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FROM THE CROSS

AN EASTER DEVOTIONAL BY
PASTOR ERIC SMITH
EASTER 2021





Seven Words From the Cross

A Devotional for Easter Week
from
Sharon Baptist Church

Pastor Eric Smith



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PREFACE

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:1–4)

The Bible tells us that nothing is more important than the message of the gospel—an older word that simply means “good news.” The gospel is the announcement that God has done something astonishingly wonderful for sinners—guilty, failed, blameworthy people—through his Son, Jesus Christ. At the cross of Jesus, God took all of our sins—every time we’ve broken one of God’s good laws, or failed to measure up to his holy standards; every time we missed the mark God set for us, or crossed a boundary line he told us not to; all the worst, most regrettable, most humiliating things about us—God took all of that and laid it on his Son Jesus. And Jesus took the blame for our sin. He stood in our place and got what we had coming from a holy God. He paid our debt in full. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and three days later, God raised him from the dead.

Now, any sinner who “receives” this gospel will be saved. Not after you clean yourself up, or kick all your bad habits, or start going to church, or anything else. Simply by “receiving” the finished work of Jesus by believing in him will forever make you right with God, erasing every sin in your file. Believing the gospel will bring you into God’s family as his beloved adopted child.

PREFACE

Believing the gospel will ensure that when you die, you will not enter into judgment but be welcomed into eternal life. God does not ask you to contribute anything to this—you can't! God has done it all for you, by his grace, through the cross of Jesus. All he calls you to do is receive it. There is no news so good as this gospel! No wonder it deserves to be the matter of first importance!

At Sharon Baptist Church, we love the gospel. We have received it. We are standing in it each Sunday as we gather for worship. We continue to sin and fail each day, but we keep holding fast to the gospel, and we keep finding in it new depths of God's mercy and grace to keep us joyfully walking with him. This Easter Week, we want the gospel to be the matter of first importance in our hearts and lives. That is why we will be working our way through this little book. Each day, we will reflect on one of the "Seven Words from the Cross" Jesus spoke as he bore our sin. These seven words will lead us again and again back to the heart of the gospel: Christ died for our sins, and in his finished work, we have all that we will ever need. Come to the cross with us; receive, rest, and rejoice in the gospel.

In Jesus' love,

Pastor Eric



1

"FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO"

.....

Luke 23:32-34

32 Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. 33 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. 34 And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

1 - FATHER FORGIVE THEM

Jesus' first word from the cross is a prayer: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He is at least thinking of the Roman soldiers who just drove the nails into him—they're just a bunch of ignorant stooges of the Roman Empire, and have no idea what's really going on. Jesus could also be praying more broadly, for everyone involved in his crucifixion—the hostile crowds, the conniving Jewish leaders, even weak-willed Pilate. In either case, Jesus' first word from the cross is a prayer of mercy for his enemies, who are actively sinning against him. What does this tell us about him?

Most crucifixion victims spent the last of their strength spewing out bitter curses on their enemies. Since they were powerless to do anything else, they used their words to lash out at all the people involved in their crucifixion—"You'll pay for this!" "My brothers will avenge me, you'll see!" "I hope you all rot in hell for what you've done to me!" The two men crucified with Jesus seems be doing this kind of thing as they hang from their crosses. Jesus, of course, has every reason to seek vengeance on his enemies. Unlike any other crucifixion victim, Jesus is completely innocent of all wrongdoing! One of the men crucified with him will eventually admit that he and his fellow criminal have in fact done all kinds of bad stuff in their lives, and are really just getting what they deserve. But Jesus is declared seven different times in Luke 23 to be totally and completely innocent! No one has had more reason to respond to mistreatment with vengeance.

But Jesus is also different from those other crucifixion victims in another way. He is not powerless! When he was arrested, Jesus told his disciples, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt 26:53)

1 - FATHER FORGIVE THEM

This reminds me of an Old Testament story in 2 Kings 1, when a wicked king keeps sending groups of fifty soldiers to capture God's prophet Elijah, who sits unguarded on top of a hill. And each time a new group of soldiers shows up, Elijah calls down fire from heaven on his enemies and consumes them! Now here is Jesus, God's Last and Greatest Prophet, on top of another hill, surrounded on every side by cruel enemies. He could have done what Elijah did! He could have prayed "Father, consume them!" and incinerated every person on Calvary. But Jesus doesn't do it. He doesn't call down fire from heaven, or send for twelve legions of angels. He doesn't utter a single curse. He prays. "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Jesus' first word from the cross is good news for us at the beginning of Easter Week; it shows us the ministry Jesus came to provide for us. As Jesus prays for his enemies here, he is intentionally acting like a priest. He is carrying on a pattern of intercessory ministry we find throughout the Old Testament. For example, when Moses leads the people of Israel through the wilderness in Exodus and Numbers, the people repeatedly turn against him, and bring the wrath of God down on the camp. But instead of standing back while God destroys his own enemies, Moses will fling himself between God's blazing fury and the sinners who just knifed him in the back for the dozenth time that month! Time and again, Moses shields the guilty people from the judgment of God. This is what a priest does; this is intercessory ministry; it is the work of a mediator.

This is the ministry Jesus came to provide for sinners like you and me, and we see a tiny snapshot of it in his first word from the cross. Here, we find Jesus interceding with God on behalf of sinners, standing between a holy God and the wicked people who deserve

1 - FATHER FORGIVE THEM

his wrath, pleading with the Lord for mercy. He does this for law-breakers who need that mercy more than their next gulp of oxygen—though they are too ignorant to know that they do, and too hard-hearted to care. Yet Jesus prays for them anyway: “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

But Jesus is also a far greater priest than Moses or any of those other Old Testament mediators! Jesus can do for us what Moses could never do for Israel. Jesus not only asks God to forgive sinners; Jesus *secures* their forgiveness by taking their punishment on himself! Moses stood between the people and the abyss of God’s judgment, but Jesus casts himself headlong into the wrath of God for us. Moses was himself a sinner who needed a mediator; he could not lead the people into the Promised Land and he never made it their himself. But Jesus our sinless Mediator is able to lead us struggling sinners all the way through the wilderness of this world and into the eternal rest of God by his priestly ministry.

