



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Good Friday Seven Words

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Service of the Cross of Christ

Today we focus on the Seven Words that Jesus spoke from the cross. The gospel writer tells us that when they brought Jesus to Golgotha, they offered him gall to drink. Gall was a narcotic. It was something that would have dulled the senses and dulled the pain, which makes sense for the soldiers who are dealing with putting people to death that they would not want them lashing out or verbally or physically attacking them. The gospel writer also tells us that when Jesus tasted it, he refused it. We've looked at, during this Lenten season, how Jesus went to the cross to suffer all that our sins deserve. So he refused anything that would deaden or lessen his suffering. But also, you and I can be thankful that he did not have a narcotic-induced haze so that he could speak these Seven Words of instruction. These are the Seven Words that show us the depth of his suffering and the depth of his love so that we might be able to consider them today and be blessed by God our Savior.

The First Word that we are going to consider comes from Luke 23. It's an amazing picture when you stop and think about it. It pictures for us Jesus as Savior so incredibly clear. Picture yourself in a courtroom. You are on trial. You have been unjustly accused of a crime that could lock you up for years. You know you didn't do it. Your accusers know you didn't do it and as you stand there in the hallway, they give you a knowing smirk before you go in to hear the verdict. As you see that smirk, what crosses your mind?—Father forgive them, they don't know what they are doing? I don't think so. As you hear the lies that have been poured out against you?—Father forgive them, they don't know what they are doing? I don't think so. As you are locked up and as you receive punishment you don't deserve?—Father forgive them, they don't know what they are doing? I don't even think I could form those words with my lips at that point in time.

But here is Jesus, when he is carrying a piece of wood and he can take a step no further without falling down, and instead of whispered threats, whispered taunts, whispered pictures of how he would have his vengeance when he would come to judge those who killed him—there is none of that. You and I are self-centered people very often because we are sinners. But here the sinless Son of God shows us just how selfless he is. His focus is not on himself. His focus is on you. His focus is on me. His focus is on every person he came to this world to redeem, and so he loves perfectly. He says, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." Because Jesus put others first, you and I are forgiven.

Rejoice in the word of Jesus that reminds you that your Savior always puts you ahead of his own interests, and hear it as we read the words from Luke 23:26-34.

The Crucifixion

²⁶As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' ³⁰Then ""they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"" ³¹For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

³²Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

If you remember from the gospels, one phrase that was often muttered and grumbled about Jesus was "this man welcomes sinners." This was an accusation that his enemies often threw against him. It was evidence. It was really a conviction that Jesus couldn't be anything special because a good and godly man would avoid the kind of people that he seemed to frequently come into contact with. He even had a tax collector, Levi/Matthew, that was in his inner circle. It was a way they were trying to put him down.

Certainly we think we would never look down at some other people, would we? But in much the same way, we think we are more worthy of God's love than a serial killer, a terrorist, and with all the discussion on the news that you see over and over about where certain sexual criminals can live or not live in various areas, it is kind of hard for our sinful nature not to cross over to lack of love and say, "they deserve everything they get. They are not as important as I am."

In Jesus' Second Word from the cross, we see Jesus right to the very end doing the thing that irritated his opponents. We see him welcoming sinners. Here is a man who is rightly accused, who is rightly convicted, and who is rightly being punished for his crimes. Here is a man who earlier in the day had been mocking Jesus and also taunting Jesus along with the other one. In some way, shape or form, the Holy Spirit worked in his heart and now he says, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Then as you and I hear Jesus' answer to that request, you and I have to thrill inwardly to hear what Jesus says because there is one thing that becomes crystal clear every Good Friday—you and I are sinners who have killed Christ. You and I do not deserve to be welcomed into his kingdom. You and I find times where we can look down our noses on those we think are less worthy of God's love than we are. But because our God is a God of grace, he never did that to us. This man's plea becomes our plea. "Jesus, remember me. I know my sins killed you. Please remember me in

your love and not in your justice.” Then Jesus looks at us and answers us so that when the day comes when he calls our soul out of this world, he will say the words of love, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” As we hear that, our soul rejoices, “Thank you Jesus. Thank you my Savior!”

We read Jesus’ Second Word from the cross from Luke 23:38-43.

Luke 23:38-43

³⁸There was a written notice above him, which read: |sc THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

⁴³Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

In Jesus’ Third Word from the cross, we see the love of a Son, but we also see the obedience of our substitute.

Did you ever get sent to your room as a child by your parents? Did you ever get so mad when you have been sent to your room as a child that you screamed vile and hatred into your pillow so they wouldn’t hear you? Did you ever do what they told you to do so you obeyed your father and mother, but you wanted them to know with every ounce of your body that you weren’t going to honor them, so every vibration in the floor as you stomped off to do it was to tell them, “I might be doing what you say, but I don’t want to to the very core of my being.”

You and I at times will say, “We did what you said, but...” in reality we failed to honor our father and mother perfectly as our God has called us to do. That, my friends, is another way that you and I have killed Christ.

