



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

March 29, 2024
Good Friday

Pastor James Enderle

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.

FIRST WORD: [Luke 23:26-34](#)

When people wonder about God, they want to see what God is like. Often we say, as Christians, look to Jesus. Look to Jesus to see what our God is like. We will see someone who is very different than we are. We are often fickle. When we are wrong, we make ourselves victims and we want revenge. We want people to get their justice, and we want to make it known when things aren't fair.

For Jesus, things were not fair. He was innocent. But here we see His love and His forgiveness. We see the forgiveness of God and Jesus as He speaks to those who are crucifying Him and says, "Father, forgive them." And to those who show mercy to Him, He tells them to think about themselves, not to worry about Him. We have a God who forgives those who hurt and kill Him. God tells us to love our enemies, not just our family and friends. Here is that perfect example as Jesus forgives those who crucify Him, His enemies.

More than that, we need to hear these words about ourselves; that He forgives us, those who put Him on the cross. In these words that Scripture speaks ring true—that Christ loved us so much that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. We did nothing to earn His forgiveness, but instead, He loved us when we were unlovable. So we hear the First Words, the First Words that embodies the whole point of why we are here, forgiveness. Our God loves us and we know it's true because He loved us and sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us and to forgive us of our sins.

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸ Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ 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!' ³⁰ Then

**"they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!"
and to the hills, "Cover us!"'**

³¹ For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ 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. ³⁴ Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

SECOND WORD: [Luke 23:35-43](#)

It's been said that Jesus Himself is kind of this crisis point in peoples' lives. As they are given the evidence and given who Jesus is, you kind of have to decide what is true. Is Jesus just this other person, just this man, just this person leading a rebellion, just a good teacher, and all these different thoughts? For the people of His time, many of them rejected Him. Many of them mocked Him for what He said He was. But there are many who believed.

For us today, it's the same question. What do we do with Jesus? If He is who He says He is, as we'll see what the people say, "If you're the Messiah, if you're the Chosen One," it means something as we follow Him and understand what He teaches and what He has to say for us. It means something—that we're forgiven and that we can love and know that we are loved. We can know we're loved and forgiven and then we can love others. Then most of all, we know what is in store for us—that though there may be troubles in this life and this life may be good and bad at times, what awaits us is peace and joy forever in heaven; an eternity in paradise.

We see for the criminals on the cross, Jesus was that crisis point. As they both mocked at one time, we see one then confess and say he believed that Jesus was innocent; that He did nothing wrong. So he asks Him to remember him when He goes into His kingdom. Jesus gives these words of comfort, these words of comfort that ring true for this criminal but ring true for us and for every loved one that we've had depart us. As Jesus says, remember "today you will be with me in paradise." We know that is true. As we die, we will be with our Lord and Savior, with Him, forever, in heaven.

³⁵ 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."

³⁶ *The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar³⁷ and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."*

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

³⁹ *One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? 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?"⁴¹ We 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 *Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

THIRD WORD: [John 19:25-27](#)

We see Jesus cares for us spiritually and eternally, but that's not the only way that our God cares for us. We see in His moment of pain and suffering, the utmost pain and suffering as He is dying for the sins of the world, what does He do? He shows care. He shows care for those most dear to Him; to His mother and that disciple that was closest to Him.

I think as we hear these words and we think of this situation, we struggle sometimes to say "Life is hard, so does God care about what happens in my life; about sicknesses; about relationships?" We know He does. We know that as God cares for us spiritually, He also cares for us in this world. We see the care that He has for His mother. Even in these dying moments, He gives this disciple to care for her.

What blessings our Lord has given us in so many ways. The family of Christ, family members, those who can guide us and help us most of all, to be with us, to lead us spiritually back to our Savior. So we see Jesus cares not just for us spiritually, but also for us physically in giving us relationships and caring for us even in our times of need.

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

FOURTH WORD: [Matthew 27:45-49](#)

Often as we look at life and look at our sins, we might wonder and say "Does God understand what I'm going through? Am I being punished? Has God forsaken me? How could these things happen? How could I be led to do these things? Life just seems horrible at this time." The truth is, though, we don't know what it really means to be forsaken by God. We struggle with our sins. We struggle with the consequences of our sins. We struggle with a world that is filled with sin, both in nature and sins against us all the time. Yet what would it truly be like to be forsaken by God? We can't imagine.

That's what hell really is—to be separated from God's love. This is what Jesus suffers on the cross for you and for me. We see though He was perfect, the other criminal on the cross got it exactly right, that they were getting what they deserved, but Jesus was innocent. He didn't deserve to die. He didn't deserve to suffer, but there on the cross, He was suffering for the sins of the whole world, for you and for me. And therefore, He was forsaken. He was suffering your and my hell so that we would not face hell.

