



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

April 10, 2009

Good Friday Service of the Seven Words

Isaiah 53 (Lesson)

Pastor Randy Ott

Service of the Seven Words

One of the things that was always done when people were crucified by the Romans is that at the beginning of the crucifixion, the Roman soldiers would offer them gall to drink. Gall was a narcotic, a form of a narcotic. You can understand why the soldiers would want to give it to them. It was better to have someone kind of sedated than to have them breathing out curses at you as you were killing them. And you can understand why someone who was being crucified would want gall to drink. The death was excruciating and this narcotic would dull some of that pain.

But as you know from Scripture, our Lord Jesus refused the gall that was offered to him as he was crucified. Because of that, we can come together today and see what our Savior with a lucid mind said as he was crucified for the sins of the world. We can focus on these Seven Words from the cross and find comfort and instruction as we consider them.

Our First Word from the cross we'll read from Luke 23. But imagine the setting. Picture yourself in Court. You've been unjustly accused of a crime that could lock you up for years. If you are in a place that has the death penalty, it could even lead to your death. You walk by your accuser in the hallway and they mock you with a knowing look that it's all lies. They look at you with a sneer. They just want to see you suffer. They want to see you in pain. They want to see you dead. As you stand when the Judge enters the Courtroom, what's the silent prayer that is going through your mind? "Father, forgive my accuser because he doesn't know what he's doing?" I would guess probably not.

What would you want to say to those who are unjustly killing you if that's the point it comes to? What would be on your mind when you're so exhausted you can't carry a piece of wood one step farther? Would cries of anger come to your lips? Desperate whispers that this is unfair? Or would you say "Father, forgive them"?

You and I are sinners. You know what we'd be saying, but here we see Jesus as our Savior. We see him loving perfectly as God had said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Something you and I aren't even interested in doing very often because that sinful beast of selfishness is well fed by our sinful nature. We see that Jesus as he is going to be put on the cross does not find as his greatest concern himself. His greatest concern is you, me, every other sinner that ever has lived, and every other sinner that ever will live. He wants them, and he wants you and me to enjoy the blessings that this salvation was

securing. You and I put ourselves first all too often. Jesus put us first and because of it, 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.

FIRST WORD:

Luke 23:26-34 – *As 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; O 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." ³⁵And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Many accusations were brought against Jesus during his life on earth. One of them was “this man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” You remember reading in the Gospels as the Pharisees and other leaders of the Jews would mutter things like that under their breath as they saw what Jesus was doing. For them it was an accusation. It was evidence that Jesus could not possibly be a faithful servant of God because he stooped down to those kind of people, the kind of people that good Godly people avoided, the kind of people that good Godly people had said “If you associate with them, you are unclean,” even though God had never said that.

We'd never do that, would we? We'd never look down our noses at a terrorist, an abortion doctor, a serial killer? We'd never think that God must love us more than he loves them, would we? Of course we would. Of course we do, because we are sinful, ignorant brutes at times. We think more of ourselves than we should and we value less the love of God because of it.

In this Second Word from the cross, you and I can rejoice because in it we see that Jesus welcomes sinners. He comes for people like you and me that at times don't understand the depths of our sin. The people he was talking to knew the depths of their sin because this man was hanging on a cross next to him.

We see this day. We see the anguish. We see everything that Jesus went through on this day and one of the truths of the matter is that it should not have been Jesus even

for a day. It should be yours and mine for an eternity, for countless days upon days upon days. So as we hear Jesus answer the criminal's plea "remember me when you come into your kingdom," there has to be a thrill inside of us because we know that we are that sinner and his plea is our plea and Jesus' answer to him is Jesus' answer to us even though our sins killed Jesus. "Remember me in love, Jesus. Don't remember me in justice." Jesus looks at us and assures us that when the day comes, when he calls our soul out of this world, he will say to us "Today you will be with me in paradise."

We read from Luke 23.

SECOND WORD:

Luke 23:38-43 – ³⁸*There was a written notice above him, which read:|sc THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

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

⁴⁰*But 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."*

⁴²*Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."⁴³*

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

Our Third Word from the cross focuses on the love of a Son and the obedience of a Savior.

As a child, or maybe you children now, have you ever been disciplined by a parent? Maybe sent to your room? Maybe told to do something else? Maybe you went to your room and you screamed your hatred for your parents into your pillows so they wouldn't hear it because you were so mad and so upset at what they did. Or maybe they told you to do something and you did it but every stare that you gave them, everything your body language said was that you were so upset and so mad at them because they had the audacity to tell you to do something.

Did you ever cross the line that God has drawn in the sand? Honor your father and mother? Of course we have. That's why this Third Word from the cross is so important to us. Because in all the times that you and I didn't honor our father and mother, maybe obeyed, but grudgingly or openly rebelled obedience, we killed Christ. It's a sin that nailed him to the cross.