There is a world of comfort for sinners like us in Jesus’ first word from the cross. This prayer is a window into the heart of Jesus toward sinners at their absolute worst. Have you ever sinned so badly, or sinned in the same way so many times, that you were sure Jesus must want nothing to do with you? That he was sick of dealing with the same garbage from you, year in and year out? That, if he wasn’t totally angry with you, he was at least embarrassed and exasperated with you? Then come again to the cross of Jesus and listen to his first word—so tender, so merciful, so gracious, so slow to anger, so eager to reconcile—offered up for sinners in the very act of putting him to death! Surely this offers some encouragement to us on this Palm Sunday! Here is “a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb 2:17) Here is the “advocate” sinners need before the throne of God (1 John 2:1)! Here is the one who nudges us toward him with the words of Hebrews 4:16: “Let us then

1 - FATHER FORGIVE THEM

with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

If you want to respond to Jesus’ first word from the cross, start by laying this book down and bringing him all of your sins. Bring all those times you “did not know what you were doing,” as you went with the flow of our God-dishonoring world instead of living for his glory. And then bring him all those times that you knew exactly what you were doing, as you stubbornly went your way instead of his, not caring who you hurt in the process. Bring him all your failures and half-hearted efforts from yesterday, and bring him the most shameful sins from way back in the past—even the ones that seem unforgivable. When you and I come to Jesus as sinners in need of mercy, we will find that he still loves to pray before a holy God, “Father, forgive them.” We can know Jesus’ prayer for us will be answered, because at the cross he purchased our forgiveness by receiving what we deserve in our place. God administered strict justice to his beloved Son for my sin, so he could pour out endless mercy on us. The Bible assures us that Jesus never tires of pouring out these merciful prayers for us: he “ever lives to make intercession” for his people—he is praying and advocating for me right now, to make sure that I make it all the way home! (Heb 7:25, Rom 8:34; 1 John 2:1).

But be careful. Because when the never-ending, never-failing, moment-by-moment mercy of Jesus washes over you, it might just soften your own proud, vengeful heart. You may even find yourself compelled to pray for some enemies of your own (Luke 6:27–36).



2

**"TRULY I SAY TO YOU, TODAY,
YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE."**

.....

Luke 23:39-43

39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

2 - WITH ME IN PARADISE

Jesus addresses his second word from the cross to one of the men crucified with him. We often call him a “thief,” but he is probably a Jewish insurrectionist against Rome. He’s a pretty rough character! Mark says that after they were all crucified, he joined the other criminal in “railing at Jesus,” mocking and demanding that he save them (Mark 15:32). But as the hours wear on, his perspective changes. It seems likely that hearing Jesus pray for his enemies had a lot to do with it (Luke 23:34).

First, he sees *himself* in a new light. Earlier, he saw himself primarily as a victim, griping about the raw deal he’d gotten in life and how he deserved better from God. Now he realizes he deserves nothing from God. He is “receiving the due reward for [his] deeds.” He is overwhelmed by the “fear of God.” With death approaching, it hits him that he will soon give an account to God, and it is not going to go well. *But then he begins to see Jesus in a new light, too.*

Throughout his ministry, Jesus has claimed to be God’s King. He is the long-promised Messiah of the Old Testament, come to rescue God’s people, restore God’s rule in our world, reign over a never-ending kingdom. This claim is what everyone ridicules at the cross: the crown of thorns, the purple robe, the sign over his head declaring him ‘king of the Jews,’ the jeers from the crowd, the “drink” from the sponge. All of this mocks Jesus’ claim to be king. The whole point of crucifixion was to humiliate the victim as a helpless weakling. Jesus’ own followers gave up hope that he was God’s King at his crucifixion (Luke 24:18–21). All this is what makes the criminal’s discovery so amazing. As he observes Jesus, it dawns on him: he really is God’s King! Yes, he looks weak and defeated now. Yes, the world mocks him as a pathetic phony now. But in a flash of faith, the criminal sees past these appearances: Jesus is God’s King! This criminal may not understand how it will all work

2 - WITH ME IN PARADISE

out, but he knows this cross is not the end of Jesus' story. Somehow, Jesus will come through this mess and wind up ruling the world!

Of course, this is exactly what Jesus has been telling his disciples: he is a different kind of king than they expected. Jesus is a king who came not to be served, but to serve; not to surround himself with the impressive and beautiful but the sinful and broken; not to destroy his enemies but to lay down his life for them. Millions of Christians will sing songs and take the Lord's Supper during Easter week to celebrate this. But at the cross, only one person in the whole world understands it—this crucified criminal!

But saving faith requires more than just accurate knowledge about Jesus; saving faith requires *personal trust* in Jesus. And this is exactly what we see from this crucified man: he declares his faith in Jesus. He gasps, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." This is an amazing confession of faith! Jesus earlier called his disciples not to "be ashamed of him" before the world (Luke 9:26). Over all the ridicule and slander at Calvary, this man declares: "everyone else may hate you and despise you, but I confess you as the true king." Jesus still calls his followers to confess him as Lord, and to boldly identify with him before the world. (Rom 10:9–10)

But this criminal also makes an audacious request of faith: "remember me when you come into your kingdom." We would not say it like this. We might say, "Jesus, forgive me!" Or "Jesus, save me!" But the criminal is thinking about that Kingdom Jesus has been talking about. He may be thinking of the Old Testament stories of David, from 1 Samuel. God promised to make David king over Israel. But then David spent many years running from his enemies, living in caves, suffering and humiliated—he did not look much like a king! But a small group of men believed he was the