In his Third Word from the cross, we see Jesus demonstrating perfect love for his mother by providing for her after he is gone. His heart goes out to her as the weight of the sins of the world come crushing down on him. In perfect love, he cares for her. In perfect love, he connects her to John. His perfect obedience of the Fourth Commandment and all of God’s Commandments is ours through faith. This truth empowers us to love the same way that God has loved us. We seek to love perfectly. We seek to be empowered by the gospel so that we can love as we have been loved, and we do it to thank the one who obeyed perfectly in our place.

This is the love that we see as we read from John 19:25-27.

John 19:25-27

²⁵Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," ²⁷and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

In the Fourth Word that Jesus speaks on the cross, things have changed. No longer does he speak on intimate terms with the Father. He doesn't call him Father. He calls him God. At this point in time, the weight of our sins crushes Jesus. It separates him from the Father. He is forsaken. He is alone. The only thing that is with him is our sin and the wrath that God feels for our sin.

Here is a divine mystery. God abandons God. It ought to chill us. It ought to numb us to think that our sins are so great that it caused God to abandon himself.

Last night we focused on Jesus on the night of his betrayal and the gifts he gave. Then after he gave us the gift of the Lord's Supper, he went to the garden and prayed with sorrow to the point of death. Why? Because he knew that God would forsake God. What he was enduring at this point of time of the Fourth Word is hell. Not hell on earth, like you hear people talk about. He was enduring hell—complete and absolute separation from God.

When we have a loved one who is in Christ and who is a believer that is facing death, it is hard. But think about how Jesus endures hell and think about the comfort that we have even in our sorrow that those who die in the Lord do not face hell. We deserve an eternity in hell, but because Jesus went through it in our place, because Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath to the very bitter dregs, you and I don't taste a drop. Jesus forsaken—us forgiven—it's not a fair exchange. But we have learned to call it the Great Exchange because it changes our lives. It shows us how our sins have been taken away by a God who was willing to be abandoned for us.

We read from Matthew 27:45-49.

Matthew 27:45-49

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

⁴⁷When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

It's a simple word that Jesus speaks, the Fifth Word on the cross. He simply says, "I thirst." Here we see him fulfilling Scriptures. Here we see that Jesus is human like us, that he hurt like us, that he was humiliated for us, and that there was healing for us in his wounds, by thirst. Why? Would a little wine vinegar lengthen his life or hasten his death? Not really. But it would fulfill Scripture.

Psalm 22, the Psalm we sang at the end of last night's service to lead us into today's worship, verse 15 it says, "my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth." We hear the Messiah through the pen of David telling us that he would thirst. But it also reminds us that his intense physical suffering was about more than fulfilling the prophecy or what the Messiah would endure. It was about fulfilling the prophecy of what the Messiah would do because Scripture fulfilled in this little detail means Scripture will always be fulfilled. It is what God has promised will be accomplished. The accomplishment of his life's work was at hand. Now that death was near, he drinks this small drink so that he can soon give a cry of victory that the world would hear.

We read John 19:28, 29.

John 19:28-29

The Death of Jesus

²⁸Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹A 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.

One word can make all the difference in the world. Think of the difference in one word when you are in a doctor's office and the test comes back. Think of the difference between the word "negative" and the word "positive" as the doctor tells you about those test results. That is a word that makes a pretty big difference.

But if you want one word that makes a bigger difference, it is in the Sixth Word that Jesus speaks from the cross. In the Greek New Testament, "it is finished" is one word—tetelestai. Tetelestai is also a word that was used by shop keepers. If they had your bill and you paid it, instead of writing paid in full on the bottom, they wrote tetelestai—it is finished.

When Jesus, having his vocal chords strengthened by that little bit of fluid that he drank, came close to the end of his life, he shouts out for everyone to hear, "It is finished"—paid in full. It's an end. An end not to us sinning, because we are still going to sin, but

an end to the power that sin has over us, an end to the tyranny of living in the shadow of the guilt of our sin without an answer for that guilt of that sin. In this unnatural darkness that was there on Good Friday comes this unequalled evaluation—it is finished. From before the creation of the world, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit had known that man would sin, had known that the Son would come to earth, had known that the Son would live perfectly in our place and die in our place. What was planned from before the creation of the world now is at its goal. Salvation completed. Satan defeated. It is finished. A loud voice call can hear.

Today, you and I are the voice of our Lord to tell others that the goal has been reached. It is finished. Sins are forgiven in Christ.

We read John 19:30.

John 19:30

³⁰When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

As we come to the last word that Scripture records for us that Jesus spoke from the cross, we come full circle. The words that began with "Father" went to "God" and now come back to "Father." That intimate connection between the Father and the Son is the focus of Jesus again. "Father I commit myself. I willingly die. I've drank the cup. I've come to the bottom of the cup of your wrath and I have suffered everything that we knew would have to be poured out upon me." And he says to the Father, "I commit myself into your hands. I've suffered hell. I've faced all of Satan's temptations. I have endured it all. Now I'm coming home." A loud voice—a triumphant cry. Mourn at what our sins did to Jesus certainly, but thrill at the knowledge that he did it willingly to bring us to be with him and the Father so that we know that we can commit ourselves into his hands and that his love will receive us.

We read from Luke 23:33-46.

Luke 23:33-46

³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."

³⁶The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

³⁸There was a written notice above him, which read: |sc THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

⁴³Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Jesus' Death

⁴⁴It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.