Here we see Jesus as our perfect substitute. Here we see his perfect love for his mother as he provides for her after he is gone. Think about it. As the weight of our sins is crushing down upon him, his heart goes out to mom. That's his perfect love that

loves perfectly because you and I do not love perfectly. He was perfect where we have failed. His perfect obedience of the Fourth Commandment and all the other Commandments is ours through faith. That truth that God considers us perfect, that he has forgiven our sins, is what empowers you and me to go beyond what we are, to go beyond being sinful human beings to people who have been set free so that we live to serve God now. We're not bound by sin's control any longer through faith in Christ.

Now we, empowered by God's love for us in Christ, seek to serve our God by obeying his Commandments – not because we have to, but because like Jesus now we want to. We do it to thank the one who obeyed the Lord in our place.

THIRD WORD:

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.

The Fourth Word from the cross marks a stark contrast. Now the cup of wrath that Jesus had prayed the night before might be taken away from him if possible is being drank and drunk to the bottom. No longer does he call out to Father. Now he calls out to God because now the weight of our sins is completely and absolutely crushing Jesus. It separates him from the Father. He is forsaken. He is alone. You can very well define hell as the absence of any of God's blessings or presence. That's what Jesus endures now.

The only thing that really is with him now as he hangs on the cross is the guilt of our sin, the punishment of our sin, and the wrath of God upon our sin. I don't know how you can begin to understand this. I don't know that we ever can begin to understand this and if you try to think about it, it ought to send a chill down our spine. God has separated himself from himself. The one who is almighty is hanging on the cross as the God-man and the one who is almighty has removed his presence from himself.

When you or I or a loved one face death, it's hard. But you or I or a loved one who is in the Lord, we have the comfort of knowing that when they die, they go to be with the Lord in the perfection of heaven. But as Jesus is hanging on the cross, God's presence is absolutely and completely removed. This isn't hell on earth. This is hell. This is what he is enduring. He's forsaken so that you and I might be forgiven. It's not a fair exchange, but the result of it is why you and I call it The Great Exchange. It's the exchange that changes our lives.

FOURTH WORD:

Matthew 27:45-49 – 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,^[a] lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"^[b]

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."

The Fifth Word of the cross deals with Jesus' humanity and God's attention to the details. The one who refused the gall to drink at the beginning of his crucifixion now says, "I thirst." Why? Is some drink of something tepid, wine vinegar, now going to lengthen his life or hasten his death? Not really. But it would fulfill Scripture. Psalm 22, the Psalm of Good Friday, the psalmist wrote "My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth." We hear the Messiah saying that through the pen of David.

We see that this intense physical suffering was about more than fulfilling the prophecy of what the Messiah would endure. He was also fulfilling the prophecies of what the Messiah would do. He fulfilled so many of these prophecies of what he would go through, what we read in Isaiah 53 to begin our service. God shows us again and again how everything that happened was according to his plan. And we can be confident that what God tells us that Jesus came to do was accomplished because all these fulfillments of prophecy remind us that Scripture fulfilled also equals promises accomplished. The accomplishment of Jesus' life work was at hand. Now that death is near, he drinks so that he can cry out a victory cry before his Spirit returns to his Father.

We read the Fifth Word of Jesus from the cross in John 19.

FIFTH WORD:

John 19:28,29 – 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.

The Sixth Word shows us the difference that one word can make. Maybe you've experience the difference in your own life in this world that one word can make as you've sat in a doctor's office and waited for results to come back. The doctor comes in, think of the difference one word positive or one word negative can make for you. No matter how much joy or anxiety those words might bring to us, there is one word that makes a bigger difference in our lives for you and for me.

It's the word "Tetelestai" – the one word in the Greek Bible that is recorded for us that Jesus spoke from the cross as the Sixth Word. It's a word that is translated "It is finished." It's a word that shopkeepers would write on the bottom of a bill that was paid in full. "It is finished." It's not his life that he is saying "It is finished" although it about is. It's his work. It's what he had come to do. He had come to pay for the sins of the world, and now it is paid in full. So he announces in a loud voice for all to hear, "It is finished."

Salvation is completed. Satan is defeated. And he desires to continue to announce that truth through loud voices today.

Those loud voices would be you and me. We are that loud voice so that all may hear that the goal has been reached. Sins are forgiven in Jesus.

We read from John 19.

SIXTH WORD:

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.*

In the Seventh Word from the cross as we have numbered them as we've searched the Scriptures, we see Jesus now not addressing his Father as God but as Father again. We see him willingly dying. He drank the cup. He suffered the hell that you and I should have suffered. He faced all temptations. He endured it all. Now he says to the Father "I'm coming home;" a loud voice, a triumphant cry.

Mourn at what our sins did to Jesus, most definitely, but thrill at the knowledge he willingly did it to bring us to be with him and the Father, both now and forever, that one day we too will be able to say, "Father, I'm coming home."

We read from Luke 23.

SEVENTH WORD:

Luke 23:44-46 – *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.*