....you are His bride! Therefore when we suffer in this world, let us remember Christ suffered first for us, leaving us an example to live by. By His stripes we are healed.

5. I Thirst! Only moments away from death now, knowing that all things were now fulfilled, Jesus thirsted. As a man He thirsted, in that those who are crucified suffer from an incredible and unquenchable thirst. A servant dipped a reed in a mixture of sour wine, vinegar, and water, reaching it up to the lips of Jesus. Yet as the Son of God Jesus thirsts for something greater than this. On the cross Jesus thirsts for our salvation. He thirsts and desires our conversion, our faith, and our love. He wants us to love Him and He so clearly loves us. He wants us to confess Him as He has so clearly confessed us. He wants us to thirst after Him as He has so clearly thirsted after us! Yea our soul should always have that desire to depart and be with Christ in heaven! For why would we ever love the things of this earth? Will we love Him as He has loved us? Will we obey His commandments as He would have us obey them? May His undeniable love move us to love Him in return. May our thirst to do His will be unquenchable!

6. It is finished! Here now is the great moment in time where the work of our salvation is complete! It is finished. All that Christ set out to do from the moment of His birth is done! Oh how these joyful words should ring in our ears! It is finished! It is done! For when Christ says this, it is the same as saying, "Dear sinner, heaven is now your home! I give My paradise to you free! Though you have grieved my heart daily by your sins, I willingly have taken all these sins upon Myself. Your sins were nailed in my body to the cross! But do not fear! I by this cross have turned God's wrath away from you forever! By My

sacrifice all of your sins are atoned for. God loves you now as He loved Me before the foundation of the world! Therefore do not fear, do not be afraid, only believe! It is finished. My work is done. You have been set free!"

7. Father into Thy hands I commend My spirit! Now that the sins of all men have been paid for, now that God's wrath has been changed through Christ into love toward all men, the previous relationship between the Father and the Son is restored. The two persons of the Holy Trinity are once again in perfect communion, one with another. The Son is no longer forsaken of the Father. Now Jesus places His spirit, His soul, into the hands of His heavenly Father. Now is the moment of death. Physically the crucified body of Jesus is at its end. As a man, Jesus has no more strength to live. Yet Jesus is not man alone, but also God. Death cannot overtake Christ as it does man. When our life ends, death is like dark shadow that moves closer and closer until it overcomes us and we have no choice. Yet it was not the same with God's own Son. Death cannot lay claim to Jesus! Death has no power over God, but God has power over death! Jesus then, who is the Light of Life, willingly walks into the darkness of death. Of His own free will, Jesus enters into death much like we would enter into a dark room. The death of Jesus was necessary so the enemy of death could be conquered for our sake. You cannot be the winner of a battle, unless you first enter into combat with your enemy. By entering into death, Jesus entered into mortal combat with our worst enemy, death. Jesus won the battle for our sake. He rose again the third day! Truly death has lost its sting for all those who trust in Christ Jesus.

As we close this evening, may we always find great comfort in the seven words of Jesus spoken from the cross. For these are the words of everlasting life. These are the words of peace. When death draws near to us, may we likewise commend our spirit into the good and gracious hands of our heavenly Father, for we need not fear death. As Jesus said to the thief, so He will say to us, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Amen.