2 - WITH ME IN PARADISE

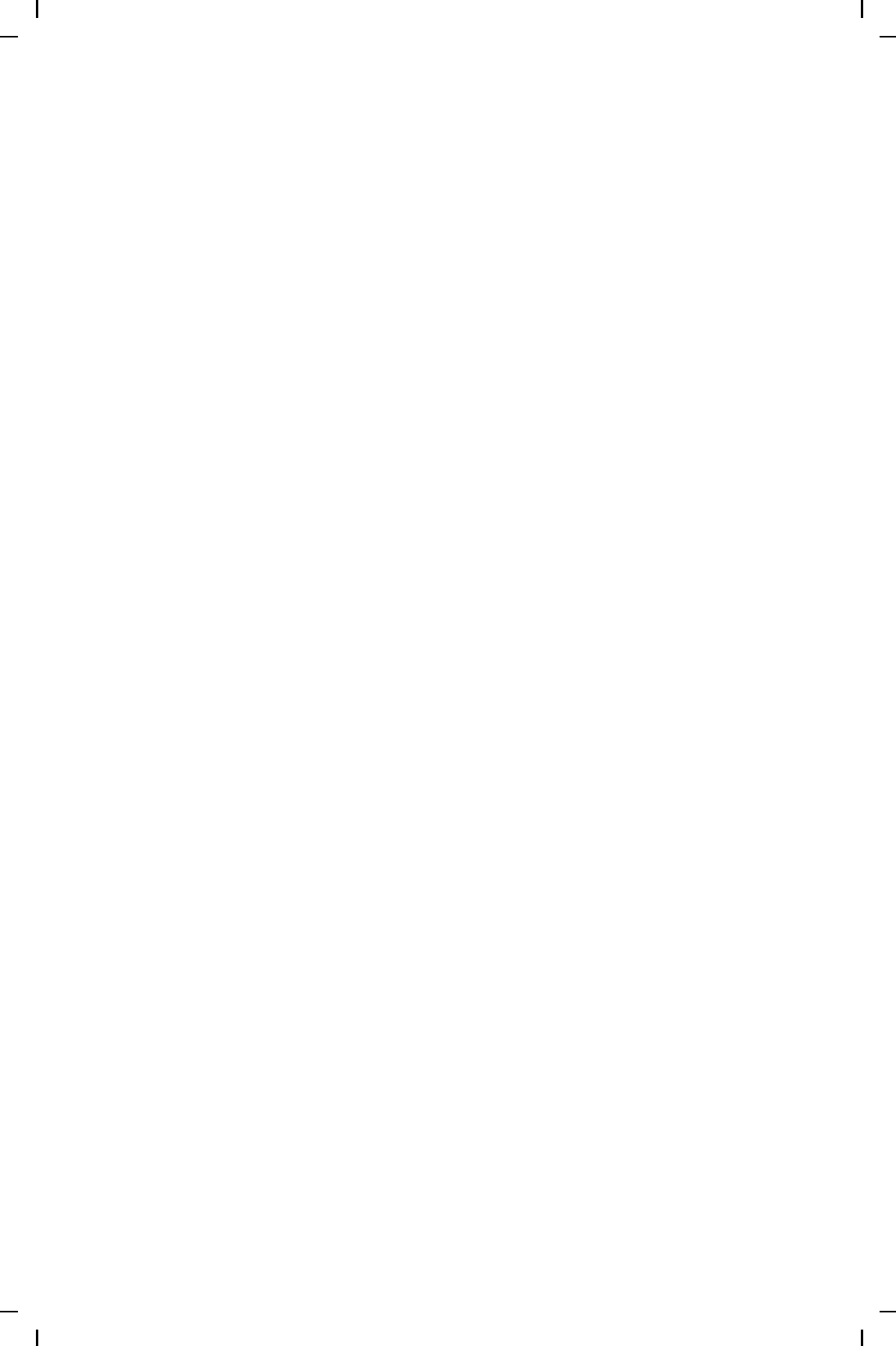
rightful king, and they pledged loyalty to David. They stuck with him through all his trials. So when David finally “came into his kingdom,” he “remembered” and rewarded these faithful friends. This is the idea the criminal has in mind: “Jesus, you may be humiliated and despised now, but I know you will soon trade this cross for a crown. When you have all glory and authority, please remember me! I pledge myself to you now; show me favor then!”

I call this audacious, because there is no reason Jesus should grant his request! Think about it: hours before death, this man realizes he’s wasted his life, and is about to face the music. He also realizes Jesus, who he has ignored and despised until the last thirty seconds, may be able to help him! But what does this man have to offer? A wretched and shameful past he can do absolutely nothing about. And it’s not as if he can promise to do better in the future—he is stripped naked and nailed to a cross for goodness sake! He has nothing to offer. So he does the only thing he can: throw himself on the mercies of the King: “I know I don’t deserve it. But I heard you ask God to forgive those Roman soldiers, and I was hoping you might have some mercy for me. Will you clear some room for me in your kingdom?” It’s an audacious request! How does Jesus respond?

The man addressed Jesus as a king, and I don’t think Jesus ever sounds more kingly than in this second word from the cross: “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.” With this precious pronouncement, Jesus tells us at least two things about the kind of king that he is. First, he is a *great king*. He has the power and the authority to open, at a moment’s notice, the gate of Paradise to whoever he wishes. In Revelation 3:7, Jesus says he is the one who “has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one will open.” (cf Isa 22:22) What could be more important this Easter Week than soberly considering this truth?

2 - WITH ME IN PARADISE

However the world may despise him now, Jesus alone has the power to open, and to shut, heaven's door. But Jesus' words also tell us he is a *gracious king*. Why would Jesus even consider this criminal's brazen request? The guy apparently had no use for Jesus during his ministry, and openly ridiculed him with the rest of the world as he died on the cross. He only drags up to Jesus when he runs out of every other option—then has the nerve to ask for a place in his Kingdom like he's Peter, James, or John! But here's the truth: whatever your story may be, you and I have just as little to offer Jesus when *we* finally drag up to him; and our request that he welcome us into God's family in spite of all our past and ongoing sin is every bit as brazen. But if we will come to Jesus—if we will come dump at the foot of his cross a lifetime of embarrassing sin, a broken and humble spirit, and a flicker of hope that he might take us anyway—we will make the same discovery that this criminal did. Instead of slamming the gate of Paradise in our face, Jesus flings it wide open. He welcomes us into the heart of God today, right now, not waiting until we've straightened up a little bit. The moment we identify with him, he identifies with us: "you will be with me." What a great and gracious king! Have you come to him?



3

"WOMAN, BEHOLD YOUR SON. SON, BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER."

.....

