



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

April 7, 2023  
Good Friday

Pastor Randy Ott

### Service of Seven Words

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Our service focuses on the Seven Words from the Cross. It's said by tradition that the women of Jerusalem would offer gall mixed with something else. It was a narcotic to help lessen the pain of the death on the cross. For our benefit I suppose, Jesus rejected it so He could remain until the end and share these words with us that are comforting and instructive to us today.

The First Word that we'll consider is from [Luke 23:26-34](#). We see Jesus as Deliverer or Savior, someone who takes our place on the cross. But take your eyes off of Him for a moment now and put them on yourself. You are standing in a hallway outside a courtroom. People have accused you of horrendous crimes. They testified and lied. Now you are about to file back into the courtroom to hear the judge's verdict. The main accuser looks at you and mocks you with a knowing look that it's all just a lie and they are getting away with it. You hear the pronouncement of death. You're led outside of the courtroom and the same look is there, the same taunting, mocking look greets you.

What would you say? What would you think? I think I'd list an awful lot of things before I'd get to ***"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*** That's your Savior. That's your Deliverer. We see Jesus crucified and mocked, and He loves those who crucify and mock Him with the same love He has shown to you, to me, and to the entire world. His greatest concern is not Himself. His greatest concern is the souls that He is redeeming. He wants them and us to enjoy the blessing of the salvation that He has completed.

You and I put ourselves first and foremost so often. Jesus never did. He looked for others and He wanted to share love with others, even in His First Word from the Cross. We read:

***As the soldiers 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. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus***

***turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"***

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

The Second Word comes from [Luke 23:38-43](#). One of the often muttered complaints about Jesus was "This man welcomes sinners!" The Pharisees and others at times hurled this at Jesus as accusation, evidence and indictment that Jesus could not be a man of God because He was hanging around with prostitutes, sinners and tax collectors, the people that "good folks" stayed away from.

Today we sound at times like the Pharisees. We look down our noses at people we consider as the terrible sinners. Abortion doctors, pedophiles, serial killers, people who fly planes into buildings. Did you ever think about how you look down your nose at the person you're unwilling to talk to Jesus about? And that you're putting yourself in front of them and your own comfort. You might be rejected so you don't love that person who is separated from Christ enough to talk about Him.

Again, we see Jesus being perfect where you and I, we've often fallen short. We don't love others. We judge others. We look down at others. Jesus loves so completely and so absolutely that He welcomes sinners even while He was dying for sinners on the cross. The day started with both criminals mocking Him. Later in the day, one of the criminals stopped mocking and Jesus welcomed Him with words that bring us great comfort yet today. It's a comfort we need.

On a day like today when we come into worship, I've been told at times "Pastor, I don't like Good Friday. It's too harsh. It's too bleak. It's too dark. It's too black. It's too this. It's too that." Isn't that the point today? We killed Jesus. Our sins led God to leave heaven and come to earth to live and die in our place. It's a blessing and it's a joy, but it is bleak what we have done to our God. So to hear in the midst of what we have done to Him, Him showing love to those who mocked Him, those who rejected Him, those who did not serve Him well, what a wonderful message it is for us as we are facing our own death to hear the words of Jesus say, ***"...today you will be with me in paradise."***

He was perfect in our place and He died in our place. We read:

***There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."***

The Third Word from the Cross comes from [John 19:25-27](#); the love of a Son and the obedience of our Substitute. When you were growing up, or if you are a child now, did you ever get so mad at mom or dad that when they sent you to your room after you were disciplined for something you did wrong you screamed into your pillow how mad you were at them? Or did you ever do what they told you to do but your body language and the thoughts in your head were screaming "This is unfair! You're not being a very good parent right now!" I would imagine we've all been there at one time or another. In the Third Word we see our Savior obeying the Commandment, honor your father and mother, perfectly, in our place because you and I have not.

