

# Good Friday 2010

## The First Word

We call this Good Friday. “Good.” We call it good when we see a man die – and not just die, die brutally. “Good.” We’re here to contemplate the most famous 6 hours in the history of the world – to witness the most talked about execution that has ever happened. We are here to witness the blood and the brutality of scourge and nail and thorn. And we call it “Good.”

How can we call this good? In order to do that, we need to open more than our eyes tonight. We need to open our ears to that man on the cross as he demonstrates for us what makes what we see this Friday “Good”. You see, this wasn’t just an abomination of justice and the worst case of police brutality ever. This wasn’t just a good man meeting his end for a cause. There was something more.

You see, this execution, ultimately was God being God, God showing us who He is and what he is all about – God opening our eyes to who he is by opening our ears to what His Son said as he died. So let’s listen tonight to the seven words, the seven sentences Jesus spoke from that cross between 9am and 3pm on that first Good Friday.

And it starts in Luke 23 – as Jesus, beaten and bloodied, prayed: “**Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**” Listen to that. This is not just an execution. This is God being God, God keeping his promise of the One who would crush Satan’s head by having his heel crushed, the One he promised would be pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. This is the One upon whom the punishment that brought us peace was and by whose wounds we are healed. God said it hundreds of years earlier – and now Jesus prays – for you and me.

And in the process, God reveals His incomprehensible, unexplainable, astronomical love. This is who God is - because, of course, our sins demanded this punishment. And God so loved the world that he placed it on His Son. God kept his promise, God showed His love...and Jesus prayed, Father, forgive .

And with that prayer, he banished the stain of our sins from the mind of God forever. His word has power. God’s promise is kept. We read the first word, recorded in **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. 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 barren 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 men 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, there they crucified him, 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 – Luke 23:38-43**

Death by crucifixion was reserved for those whose death needed a statement. They were so low, so vile, so sinful, that their existence had to be snuffed out gradually and painfully as a statement to all who passed by.

It takes one to know one, doesn't it? Two vile criminals hung next to Jesus. As to be expected, the one criminal continued his love affair with sin and hate as he ridiculed Jesus. The other, by the Spirit's power, realized that this man was not one of them. He knew sinners. Jesus was not a sinner. No, Jesus was, as the sign read above his thorn crowned head, "The King of the Jews." Jesus was the promised Messiah, the perfect Son of God, the Savior. Here he hung with criminals. The one criminal saw his Savior and though he knew he didn't deserve heaven or his love, made a simple request, "*remember me.*"

Jesus hung on the cross for that man and his sins. Jesus hung on the cross because he loved that thief. Jesus hung on the cross because he loves you. Jesus hung on the cross to pay for your sins. We don't deserve his time, or his attention, let alone his love, but in Spirit-worked faith we make that simple request, "*remember me.*" Jesus' answer is the same for the thief, for you, for all, "*I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.*"

The thief, though rejected by his fellow men for his sins, was forgiven and accepted by his Savior, Jesus. The thief, though crucified outside Jerusalem for his deeds, was welcomed into the perfect and eternal Jerusalem because of God's grace. The thief, though comforted by Jesus, brings us comfort because Jesus promises us the same thing. We will be with Jesus in paradise, in the true Jerusalem. What a comfort to know that our sin is forgiven and our home is in heaven with Jesus. We will be there with him in the heavenly Jerusalem.

### The Second Word – Luke 23:38-43

*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 Christ? 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, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*

## **The Fourth Word**

No longer did Jesus call him Father. No longer did he beg him to forgive those who unknowingly crucified the Lord of Glory. No, now at the climax of Christ's work, we see him in the very depths of hell. In some way, known only to God, all the timeless sin and shame of the world, wave upon wave, deeper and deeper, came over him. And God made the Holy One to be the Sinner...to be the world's Greatest Sinner...to be the world's Only Sinner.

He became the sin of Jonathan Scharf. And because of that God turned his back and punished Jesus Christ with all the hell that I deserve. God forsook God...

Why? So that I never will be forsaken. Christ went down into the very depths of sin and shame, so that you never will. The fires of God's judgment burned themselves out on Christ. Like firefighters battle a forest fire by burning a section ahead of the fire so that the wildfire

can't spread anymore, creating a safe spot - you and I stand safely in Christ, where the fires have been.

In this 4<sup>th</sup> word, our Savior asks a question. God's answer is: Because I love my children so much. Hear the question in **Matthew 27:45-49**

*From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About 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?" 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 stick, 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 – John 19:28-29**

Every detail had to be perfect. The king was coming back and all the servants knew that if anything was wrong, any detail overlooked, it would mean their life. The king was just. He accepted nothing less than perfection. He demanded perfection. That's why he sent his Son to them. You see the servants were anything but perfect. They had overlooked details of the King's instructions. They had blatantly ignored and done the opposite of the king's demands. They would all lose their lives if the king came back to this. So, in mercy, the King sent his Son. The Son fulfilled all the King's demands on behalf of the servants, and without their help. The Son took care of every detail, even the smallest. That way when the king came back, all the servants would be spared.

Jesus fulfilled every demand, every prophecy of God, all of God's laws; so that when the King of Kings comes back he will come back to welcome us to heaven and not to crush us. Jesus fulfilled even the smallest of prophecies, even the one about his thirst. Jesus must have thirsted long before this moment. Consider his trial, his flogging, how he carried his cross through the dusty streets of Jerusalem, how he hung in the dry air and suffered, suffered hell on that cross. But here now, after he knew all was fulfilled, he speaks this one word, "dipsw," "I thirst." Jesus showed himself as true man with thirst. Jesus showed he was God and perfect by fulfilling even this little detail for you and for me so we may one day stand before the king. Jesus' lips and throat were wetted to fulfill prophecy and rally the strength to cry out his last words.

*The Fifth Word – John 19:28-29 – Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the 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 a hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips."*

### **The Seventh Word**

Everything has changed. The time came when that had to be obvious to every human being alive. From the 6<sup>th</sup> hour (high noon) until the 9<sup>th</sup> hour (3pm) darkness covered the land. It was not an eclipse. It was not just a storm. Something was wrong.

Humans have found all sorts of ways to meet death, from the defiant machismo that goes down in a blaze of ill-advised glory, to the kicking and screaming, begging and pleading of the villain. Death has been met with calm resignation and fear and trepidation. But never has this world seen a death like the one we glimpse tonight.

When we humans die, we often leave things unfinished, some even unbegun. There is often that reluctance to go. Not for our Savior. Having declared his work finished, he protests nothing, he sheds no tears, he is neither defiant nor resigning. Instead, in this seventh word – we hear the triumphant entry into a glorious life. **Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.** Let us not miss the meaning of this. He has now turned from earth into heaven. He has transformed the cross into the crown. He died, only to live again.

So the sting is gone from your death. The grave becomes a gate. The fear becomes faith. Jesus guaranteed it, and like him, we can meet our end here as our beginning there. With him, we can speak “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”  
Amen.

This 7<sup>th</sup> word is recorded in **Luke 23:33-36**

*It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, 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:*