JOHN 19:23-27

23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, 24 so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

"They divided my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

So the soldiers did these things, 25 but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

3 - BEHOLD YOUR SON

One December, I asked a Bible Study group to name their favorite Christmas song. I was shocked that 100% of the women said: “Mary Did You Know?” They each shared how they identified with the complex emotions Mary must have felt as Jesus’ mother, who also needed him as her Savior. Jesus’ third word from the cross reminds me of that conversation; it highlights the uniqueness of Mary’s mother-son relationship with Jesus.

From the moment the angel told Mary that she would bear God’s Son, she has been on a journey in her understanding of Jesus. At his miraculous birth, she “treasured up” all that was said about him, “pondering it in her heart.” (Luke 2:19) Then there was that moment when old Simeon held baby Jesus, and told Mary that he would one day bring her sorrow: “A sword will pierce your soul also.” (Luke 2:35) Twelve years later, when Mary found Jesus in the Temple after three days, Jesus told her, “Don’t you know I must be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49) Jesus went home and submitted to Mary as his mother, but clearly another relationship, another calling, had priority in his life.

Another important transition came at a wedding reception, where Mary was involved with the meal. She rushed up to Jesus and said, “The wine is all gone! Do something!” Like any mother, she had been dealing out orders and requests like this for thirty years! But this time, Jesus calls her “woman.” (John 2:4) It is not exactly disrespectful by first century standards, but he is definitely distancing himself from her: “Woman, what have you to do with me? It’s not your place to breeze up and tell me what to do anymore. My hour has not yet come.” It would have been hard for Mary to hear, but she accepts it. Then she tells the servants to “do whatever he tells you,” and Jesus does more for her than she could have dreamed. The tension builds further when Mary rounds up

3 - BEHOLD YOUR SON

her other sons to stage an intervention with Jesus. But when Jesus hears that his family has come to get him, he brushes them off: “Who are my mother and brothers? My disciples are my family now.” (Mark 3:33–35) I’ll bet Mary pondered *that* in her heart!

Mary’s journey with Jesus has now led her to the cross. I think she is now a disciple. She does not understand all Jesus is doing any more than his followers, but she is devoted to Jesus. In Acts 1:14, she will gather with the rest of the church to await the gift of the Holy Spirit. At the cross, Mary is learning like Paul not to “regard Jesus according to the flesh” (2 Cor 5:16), but as her Savior.

In his fourth word from the cross, Jesus completes this transition. He again calls her “woman,” which must have reminded her of the wedding at Cana. I think Jesus is saying: “I know the sword Simeon talked about is piercing your soul right now. But remember the good news that the angels sang about at my birth? It’s happening now. And when I was twelve and said I must be about my Father’s business? I’m doing it now. And when I told you at the wedding that my hour hadn’t yet come? It’s here now. If you will trust me now like you did then, I will make the wine of the Kingdom’s joy flow into the world and into your life. You carried me, you guided me, you taught me; now I will do that for you. Trust me, like at Cana, and I will give you more than you can dream. I will be your Savior.”

So Mary “loses” a son at the cross, but she gains a Savior. What kind of Savior does she get? The same kind of Savior that we do when we trust him. Jesus is an *attentive Savior*. As a first-century widow, Mary can’t run out and pick up a job. She can’t draw social security. She’s dependent on her oldest son, Jesus. Now he’s dying. And as he hangs on the cross under God’s wrath, this is what he’s thinking

3 - BEHOLD YOUR SON

about! Suspended between heaven and hell, Jesus arranges his mom's end-of-life care! Jesus' instinctive other-orientation is amazing: even at the cross, he prays for his executioners, reassures the dying thief, and now summons his ebbing strength to gasp, "Woman, behold your son. I don't want you to worry about making ends meet, hauling off the trash, getting bullied by Rome, or being alone at Thanksgiving. I've taken care of all that—my friend John will be a son to you. I've taken care of everything." John 19:28 tells us that it's only after he's cared for Mary that he "knows all is finished," and that it's OK for him to die now. This is John 13:1: "Jesus, having loved his own while he was in the world, loved them to the end." When you trust in Jesus, you get a Savior just as attentive to you.

We also get a *righteous Savior*. Taking care of mom is not just "the right thing to do;" it's the 5th command of God's moral law: "Honor your Father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land I am giving you." (Ex 20:12) With his last ounce of strength, dizzy from blood loss, laboring to keep his senses, Jesus keeps that Law. At 8-days-old, Jesus was circumcised as the law commands; on his final day, he honors his mother. Every day in-between, his heart beat to keep God's law perfectly, joyfully, inside-and-out, with unwavering focus, never a moment of drifting, rebellion, or apathy. Now, he finishes his course perfectly righteous by God's standard. Why does it matter? Because God demands a perfect moral righteousness according to his Law from you and me. And, of course, you don't have that. Not even close. I'm not righteous either, and neither was Mary. But when we could not meet God's demands, God sent his Son to meet them for us. Jesus left heaven, became one of us, placed himself under the Law's yoke, and carried it flawlessly for us, to his final breath (Gal 4:4–6). Jesus takes our shabby record from us, and gives his perfect record to us. Hallelujah!

3 - BEHOLD YOUR SON

We also get an *inspiring Savior* when we come to Jesus. Along with Mary, Jesus also addresses “the disciple he loved” with his third word. This is probably John. Jesus’ great love for John compels him to stay at the cross with Mary when everyone else runs away (if John was very young, the Romans may not have seen him as a threat). Jesus looks at John and says: “behold your mother.” Jesus is making John responsible for his mother! What a commitment! It requires John to move Mary into his house, and provide for her until the end of her life. But what an incredible honor! In war movies, sometimes a dying soldier will ask his buddy to care for his family. Maybe a friend has said to you: “If I can’t be here to take care of the people most precious to me, you’re the one I trust the most to do it. Will you?” What an honor. And Jesus tells John: I trust you to take care of my mother. Will you do it?

