



Good Friday 2023

Seven Last Sayings  
of Jesus on the Cross

On that terrible Friday some 2000 years ago, Jesus was condemned to die on that old wooden cross. It had to be such an awful sight for His followers. Crucifixion was and is a horrific way to die. No human being, let alone the savior of the world should have to endure. But this is exactly what happened.

In the midst of his excruciating death, the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) record something amazing. In spite of the fact that He was abandoned by his closest friends, that the very people He came to save turned their backs on Him and spit in His face, that the Roman soldiers drove nails into His hands and feet, even with all of this, Jesus wasn't done teaching, leading and giving us an example for how we should live.

In these Gospels, seven of Jesus' last words are recorded. Seven amazing statements that when taken seriously, will change your life and the way you view the world.

Tonight, we have created seven experiences, to go along with the seven last statements of Jesus. We invite you to take your time, reflect, pray, and invest in each one. Because the more you invest, the more you will take away.

There is a reason why this terrible Friday is now called Good Friday and we want you to experience it in a new and very real way.

## LAST SAYING #1

'Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Luke 23:34a NIV

It makes sense that the first word of Jesus from the cross is a word of forgiveness. That's the point of the cross, after all. Jesus is dying so that we might be forgiven for our sins, so that we might be reconciled to God for eternity. But the forgiveness of God through Christ doesn't come only to those who don't know what they are doing when they sin. In the mercy of God, we receive his forgiveness even when we do what we know to be wrong. God chooses to wipe away our sins, not because we have some convenient excuse, and not because we have tried hard to make up for them, but because he is a God of amazing grace, with mercies that are new every morning. As we read the words, "Father, forgive them," may we understand that we too are forgiven through Christ. As John writes in his first letter,

"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness"

1 John 1:9 NIV

Because Christ died on the cross for us, we are cleansed from all wickedness, from every last sin. We are united with God the Father as his beloved children. We are free to approach his throne of grace with our needs and concerns. God "has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west" (Ps 103:13). What great news!

At the same time, Jesus had taught his disciples to forgive both enemies and friends. Now, as Jesus hung on the cross, He was practicing what He preached, forgiving His own torturers. In the midst of his excruciating suffering, the heart of Jesus focused on others, even those who had done terrible things to Him.

This is how much He loves us!

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 NIV

## Questions for Reflection

Do you really believe God has forgiven your sins? Do you take time on a regular basis to confess your sins so that you might enjoy the freedom of forgiveness? Do you need to experience God's forgiveness in a fresh way today?

Do you have someone in your life that you need to forgive? Do you need to release what they have done to you so that you can find freedom and follow the example of Christ?

### EXPERIENCE INSTRUCTIONS

*Spend a few moments reflecting on the above questions. Just like Jesus, is there anyone in your life you need to say, "forgive them" or "I forgive you" ...if you do write their names on a piece of paper.*

*Then take the paper and run it through a shredder. If you don't have a shredder, rip the paper up into many pieces. As you hear the unique sounds of the shredder, or the ripping of the paper, completely forgive that person in your heart.*

## LAST SAYING #2

'Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."  
Luke 23:43 NIV

As Jesus hung on the cross, he was mocked by the religious leaders, political leaders and the soldiers. In addition, there were two criminals that were crucified with Him. One on his left and one on His right. One of the criminals being crucified with him joined in on the mocking. But the other crucified criminal sensed that Jesus was being treated unjustly. After speaking up for Jesus, he cried out, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (v. 42).

Jesus responded to this criminal, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." ' (v. 43). Here we have encountered one of the most astounding and encouraging verses in all of Scripture. Jesus promised that the criminal would be with him in paradise. Yet the scriptures don't give us a reason to believe this man had been a follower of Jesus. Rather, the criminal's cry to be remembered seems more like a desperate, last-gasp effort.

This man, who had done something to deserve capital punishment, who had no way to earn the favor of God, was forgiven and given a promise for eternity. He simply said, "Jesus, remember me,". And Jesus, full of mercy and grace, says to him, "You will be with me in paradise."

And the same is true for us. We can have the same promise not because we have all the right answers, and not even because we are living rightly, but because God is merciful and we have put our trust in Jesus. Just like the thief.

## Questions for Reflection

Have you staked your life on Jesus? Have you put your ultimate trust in him? Do you know that, when your time comes, you will be with him in paradise?

