

Sermon for Good Friday

Date: April 2, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Sermon Title: Jesus Last Words from the Cross

Introit: Psalm 2

Hymns:

LSB 607 – From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee

LSB 447 – Jesus, in Your Dying Woes

LSB 451 – Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted

LSB 690 – Hope of the World



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Peace to you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

The First Words

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."¹

The Heavenly Father's beloved Son, with Whom the Father is well pleased, as His crucifixion begins and His suffering excels, pleads with His Father, not for vengeance on, but forgiveness for, those who crucified Him. Do you not hear the wonder of it?

The First Word from the Cross is the very reason Jesus was on the cross, for the forgiveness of sins! From the cross Jesus prays that all those who had any role in His crucifixion would be forgiven as they are led to turn, in sorrow, from their sin and to trust God for forgiveness.

Like those driving spikes into Jesus' body, nailing Him to posts, you and I are filled with sin. Our sin put Him there. It is the reason He is there. He is there for you, and the soldiers, Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, Judas, Adam.

There Jesus not only is crucified, but He also intercedes for us all. Our great High Priest's sacrifice and intercession make possible our salvation and transformation, so that we in turn plead with our Heavenly Father not for vengeance, but forgiveness for those who wrong us in any way.

1 Luke 23:34

The Second Words

Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”²

Jesus’ prayer for those responsible for His crucifixion was “forgiveness.” Forgiveness given immediately, as one of the sinners for whom Jesus was dying turns from his sin and trusts God to forgive him, for Jesus’s sake.

The criminal, in repentance, who just earlier had reviled Jesus.³ Now, seeing Jesus’ grace, mercy, and peace for those crucifying Him is led to repent and believe in Jesus as the promised One, the Messiah, his Savior. The faith that the criminal had cried out for the forgiveness that would open to him the Kingdom of Heaven.

That cry was itself immediately answered with Jesus’ very public, but also very individual, absolution or forgiveness. In His Second Word from the Cross, Jesus most-assuredly assures the repentant criminal, on that very day he would be with Jesus in paradise. There would be an end to the suffering.

As we seek Jesus’ forgiveness, in Confession and Holy Absolution, we have the same sure and certain promise, and we are at peace with God and with one another, looking forward to the eternal day of our Lord’s Kingdom.

2 Luke 23:43

3 Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32

The Third Words

Jesus said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!”⁴

No depth of woe would keep our Lord from exercising care. Jesus lovingly entrusts His mother’s care to the disciple John, Jesus’ mother Mary was to look to John as a son, and John was to honor her like a mother.

In Jesus’ Third Word from the Cross, the Church hears Jesus’ entrusting the care of the Church to Her ministers, who should care for the Church as She looks to them for care.

In the Church, as God’s Word transforms us, making us His children, born of God from above in the water and Word of Holy Baptism, we love Him, and our neighbors, no matter how lowly, poor, or feeble they may be.

In the family of God, for whom our Lord was willing to be betrayed and crucified, we are able to exercise our care for those around us. Behold your children, parents, your brothers and sisters in Christ!

4 John 19:27

The Fourth Words

Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” That is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”⁵

As darkness and death closed in on the crucified Jesus, He calls out the Fourth Word from the Cross. In the words of Psalm 22, the Words we heard as the altar was stripped last night, Jesus cries.

God had made Him who knew no sin, to be sin,
for our sake, so that in Him
we might become the righteousness of God.⁶

God the Father saw, not His holy Son, but our sin, and in His righteous wrath God abandoned Him. Unleashed on Jesus was the full force of God’s wrath and Hell’s hate. We could not imagine the horror of such a thing.

Yet, God Son does not lose faith, and continues to call to the Father. In calling out to the Father He is also calling us to faith. Quoting Psalm 22, a messianic Psalm. A Psalm foretelling of the coming Messiah. A foretelling fulfilled in Jesus, nail to that cross.

We are the ones who deserve to be forsaken and abandoned by God. Yet, because Jesus carried the burden we deserve, God does not forsake us. When we call to Him in repentance and faith, we are not alone. God’s promise is true: God will not leave us or forsake us.⁷ We need not despair. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.⁸

5 Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22:1

6 2 Corinthians 5:21

7 Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5

8 Romans 8:39

The Fifth Words

Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said, to fulfill the Scripture, “I thirst.”⁹

Jesus is there to fulfill the foretelling. He is there to fulfill all that the Bible said He would do, long before He came in that manger. This was one more thing that needed to be done.

Knowing that all was being finished, in the Fifth Word from the Cross, as this prophecy is fulfilled, so is the need to have His lips and throat readied for the cry that is about to come, in His final Words before His death.

His thirst should prompt in us a hunger and thirst for righteousness.¹⁰ A Hunger and thirst for our Lord’s Holy Meal that quenches and calms out soul.¹¹

9 John 19:28; Psalm 22:14-15

10 Matthew 5:6

11 John 6:54-56

The Sixth Words

Jesus said, "It is finished."¹²

With His throat quenched and clear, Jesus speaks. He speaks words that are not only for those in ear-shot. He speaks words that are not only for us. These words are words of victory, power, and conquering might. "It is finished!"

As He closes His quote of the Messianic Psalm, like a stamp "paid in full" Jesus' perfect life of love has now finished all that He left His throne above to do, for you.

Jesus perfectly kept the Torah Law that we fail to keep, and Jesus perfectly paid the price for our failure to keep that Law. There was nothing left for Jesus to do, and there is nothing left for us to do, for our salvation. It was done. It is finished.

There were things that still needed to be done:

Jesus would descend into Hell and the third day rise again from the dead, but those declare what He had already done on the cross.

Jesus ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, but that is where He applies to us what He already has done on the cross.

Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead, but that will be the final realization of what He has already done on the cross.

For us and for our salvation. There is nothing left to do.

¹² John 19:30; Psalm 22:31

The Seventh Words

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.¹³

His final Words from the cross, in prayer, commit His spirit into His Father’s hands. Scripture states, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.¹⁴” Indeed, for the sinner, like you:

who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace¹⁵

it no doubt is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the righteously-angry living God. Yet we, the faithful, as we repent and believe, find God who has poured out His wrath on Jesus, is no longer angry with us, and no longer sees us as sinners.

Like His only-begotten Son, with Whom the Father was well pleased, we can commit our spirits into grace, mercy and peace found in gracious hands of our Heavenly Father. The day will come when we also will breathe our last. May we like St. Stephen, in that moment pray for the Lord Jesus to receive our spirit.¹⁶

Whether we ourselves pray, or the Holy Spirit prays for us,¹⁷ we, like our Lord Jesus, so depart in peace. Amen.

Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people



13 Luke 23:46

14 Hebrews 10:21

15 Hebrews 10:29

16 Acts 7:59

17 Romans 8:26