Can you imagine what it meant to John, that Jesus trusted him with such a precious assignment? He accepts without blinking. Mary leaves Calvary leaning on John’s arm, never to be left alone. When we trust Jesus, he also inspires us to accept new responsibilities and callings. If we have been to the cross, if we have known his personal love for us, we accept any task he assigns. Whatever the sacrifice or commitment it requires, however disruptive to our plans it may be. It’s an honor for our Savior to trust us with anything that is important to him. “Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small. Love so amazing so divine, demands my soul my life my all.” Is this your attitude toward the Savior?



4

"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

MARK 15:33-36

33 And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." 36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."

4 - MY GOD, MY GOD

Jesus' fourth word from the cross—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"—is sometimes called "the cry of dereliction," or "the cry of abandonment." It is by far the saddest and most haunting of his seven words. On first reading, it sounds as if Jesus has lost all hope, that he has completely despaired. The bleakness of the scene is intensified by the crowds' callous response: they don't understand what Jesus is saying, and just use it as another opportunity to ridicule him. Moments later, Jesus dies, draped in darkness, surrounded by enemies who don't understand and don't care. Why does Jesus give this awful cry? And what does it tell us about the cross?

Jesus is not the first to utter these words. He is quoting David, from Psalm 22. As God's anointed king, David expected to experience God's favor and blessing. But in Psalm 22, he finds himself suffering intensely and surrounded by enemies. In his pain, David cries out that it feels like God has abandoned him, disowned him, handed him over to the darkness. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest." (Psalm 22:1-2) It makes sense that Jesus, having spent his life soaking his mind in the Scriptures, would express his heart in the words of Psalm 22 at the cross. Jesus was actually fulfilling David's words in ways David could not have understood when he wrote Psalm 22. David's poetic description of his sufferings in fact provide the most graphic prediction of Jesus' sufferings at the cross in the whole Bible: "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. For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they

4 - MY GOD, MY GOD

stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” (Psalm 22:14–18)

But there is another, more important way that Jesus is fulfilling Psalm 22 at the cross. David only *felt* abandoned by God, though the rest of the psalm makes clear that he really wasn't. At the cross, Jesus does not just *feel* abandoned by God—he *is*. Mark's gospel begins with the sun beaming down on Jesus at the Jordan River, God declaring “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:11) Now, Jesus is swallowed in darkness (15:33), a picture of God's judgment. Instead of turning his face toward Jesus in blessing (Num 6:24), God turns his face away from Jesus in anger. Instead of drawing near to Jesus, God abandons him. As God's Son, nothing could be more horrifying. Until this moment, he has only known the Father's approval and affection. From all eternity, he has been “at the Father's side,” (John 1:18) God's “daily delight” (Prov 8:30), the radiance of his glory (Heb 1:1–2). Suddenly, he is abandoned.

Now we know why Jesus “fell down” in the Garden and begged the Father to “remove this cup from me” the night before (Mark 14:36) In the Bible, the “cup” is a symbol of God's holy judgment against sin and evil (i.e., Psalm 75:8; Rev 14:10). This is the cup Jesus begged the Father to remove from him; as Jesus cries out with the words of Psalm 22, he is drinking that cup down to the bottom. The gospels give surprisingly little attention to Jesus' physical sufferings, because the spiritual reality is far, far more intense and important. For three dark hours, Jesus descends into the horrors of hell. Why?

Jesus has already told his disciples why, though they couldn't understand it at the time: “For the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

4 - MY GOD, MY GOD

Jesus came down from heaven to pay the ransom for sinners. The Bible tells us that we deserve what Jesus endures at the cross for our sin (Rom 6:23). We should be cast into the outer darkness. We should drink the cup of God's wrath. We should experience God turning his face away from us forever. But God has shown his love for us in this: instead of giving us what we deserve, he sent his Beloved Son to take our place—while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8). At the cross, Jesus volunteered to be our Substitute, to “bear our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Pet 2:24). Jesus “became a curse” for us, so that God's blessing could flow into our lives forever (Gal 3:13). Jesus “became sin” for us at the cross, so that he could give us his righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). He drank the bitter cup of God's wrath, so that we could lift up the cup of God's salvation (Psalm 116:13). God abandoned Jesus at the cross, so he could welcome us into heaven. In Jesus' horrible cry from the cross, we hear the beautiful music of the gospel!

Have you received this wonderful exchange Jesus made for you in his death? The people at Calvary did not understand Jesus' third word from the cross. And when you and I have been in heaven 10,000 years, we still will not fully understand the dark night of the soul through which he passed for us. But the little that we do understand is more than enough to move us to worship and adore him.

Jesus' fourth word from the cross also shows us that we can trust God in our suffering. For all his pain in Psalm 22, David declares repeatedly that God is still holy, and will still keep all his promises. Though it may feel like God has cast him off at the moment, David knows God will rescue him, and he will live to declare God's praises with God's people. (Psalm 22:2–5, 22–31) Jesus knows all this when he quotes Psalm 22. And in his fourth word, Jesus announces that

4 - MY GOD, MY GOD

he still trusts God, even in the darkness. With Job, Jesus declares that though God slays him, yet he will hope in him (Job 13:15). Jesus' hope in God will be vindicated on Sunday morning, when God raises him from the dead. God now welcomes his Son home as a conquering hero; he removes his shame by giving him a name above every name in the universe (Phil 2:5-11)! And one day, when Jesus is surrounded in heaven by all those he redeemed by his cross, he will again quote Psalm 22, with joy: "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." (Heb 2:12) But at the cross, Jesus must walk by faith.

Jesus trusted God in the darkness, and on Easter God brought him into the light. With Jesus as our Savior, we can trust God in the darkness too. He is not the last of God's people to cry, "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" As we follow Jesus through our broken world, we will sometimes feel abandoned by God. But Jesus' fourth word reminds us that, no matter how deep the darkness, "he will never leave us or forsake us." (Heb 13:5) Jesus lived as a man of sorrows, and now he can carry our griefs when we unburden our hearts to him (Isa 53:3). Jesus did not remain removed from our suffering; he is a merciful and sympathetic high priest (Heb 2: 17, 4:16). His friends left him all alone, but he is a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov 18:24). He traveled the valley of the shadow of death without a shepherd, so that he could walk with us in every step of our journey. He experienced the anguish of Psalm 22, so that we could live in the comfort of Psalm 23.