We see as even the weight of our sins is crushing Him on the cross that His heart goes out to His mother and He provides for her and He cares for her and He loves her perfectly, seeing to it that she would be cared for after He is gone. We see this being done for us because you and I don't do it perfectly. Again, this love that Christ had for His mother we realize is a love for us because He is doing it because we so often have failed to keep these commands. He kept them all in our place, including the Fourth. So now we are empowered to carry out that new command, not just when it benefits us but at all times. We thank the One who obeyed the Law in our place as we are His vocal chords. We read from [John 19:25-27](#):

***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.***

The Fourth Word of the Cross comes from [Matthew 27:45-49](#). In the Fourth Word, things change. In the beginning it was "***Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.***" It's no longer "Father," now it's God. The weight of our sins is crushing Jesus. It separates Him from the Father. God is separated from God. Jesus is

left alone with all of the punishment, all of the guilt, and all of the pain. All of the suffering of hell that your sins and my sins deserve is on Him at this point in time. This is what caused Him to pray with sweat that was like blood the night before, because He knew He would endure hell for you and for me and for the whole world.

When you and I face the death of a loved one, it's hard! It's incredibly hard! But it's not as hard as what Jesus went through. God separated from God. When you and I face our death, as believers, we know that on the other side Jesus is waiting for us with His perfect love. On the cross, Jesus endured the hell you and I deserve. Jesus is forsaken. We are forgiven. It's not a fair exchange, but it's what we call The Great Exchange. We read from [Matthew 27:45-49](#):

***From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."***

The Fifth Word from the Cross is recorded for us in [John 19:28, 29](#). "I thirst." Of all the words that Jesus spoke, it seems strange that this one is recorded for us. But then when we remember, it was there to fulfill Scripture. In these words we see Him not only fulfilling Scripture, the prophecy that came from [Psalm 22:15](#) (***my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth***) as the Messiah was speaking through David, but we also see Him as human. He hurt like us. He was humiliated for us. He was hurting for us in His wounds. "I thirst." Would a little wine vinegar extend His life? Would it make things better now? No, it would fulfill Scripture.

Here we see our God doing more than just fulfilling Scripture. Here we see what the Messiah would endure. But we also see, in His fulfilling of the prophecies, what the Messiah would do. Scripture fulfilled for us means that all of the Scriptures' prophecies are fulfilled for us. The accomplishment of His life's work was at hand. Now that death was near, He takes a drink so He can cry out a victory cry before His Spirit returns to His Father. We read from [John 19:28, 29](#):

***Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." 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.***

The Sixth Word from the Cross is [John 19:30](#). There are times in your life when one word makes all the difference. When the doctor comes and says "Here are the test results..." "...positive for cancer." "...negative for cancer." One word can make a huge difference, but not as big a difference as the one word Jesus speaks in Greek in the New Testament, which is translated three words in English. That one word in the Greek is "Tetelestai." "It is finished." It's the word a shop keeper would write on a bill when the bill was paid in full.

This word is a reminder that you and I do nothing to pay for our sins. What was finished was not Jesus' life, it was His work; His mission to come and buy us back from the guilt of our sins. Our sinning isn't finished. We still sin. But we're no longer controlled by sin and the guilt of our sin is taken away through faith in Jesus' life and death. That one word makes all the difference in your life and in my life and then the life of every Christian. "Tetelestai."

If you go down in the basement today, there are three bracelets down there. Help yourself if you want this as a reminder of the one word that makes all the difference. Even if you don't have a bracelet, remember you are the loud voice that Jesus cries out with today so that others may know what He has done for them. The goal has been reached. Sins are forgiven. We read [John 19:30](#):

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

The Seventh Word comes from [Luke 23](#). Once again Jesus returns to addressing His Father as "Father." "I commit my Spirit." Willingly, Jesus dies. He drank the cup. He suffered the hell that I should have faced, that you should have faced, that all of humanity should have faced. He endured it all. Now He says to the Father, "I'm coming home."

Mourn over what our sins did to Jesus, on this day and every day as you repent, but thrill at the knowledge that He willingly did it to bring us to be with Him and the Father, both now and forever. We read from [Luke 23:33-46](#):

***When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING***

***OF THE JEWS. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."***

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

***And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.