### EXPERIENCE INSTRUCTIONS

*Take a piece of paper, begin to write words, or draw a picture of what paradise would look like to you. As you do it, if you have put your faith and trust in Jesus, remember that just like the thief received a promise of eternity, so have you!*

*If you are doing this with your family, put all the artwork and words on your refrigerator or post them somewhere in your home. This will remind you of the great promise of eternity that we have in Christ!*

### LAST SAYING #3

*'Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.'*

John 19:25-27 NIV

As Jesus was dying, his mother was among those who had remained with him. Most of the male disciples had fled, except for John, who is also the one who wrote this Gospel.

It's clear that Jesus was forging a relationship between this disciple and his mother, one in which the disciple would take care of Mary financially and in other ways. Jesus wanted to make sure she would be in good hands after his death.

The presence of Mary at the cross adds both humanity and horror to the scene. Too often we forget that Jesus was a real human being, a man who had once been a boy who had been carried in the womb of his mother. Even as he was dying on the cross as the Savior of the world, Jesus was also a son, a role he didn't neglect in his last moments.

When we think of the crucifixion of Jesus from the perspective of his mother, our horror increases dramatically. The death of a child is one of the most painful of all parental experiences. To watch one's beloved child experience the extreme torture of crucifixion must have been unimaginably terrible. We're reminded of the prophecy of Simeon shortly after Jesus' birth, when he said to Mary: "And a sword will pierce your very soul" (Luke 2:35).

This scene helps us not to glorify or spiritualize the crucifixion of Jesus. He was a real man, true flesh and blood, a son of a mother, dying with unbearable agony. His suffering was altogether real, and he took it on for you and for me.

## Questions for Reflection

Take a moment and reflect on the fact that despite being fully God, Jesus was also fully human complete with emotions and feelings for those that were closest to Him. What does Mary's presence at the cross do to your soul?

### EXPERIENCE INSTRUCTIONS

*Do you have a family photo album around your house? Or maybe you have pictures of your family on your phone. Take a moment and look at them. As you do, take some time to reflect on your family relationships. Sometimes families can be very complicated. What is God saying to you today? Is there something He wants you to do or not do in your family?*



## LAST SAYING #4

'And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").'

Mark 15:34 NIV

As Jesus was dying on the cross, he echoed the beginning of Psalm 22, which reads:

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?  
Why are you so far away when I groan for help?  
Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.  
Every night you hear my voice, but I find no relief. (vv. 1-2)

Why had God abandoned him? Why did his Father turn his back on Jesus in his moment of greatest agony?

This side of heaven, we will never fully know what Jesus was experiencing in this moment. Was he asking this question because he didn't know why God had abandoned him? Or was his cry not so much a question as an expression of profound agony? Or was it both?

What we do know is that Jesus entered into the hell of separation from God. The Father abandoned him because Jesus took upon himself the penalty for our sins. In that excruciating moment, he experienced something far more horrible than physical pain. The beloved Son of God, who knew what it was like to live in perfect community with the Father, now knew what it was like to be rejected by the Father and it crushed him.

As we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (NIV).

We can say, truly, that the Father abandoned the Son for our sake, for the salvation of the world. But can I really grasp the mystery and the majesty of this truth? As Martin Luther once said, "God forsaking God. Who can understand it?" Yet even if I cannot completely understand this, it calls me to confession, to humility, to worship, to adoration of our Savior who went to indescribable lengths to rescue me from my sin!

## Questions for Reflection

Have you taken time to consider that Jesus was abandoned by the Father so that you might not be? Can you imagine the pain of separation from the Father that Jesus experienced in that moment?

### EXPERIENCE INSTRUCTIONS

*Do you have a family photo album around your house? Or maybe you have pictures of your family on your phone. Take a moment and look at them. As you do, take some time to reflect on your family relationships. Sometimes families can be very complicated. What is God saying to you today? Is there something He wants you to do or not do in your family?*

## LAST SAYING #5

'Later, knowing that everything had now been finished,  
and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." '  
John 19:28 NIV

No doubt Jesus experienced extreme thirst while being crucified. He would have lost a substantial quantity of bodily fluid, both blood and sweat, through what he had endured even prior to crucifixion. Thus, his statement, "I am thirsty" was extremely obvious, a request for something to drink. In response the soldiers gave Jesus "sour wine" (v. 29), a cheap beverage common among lower class people in the time of Jesus.

John notes that Jesus said "I am thirsty," not only as a statement of physical reality, but also in order to fulfill the Scripture.

As we reflect on Jesus' statement, "I am thirsty," think of your own thirst. It's nothing like that of Jesus. Rather, we are thirsty for Him. Our souls yearn for the living water that Jesus supplies. There is no other way for our thirst to be quenched than through life with Jesus.

In Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well he said:

'Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,  
but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.  
Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water  
welling up to eternal life." '  
John 4:13-14 NIV

## Questions for Reflection

What does the statement “I am thirsty” suggest to you about Jesus? About yourself? What areas in your life do you seek to “quench your thirst” in ways outside of the way Jesus offers?

### EXPERIENCE INSTRUCTIONS

*Do you have any vinegar in the house? If so, take a teaspoon and taste the vinegar ...then drink a cup of PURE WATER...compare the two and then reflect on the difference between the water this world offers vs. the LIVING WATER Jesus offers all of us. Take a moment and thank Jesus for giving you the water that will quench your thirst forever!*

## LAST SAYING #6

'A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. '

John 19:29-30 NIV

One of the most difficult films to watch is Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. For most of us, when watching that movie, we want to close our eyes. It's horrible to watch. And it was beyond comprehension to think that this actually happened to somebody, and not just anybody, but our Lord and Savior. We can study the crucifixion; we can know in our heads what Jesus experienced. But seeing a visual presentation of his suffering is almost more than anyone could bear. When *The Passion of the Christ* concludes, we feel relief. Thank goodness it is finished.

When Jesus said, "It is finished," he was expressing relief that his suffering was over. "It is finished" meant, in part, "This is finally done!" But the Greek verb translated as "It is finished" (*tetelestai*) means more than just this. Eugene Peterson captures the full sense of the verb in *The Message*: "It's done . . . complete." Jesus had accomplished his mission. He had announced and set up the kingdom of God. He had revealed the love and grace of God. And he had embodied that love and grace by dying for the sin of the world, thus opening up the way for all to live under the reign of God.

Because Jesus finished his work of salvation, you and I don't need to add to it. In fact, we can't. He accomplished what we never could, taking our sin upon himself and giving us his life in return. Jesus finished what He had been called to do, and we are the beneficiaries.

Because of what he finished, you and I are never "finished." We have hope for this life and for the next. We know that nothing can separate us from God's love. One day what God has begun in us will also be finished, by his grace. Until that day, we live in the confidence of Jesus' cry of victory: "It is finished!"

## Questions for Reflection

Do you live as if Jesus finished the work of salvation? Do you have confidence that God will finish that which he has begun in you? Is there anything you would like to see “finished” in you?

### EXPERIENCE INSTRUCTIONS

*Take a piece of paper and draw a cross. Think about what needs to be finished in you. Maybe it's pride, greed, lust, gratitude, joy, patience, peace or self-control. Or something else. Then write that word over the cross. Place that cross on your bathroom mirror or somewhere where you will see it everyday, as a reminder of the work that God is finishing in your life.*

## LAST SAYING #7

'Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."  
When he had said this, he breathed his last.'  
Luke 23:46 NIV

In this final statement, Jesus quotes from Psalm 31, Jesus was putting his future in the hands of his Father. It was as if he was saying, "Whatever happens to me after I die is your responsibility, Father."

But when we look carefully at the Psalm Jesus quoted, we see more than what at first meets our eyes. Psalm 31 begins with a cry for divine help:

O LORD, I have come to you for protection;  
don't let me be disgraced.  
Save me, for you do what is right. (v. 1)

But then it shifts to asking for God's deliverance with a confession of God's strength and faithfulness:

I entrust my spirit into your hand.  
Rescue me, LORD, for you are a faithful God. (v. 5)

By the end, Psalm 31 offers praise of God's salvation:

Praise the LORD,  
for he has shown me the wonders of his unfailing love.  
He kept me safe when my city was under attack. (v. 21)

By quoting a portion of Psalm 31, therefore, Jesus not only entrusted his future to his Father, but also implied that he would be delivered and exonerated. No, God would not deliver him from death by crucifixion. But beyond this horrific death lay something marvelous.

"I entrust my spirit into your hands" shows us that Jesus had complete trust and faith in His Father! His future was in God's hands and therefore secure. And the same is true for those of us who believe, trust and have faith in Christ alone!

## Questions for Reflection

Have you put your life and, indeed, your life beyond this life, in God's hands? How do you experience God's salvation through Christ in your life today? Do you completely trust in Christ for today and tomorrow?

### EXPERIENCE INSTRUCTIONS

*We will gather as a large group and take communion together. Gather something to use for the bread and the cup and join us back on video to take communion together.*



Thank you for “experiencing” Good Friday with us.

Join us on Easter Sunday morning at 10:00 am!