Will you trust Jesus to shepherd *you* today?



5

"I THIRST."

JOHN 19:28

28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."

5 - I THIRST

Jesus' fifth word from the cross is his shortest, and probably his least-remembered. Why does Jesus say "I thirst"?

First, we need to simply catch up with the story. Jesus said "I thirst" "after this...knowing that all was now finished." In other words, all that the Father had given Jesus to accomplish was now complete: every prophecy fulfilled, every act of ministry to individuals like the thief, and Mary, carried out. All that is left for Jesus to do now is to die. And it is at this point that Jesus makes his lone mention of physical discomfort at the cross: "I thirst."

Jesus does not complain of thirst like you expect a crucifixion victim to. He speaks with regal dignity, like a king to his attendants: "I thirst." It reminds me of a favorite Old Testament story, in 2 Samuel 23, when King David is fighting the Philistines. They have captured his hometown of Bethlehem. At some point in the battle, David remarks off-handedly: "How I'd love a drink from the well of Bethlehem right now." He didn't mean it literally. But three of David's "mighty men" heard him, and their love for David their king is so great that they immediately attend to his wish. They sneak off from camp. They fight their way into Bethlehem. They make it to the well, and two fight off the bad guys while one fills up a canteen. Then they fight their way out, and make it all the way back to David's camp. When they give David the water, he can't bring himself to drink it. It is too precious, too sacred. So David pours the water out as an offering to God.

This is how you attend to the thirst of a king! Now 1,000 years later, David's greater son hangs on the cross, and says 'I thirst.' But there are no mighty men this time: all his friends have forsaken him. No one attends the thirst of this king. Instead, the onlookers just mock Jesus some more—they raise a sponge of sour wine up to

5 - I THIRST

him on a stick. Another jab at the “phony king.” But Jesus receives the drink with grace anyway. The swallow wets his throat enough for his more famous words, “It is finished!”

Why does Jesus say “I thirst?” Certainly, he is terribly thirsty. But John says he has a deeper purpose: he said this “to fulfill the Scripture.” Most point to David’s words in Psalm 69:20–21: “Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.” As with Psalm 22, David’s sufferings as God’s king in Psalm 69 foreshadow Jesus’ sufferings as God’s Ultimate King. But Jesus’ thirst on the cross points beyond just these specific verses.

Jesus has said “I thirst” already in John’s gospel. He was at a well in Samaria, asking a woman there for a drink. The woman had a checkered past; she had made some bad choices and was now an outcast in her community. After Jesus asked her for a drink from the well, he told her that he could give her living water to satisfy the thirst of her soul: “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.” (John 4:13–14) Later, Jesus would call *all* who “thirst” to come to him and drink; he said that he could not only quench our thirst, but make rivers of living water flow out of our hearts to give life to others (John 7:37–39).

Just as God created our bodies with a physical thirst for water, he created our souls with a spiritual thirst for him. We all have a longing that can only be satisfied in knowing him and his love. God himself is “a fountain of living waters:” an endless supply of life, joy, and satisfaction. He offers himself freely to us! But we are

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threatened by God, and don't come to him to drink. We instead try to maintain our independence from him, while still trying to satisfy our soul-thirst with other things, like acceptance from peers, sex and relationships, money and material things, achievement and success. We tell ourselves: when I just get _____ I won't be thirsty anymore! But only the God who made us can quench the thirst of our souls. Anything else is a broken vessel, leaving us discontented, dissatisfied, restless, and so thirsty. (Cf Jer 2:13; Isa 55:1-2; Rev 22:17)

Beyond just having an unfulfilled life on earth, there are more serious consequences to rejecting the living water of a relationship with God. "Thirst" is often a picture of God's judgment, God's curse (cf Deut 28:47-48). In Luke 16, Jesus tells the story of a rich man who lived his whole life trying to quench the thirst of his soul with money. When he died, he woke up in hell. And Jesus said this man is intensely aware of his awful *thirst*. He's in torment in a flame, and begs Lazarus to come from heaven and dribble a drop of water from his finger onto his tongue. Hell is a place of eternal thirst. It is where we're finally cut off from access to the living water of God that we rejected on earth.

This is why it is good news for us that Jesus said "I thirst" from the cross! Unlike us, Jesus always delighted in the deep well of God's love. From before the world was made, Jesus had been drinking from the fountain of living water. Jesus had never tried to satisfy the thirst of his soul with an idol. But at the cross, as Jesus bears our sin, for our idolatry, for the first time he is cut off from the living waters of God's presence. Jesus is treated like the Samaritan woman deserved to be treated for her sins; he enters the flame like the greedy rich man from the parable; he experiences the thirst of judgment like Psalm 69:3: "I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God."

5 - I THIRST

When Jesus says “I thirst” from the cross, we realize for the first time what it cost him to offer living water to the Samaritan woman at the well. For her to get access to the fountain of living waters, Jesus had to be cut off from them. For her to be spared the eternal thirst of the rich man in hell, Jesus had to experience it for her. For her to drink and be satisfied in God, Jesus had to thirst in her place. But Jesus thirsted for her, and for us, with all the love in his heart! Now, he joyfully invites thirsty sinners like us to come and drink, and never thirst again: “If anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink....and let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” (John 7:37, Rev 22:17)

Have you responded to Jesus’ invitation? Have you received this free gift of soul-satisfying salvation from him? There is nothing left for us to do—Jesus said “I thirst,” because “all was finished.” Come to him with the empty hands of faith and receive his grace.

Maybe you have forgotten that only Jesus can satisfy, and you are trying again to quench your soul’s thirst with the broken cisterns of the world—“when I finally get ____ I’ll be satisfied!” Jesus thirsted for you at the cross to free you from this restless, discontented, thirsty life. Come to him and drink.

If Jesus has satisfied your thirst, then serve him as your king—like David’s mighty men!—with thankfulness and joy.



6

"IT IS FINISHED."



JOHN 19:28-30

28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." 29 A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

6 - IT IS FINISHED

Only John records Jesus' sixth word from the cross, "It is finished," though it appears to be the same "loud cry" that Mark tells us Jesus uttered before he "breathed his last." (Mark 15:37) What does this sixth word mean?

