

Seven Words

Luke 23:33-49,

Good Friday, April 3, 2015

Sermon Text: *“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This Is The King Of The Jews. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.”*
Luke 23:33-49 (KJV)

Beloved of the Lord.....It is written in John 20:31, *“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* These words, “these are written”, include all the words we just heard this evening regarding the crucifixion and death of our dear Savior Jesus Christ, written so we might have life through His name.

Regarding the crucifixion of Christ, the piercing of His hands and feet, let us remember Jesus kept and retained these nail prints for us in His body, upon that tree. Isaiah writes, *“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”* His hands reveal His love, and His nail prints are still there.

On the cross, above His head was likewise the sign provided by Pilate, *“Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”*. This angered the Jews greatly, but it gave pleasure to Pilate, for Pilate hated the Jews just as much as the Jews hated Pilate. Yet Christ suffered on the cross for them all, even the whole world, and the superscription was God’s handwriting

to the same world by means of unbelieving Pilate. This teaches us God reigns over the heathen against their will, to God's own glory. Psalm two says, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

As Jesus suffered agony of body, at the foot of the cross four soldiers were stationed. They watched Him there. And even before Jesus was dead, they gambled for His clothing, the spoils of their labors. So God's prophesy in Psalm 22 was fulfilled, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." According to tradition Mary (the mother of Jesus) had woven for Him a vestment of cotton, and there were no seams to the garment, so it could not be torn apart. There is nothing magical or mystical here as some suppose, but it is a good way for us to be reminded about how Christ through the cross has placed upon us a robe of righteousness which cannot be divided nor torn asunder. Isaiah 61:10 says, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." And so Jesus was nearly naked on the cross, that our nakedness might be covered with grace.

While on the cross Jesus also endured the hatred and mockery of the world. "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." So the world found shame in Jesus, and to our shame sometimes we are ashamed of Jesus ourselves. This brings us to His FIRST words or sentence spoken from the cross, namely Jesus prays "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." This is not a reference to the soldiers who did their job by executing Jesus, but it refers to the Jews who crucified Him, and also the entire world. It should shock us that Jesus had no words of condemnation to such cruel sinners, but being the High Priest of all the world, Jesus seeks their forgiveness from the Father. His blood still intercedes for us today. And because of Jesus we need not fear our Heavenly Father, but we can take all our sins to Him, confessing them without fear, seeking the same absolution and grace. In like manner we can pray "Father forgive us for those sins we know and those we don't know, for we too are ignorant." Truly we are ignorant to the greater portion of our sins, than those we confess, but for Jesus' sake it is written, "where sin abounds, grace does much more abound." But woe to us if we crucify Christ anew by wicked living. Let us not only repent and believe, but change our sinful ways. To repent without having the willingness to amend is to not repent at all.

Regarding the SECOND word or sentence Jesus spoke from the cross, this was for the comfort of His mother Mary. The Apostle John tells us, "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." Not only were John and Mary there, but at least two other Marys. It is written "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." Joseph by this time was dead and Mary a widow. Hence Jesus in the midst of great suffering is thinking of Mary, not Himself. He provides for her through John, just as He

through various means still provides for widows also, who believe and trust in Jesus. So we should happily receive our parents into our house if they are in need, and care for them especially in their old age, for in this was our God is glorified.

Note also here regarding Mary, that as she watched Jesus suffer, the prophecy of Simeon came true, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Lk. 2 Johan Gerhard gives the comment, "She sees Him suspended, but can not touch Him; sees Him nailed and may not loose Him; she sees Him dripping with blood, but can not remove it; sees Him wounded upon His entire body, but can not bind up His wounds; she hears His plaint: "I thirst," and may not give Him to drink." But all Mary's wounds are now healed by Jesus Himself in heaven, and there are no tears.

The THIRD word or sentence from the cross was spoken by Christ to the thief. Though both thieves at first reviled Jesus, there was a change of heart with one, for he later rebukes the first thief, and he also prays to Jesus saying, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." We make assumptions here, but this thief was a witness to the mercy and love of Jesus to His enemies, and with that prayer "Father forgive them", this thief heard and absolution for his own sins. In any case this thief was convinced both of the innocence of Christ, and the power of Christ to save him from sin. He calls Jesus "Lord" and asks Jesus to receive Him, a sinner into His kingdom. Thanks be to God he hears the blessed answer "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." This means "Your sins are forgiven and I will not condemn you, but immediately receive you into paradise!" What a day it was for that repentant thief. Jesus dies at 3PM, and not long after the soldiers break his legs so he suffocates and dies himself, but thereafter he enters paradise with the saints singing God's praises! So it is never too late for sinners to repent, but woe to the man who puts off repentance till tomorrow. The other thief didn't make it to paradise, but he died without Christ.

"And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Such was His FOURTH word. This extreme darkness for three hours indicates the greatest crime of all time taking place, the murder and death of God's own beloved Son. It is as if creation itself must hide its face from this darkest deed of humanity. What darkness is this however to the anguish of Christ's soul? For now He enters into His deepest abyss of suffering, to be forsaken by God, cut off, eternally cast away, utterly and entirely forsaken and alone. God forsakes God. God turns His back upon God. God is judged for the sins of men, and justly condemned and banished from the presence of God. Yet not once does Jesus despair, but He is despondant. He does not say "Father" here, but "My God". There is still love and trust in His heart for God, and He still loves God, though God does not love Him because of our sins. If all mankind is to be delivered from that eternal punishment, the Son of Man must pay such a price, so that by His stripes we will be healed.

Now the FIFTH word, “I thirst.” This was a physical thirst, naturally, but we cannot deny nor forget His greater thirst for our salvation either, nor the Living Waters we receive from this sacrifice. Similarly the previous day Jesus had said to His disciples, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” Tonight we eat this Passover too, namely the holy meal of Holy Communion, for we eat His true body and drink His true blood, “given and shed for you for the remission of sins.” Receiving the same by faith tonight brethren, let us remember the great thirst of Christ, to provide salvation to our soul by His very body and blood. Holy Communion is the Passover of the New Testament, for in His body and blood, the Lord passes over our sins, not charging, counting or imputing our trespasses against us. And by such Living Waters He quenches the greatest thirst of our soul, namely “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” May we thirst hereafter for good and not evil, to the glory of His name and not our own.

The SIXTH word now: It is finished! Indeed at this point Christ had paid the entire debt of our ransom. He had fulfilled and completed all that God the Father had willed Him to do. The work was finished, the victory won! The head of Satan was crushed by the mighty heel of Christ. Redemption had been effected, the gates of paradise opened, and the wall of separation between God and man was removed. Christ thus said “It is finished” because there was no sin not yet paid for. As God and Judge and Savior Christ knew in perfect knowledge that by His blood He had rendered to God full satisfaction for all sins. So the Apostle John writes, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

And now our SEVENTH word, “Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.” This is taken from Psalm 31:5, so Jesus quotes the Scriptures to the very end. “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Jesus leaves His life in the Father’s good hands, committing His soul to God’s keeping. Yet note this very important truth, death does not come for Jesus, but Jesus willingly enters into death. The time, the second, the moment of death is His own choosing. Death does not come to take Him prisoner, but Jesus enters death to swallow up death whole and conquer, granting us the victory. Jesus is the death of death itself, and after death there is only life for all who believe in Him. Therefore He said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

Finally it is written Jesus “bowed His head and gave up the ghost.” This is a conscious and willful act. His body then is buried in a tomb, but it does not see corruption. He awaits the quickening of the Father’s hand, the glorious resurrection on the third day.

Therefore beloved, as we began the sermon, so let us end it knowing “*These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*” Amen.