We will never know what it is like to be forsaken by God. That idea, that concept should astound us and make us so thankful to understand our Lord and our Savior, Jesus, took hell upon Himself so that we will not face hell but have heaven in store. We read how our Savior was forsaken for you and for me and for the whole world.

⁴⁵ From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶ 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?").

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

⁴⁸ 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. ⁴⁹ The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

FIFTH WORD: [John 19:28-29](#)

As we look to who Jesus is and the whole concept of God coming down to become one of us, we see in these words what it meant to be Jesus. It was so important for Him to be God, to come down and be perfect, but also to be man, to be born under the Law and to be able to suffer for those who were under the Law.

Hebrews talks about how we have this amazing High Priest, not like in the Old Testament. A priest had to offer sacrifices over and over again and offer sacrifices for himself because he, too, was sinful. We have one who was perfect in every way. Yet He

resisted every temptation. He knows what it is like to be tempted, to be like you and me, to be afflicted by the devil's assaults and accusations, but He stood strong.

It boggles our minds to understand why Jesus would leave heaven and perfection to become a man, to be like one of us, but this is that love unknown; that great love that God has for you and for me that He would humble Himself to be born of a woman, to be born in order to suffer on a cross for you and for me.

So in this Fifth Word, we see the humanity of Jesus. He experienced the death of loved ones. He experienced what it meant to be betrayed. He was accused when innocent and all of this was done in your place. He did it all perfectly so that you and I can know that our sins are forgiven. We hear of Jesus' humanity as He suffered in our place.

²⁸ Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ 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.

SIXTH WORD: [John 19:30](#)

When we talk about Jesus being a crisis point, we often think it's good to compare what religions think. You might say that there are many religions in the world. There could be thousands or millions. You could also say that there are two. There is either the work-righteous religion or the religion where we are saved by grace; saved because of nothing that we do but because Christ did it all; saved by faith and the work of Jesus. This is what that Sixth Word is all about.

In this Sixth Word, as He says "It is finished." We have three words, but in the Greek it is "Tetelestai," just one word telling it all. It is finished. It is done. You might say that's just Jesus on the cross saying He's dying, but it's so much more. The work of salvation, the plan from the beginning of when Adam and Eve first sinned and He promised that an offspring would come to crush the head of the serpent, it is finished. So we don't have to worry and wonder if I'm good enough, if I have done enough, or if after I believe I have to show I am good enough. It is finished. What beautiful words to know that your salvation is complete. There is nothing you can do to add or subtract. It is finished—the work of Christ.

So we look upon Christ. We look upon what He has done and we rejoice, knowing that our salvation is complete. Thankful that we're not asked to do more or to prove ourselves or to prove our faith, but just to trust in Him and know that He has done it all. Through faith in Christ, we are assured we are forgiven and have heaven in store. So trust those beautiful words that Jesus speaks. It is finished. The verdict is in. You are forgiven.

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

SEVENTH WORD: [Luke 23:44-46](#)

When our world thinks of the word “commitment,” what do you think about? How do you feel when you are committed to something? I think more and more our world cringes at the idea of commitment because it doesn’t trust people, doesn’t trust companies and businesses. It doesn’t like to sign binding contracts. You can even see that in marriage. People don’t like the idea of being committed for life.

But commitment can be a really good thing when you are committed to something that is very good and that person is going to love and give you compassion. When we are committed and that person who is committed to us has good things for us, commitment is amazing. When you think about being committed to the right thing opposed to being committed to the wrong things, commitment really helps us understand how blessed commitment is.

As we look at Christ and His commitment, He was committed to you and to me as He resolutely set out to the cross. He knew what needed to be done, even if it meant His death and suffering hell for you and for me. We heard Him pray that even if there was another way for God to allow it, but He was committed that even if there was no other way, He would still go to the cross. As we hear His commitment and He gives His spirit to the Lord, to His God, we know that His work is done. He has committed His life, His work, His ministry to salvation for you and for me. What a beautiful commitment that was and what the means for you and for me.

We know what that means for us, that God is committed to us. Our Savior is committed to us and giving us that peace and forgiveness, that salvation. So when we look at understanding what it means that we commit our lives to God, we know it’s not one of Law because we just heard it is finished. It is trusting that God has what is best for us, that He has grace and forgiveness and heaven in store, all because of what God has done for us through Jesus; through Jesus our Savior, who is always committed to you and to me and to His Father’s will of bringing us grace, forgiveness and heaven through His death and His resurrection. We read the Seventh Word as Jesus gives up His life and commits His soul to His Father, showing His work is done.

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