The crowds who watched Jesus dying probably thought that Jesus was just expressing the typical sadness and despair of any crucifixion victim: "I'm finished—they've killed me—my life is over!" But John wants us to know that something very different is going on. Jesus' sixth word, "It is finished" is not the whimper of a victim. It is the shout of a victor! Jesus is declaring that his work is now complete, and he is inviting you and me to come rest in him.

John began his story about Jesus much earlier than the other gospels. Mark begins at Jesus' baptism, Luke starts at Jesus' birth, and Matthew leads us to Jesus' Old Testament family tree. But in John 1:1–18, John begins Jesus' story all the way back before the dawn of time. Here, we peek behind the curtain of eternity and discover that Jesus' story did not begin as a baby in Bethlehem—*Jesus has always existed!* That is because Jesus is God himself, the Word of the Father, the eternal Son of God (John 1:1–2). Before the world was made, Jesus has been "at the Father's side," in close, perfect fellowship with him (John 1:18). We did not know this when we read about the creation of the world in Genesis 1–2, but Jesus was there with the Father "in the beginning;" in fact, it was through Jesus that God created all things (John 1:3–4).

But John also tells us more about what the Father and Son were doing before the world began: *they were forming a rescue plan.* Sometime in the misty dawn before time, Jesus and his Father made a sacred promise to one another: together, they would save the guilty sinners they loved (John 17:1–5).

6 - IT IS FINISHED

Because God is perfectly holy and good, our sin against him deserves God's judgment, his "wrath," and eternal death (John 3:36). But amazingly, God still loves the sinners who "love the darkness" and have run away from him (John 3:19). God's heart longs to restore us to a right relationship with himself. So God the Father proposed to send his Son on a rescue mission. It would be dangerous, and it would be costly, but it was the only way that a holy God could give "grace upon grace" to sinners like us. (John 1:16)

This rescue mission would require Jesus to give up his position in heaven and go down into the world he had made. The mission would require Jesus to conceal his true identity and eternal glory, and accept the humiliation of "taking on flesh" like the people he was saving (John 1:14). But instead of the world receiving Jesus as its rightful king, he would be rejected and hated (John 1:10-11). The mission would require Jesus to place himself under the yoke of the Law of Moses, keeping all of its demands perfectly for thirty-three years. Finally, Jesus' mission would require him to go to the cross. There, as the "Lamb of God," Jesus would offer his life as a perfect sacrifice for sinners (John 1:29). The Father would lay on his Beloved Son all the hell-deserving crimes of his people, and in one dark afternoon, God would pour out on his Son all his just and holy wrath against sin, until the full price had been paid. But three days later, the Father would raise his Son from the dead, and receive him back into his rightful place of glory! Through Jesus' work, all who believed in him would be forgiven of all their sins and receive "eternal life," restored to the relationship with God we were made for.

This is the mission the Father proposed to his Son, and Jesus volunteered without hesitation. He accepted the dangerous

6 - IT IS FINISHED

assignment. He would go on the noble quest. He would carry out the sacrificial rescue operation, no matter what it cost him. He would do it all for the glory of his Father and for the love of his people.

This sacred mission grips Jesus' heart on every page of John's gospel. It's why he talks so much about "doing the will of my Father who sent me." It's why he will allow nothing to keep him from "accomplishing the work" the Father assigned him. It's why, on the night before the cross, we overhear Jesus talking with the Father about how close he is to completing his task and returning home: "Father, the hour has come...I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." (John 17:2, 4-5) The mission is why, though Jesus can knock a Roman legion on their backs with a single word, he goes with them willingly when they come for him (John 18:1-9). The mission is why Jesus makes no attempt to defend himself in his trials before the Jews and Pilate (John 18:12-19:16). The mission is why Jesus endures at the cross all that we have been exploring in our earlier readings—drinking the cup of God's wrath, experiencing the forsakenness of God, submitting to the thirst of God's judgment. And the mission is why Jesus can finally cry "It is finished!" (John 19:30)

This sixth word means that Jesus has fulfilled his mission. He has kept his promise. He has completed his assignment. Jesus is no longer gazing into the horror of judgment; he is looking homeward, to "the joy set before him," and his return to the Father's side (Heb 12:2). Even while he hangs on the cross, three days before his resurrection, the tone of the story is already shifting: from tragedy to triumph, from despair to delight, from misery to majesty, from suffering to satisfaction!

6 - IT IS FINISHED

After beginning his gospel with echoes of the Creation story, John may want us to hear them again. When God looked out on his work of creation at the end of the sixth day, he declared that it was “very good.” (Gen 1:31) God had done all he had intended to do, and was totally satisfied with his work. Nothing left undone. Nothing missing. Nothing lacking. Now, he could rest. Here at the cross, God the Son looks out on his work of *redemption*. All that he had done to secure the salvation of sinners as his Father had called him to do. And Jesus also sees that *he* has left nothing undone. Nothing is missing. Nothing is lacking. “It is very good.” Now, he can rest. And so it is only now, after announcing that “it is finished,” Jesus “bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (cf John 10:17–18)

Because Jesus cried “it is finished!” from the cross, he invites us to come rest in him. Every other religion in the world gives us something *to do* so that God will accept us. Only the gospel tells us that the work *is done*. When we could do nothing, Jesus has done it all for us. He now calls us to receive with the empty hands of faith his finished work on our behalf.

His words “it is finished” are really just one Greek word, *tetelestai*. If you came to my shop in the first century and paid off your account, I might write at the bottom of your bill *tetelestai*: paid in full, account settled, business closed. When you and I trust in Jesus, God writes *tetelestai* on our bill. We don’t have to work our way to God, or perform for him, or impress him. We are unfinished people resting in Christ’s finished work. The only work left for us to do is simply believe in him (John 6:28–29).



7

"FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT."

.....

LUKE 23:44-49

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 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. 47 Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" 48 And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. 49 And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

7 - INTO YOUR HANDS

Luke tells us Jesus spoke one more word from the cross before breathing his last: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” What does this seventh word teach us?

Relationship Regained

Throughout Luke, Jesus has enjoyed an intimate relationship with God as his Father. At age twelve, he had an overwhelming desire to be near his Father: in his Father’s house, about his Father’s business (Luke 2:49). At his baptism, the Father told Jesus, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22) During his ministry, Jesus regularly slipped off to pour out his heart to the Father—his prayers were so familiar and earnest that his disciples asked him to teach them to talk to God as he did. (Luke 11:1–13) Jesus’ greatest joy is his knowledge of God as his loving heavenly Father.

The cross violently disrupted Jesus’ fellowship with the Father. When Jesus “became sin for us,” the warm sunshine of God’s favor was eclipsed by the dark clouds of God’s judgment. The storm of God’s wrath came down on Jesus our Substitute, and he knew the total abandonment of the Father. It was so wrenching for Jesus that he cried out in pain, though not, as he usually did, as “Father.” God seemed far too distant for that. As Jesus bore our curse, he cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

This is why Jesus’ seventh word from the cross is precious! In his sixth word, “It is finished!” Jesus declared that God’s wrath had been totally satisfied. Justice had been perfectly served, sin’s penalty fully paid. So when Jesus addresses God here, he again calls on him as “Father.” It’s still dark on Calvary, but Jesus’ relationship with God has already been restored. Never again will Jesus be separated from the love of God. And if we place our trust in Jesus,

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we never will be either (Rom 8:37–39). In Christ’s death, God was reconciling us to himself, repairing the relationship we had broken in our sin (2 Cor 5:16). Jesus was treated like God’s enemy in our place, so that we—God’s enemies—can be adopted as God’s beloved children, always calling him “my Father.”

Sustained by Scripture

The rest of Jesus’ prayer, “into your hands I commit my spirit,” is a quotation of Psalm 31:5. You may remember from earlier this week how Jesus quoted Psalm 22 from the cross, also. Some have speculated that Jesus prayed straight through psalms 22–31 as he died. We can’t prove this, but Jesus easily could have done it—he likely had the entire Old Testament memorized. In any case, it is a powerful devotional exercise to read Psalms 22–31, thinking of Jesus praying these words as he bore our sin. Stripped and beaten, forsaken by his friends, surrounded by enemies, drenched in the darkness of God’s judgment, Jesus may have prayed...“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want (Psalm 23:1)...Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation (Psalm 24:4–5)...To you O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me (Psalm 25:1)...For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning (Psalm 30:5).”

We can’t know for sure if Jesus prayed through Psalms 22–31, but we do know that the Scriptures sustained him on the cross, just as they did when Satan tempted in the desert (Luke 4:1–12). When Jesus was pressed beyond the limits of human endurance, the Word

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of God he had loved so long was the anchor for his soul. Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of the Psalm 1 and Psalm 119 man, storing up God's Word in his heart, mediating on it day and night. He is the True and Faithful Israel, who lived not by bread alone, "but by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God (Deut 8:3)." Adam rejected God's Word at the tree and brought us death; Jesus clings to his Father's Word at the tree and brings us life. What a Savior! Jesus' perfect reliance on God's Word in our place wins our redemption, but it also teaches his followers how we can live by faith. If intense testing crashed into your life this week, is God's Word in your heart to sustain you?

Resting in the Promises

The specific psalm Jesus chooses as his last word is significant. In Psalm 31, David is surrounded, "besieged," by "adversaries." (Psalm 31:11, 21) They slander and lie about him. They scheme against him. They seek to kill him. "I am in distress;" David cries, "my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also." (Psalm 31:9) Worst of all, David feels he has been "cut off from God's sight." (Psalm 31:22) But despite this pain, David knows God will not forsake him. David is God's anointed king; God promised to rescue his life and vindicate his character. David can't see how God will do this at the moment. But David knows God always keeps his promises. So, up to his neck in trouble, David declares: "Into your hands I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God." (Psalm 31:5) These words reflect such simple, total trust in God's care that Jewish parents taught them to their children as a bedtime prayer, the way we might pray, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

At the cross, Jesus enters a deeper distress than David ever imagined: surrounded by enemies, slandered viciously, and truly

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cut off from God's sight. And unlike David, who escaped death at the time he wrote Psalm 31, Jesus really is about to die. God's wrath has been satisfied, but as the "Last Adam," Jesus still must endure the full scope of sin's curse if he is to break its power over us (1 Cor 15:20–28; Heb 2:12–18). And so Jesus will soon speak no more from the cross. His heart will stop beating. His body will go still. He will be taken down, bound in grave clothes, and laid in a tomb. But even on the precipice of death, Jesus believes God will keep his promises to him: God will rescue his life; God will vindicate his character; God will enthrone him as the world's rightful King! When you read the earliest Christian sermons in the book of Acts, this is how they talk about the resurrection: it is God's response to all the lies and slander about Jesus. When God raises up Jesus, he announces: "I have not abandoned him! He really is innocent! He is the world's True King! He has authority to forgive sin and open heaven's door for all who trust in him. He is my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased!" This is what God has promised Jesus. But first, Jesus must trust him in death.

And Jesus does. He trusts his Father so completely, with such simple, childlike faith, he offers the bedtime prayer Mary and Joseph may have taught him as a little boy: "Into your hands I commit my spirit." On the edge of death on Good Friday, Jesus is as safe in his Father's care as he had been in Nazareth. And if you belong to Jesus, the same is true for you (Phil 1: 18–26; 1 Thes 4:13–18, 5:9–11; 1 Cor 15:20–58). We can trust him even at the hour of death, because we know we are simply "falling asleep in Jesus": our spirits immediately come more alive than ever in his presence, and our physical bodies are temporarily laid to rest to await the final resurrection.

There is great comfort in belonging to a Savior who—like most of

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us will—once had to fall into the sleep of death, clinging to the promises of God. A Savior who spent that long, quiet Saturday, resting in the silence and stillness of a grave. And there is unspeakable comfort in knowing that on Sunday morning, resurrection life came rushing into our Savior's tomb, just like God promised. And as Jesus' heart began to beat again, as his lungs filled up with air and his eyes snapped open...it was time to wake up.

And if we belong to this Savior, then whether we are awake or asleep, in life and in death, we can trust our lives into the care of God. Like Jesus, we will find him faithful.





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