

The Seven Last Words

Meditations from the Cross



A virtual service for

Good Friday

April 2, 2021

with the Clergy of the
Moorestown Ministerium

The four gospel records of Jesus' death include different accounts of how Jesus spoke from the cross, offering different glimpses into Jesus' experience and purpose in the sacrifice of his life. Over the centuries, many Christians adopted the practice of reading and reflecting on those "Last Words" on Good Friday.

This service of meditations on the "Seven Last Words" allows us to gather at the foot of the cross today, along with Jesus' first disciples, and Christians throughout the centuries and across the globe.

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Prelude

Herzlich tut mich verlangen, J. S. Bach
Vernon Williams, Trinity Episcopal Church

Welcome and opening prayer

The Reverend Emily Mellott
Trinity Episcopal Church

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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The First Word
"Father, Forgive Them"

Luke 23:33-34

Holman Christian Standard Bible

When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they crucified Him there, along with the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." And they divided his clothes and cast lots.

Meditation

The Reverend Jonathan Leath
Converge Church

Music for Reflection

Ah, Holy Jesus, Vernon Williams
Coventry Choir, Trinity Episcopal Church

Ah, holy Jesus, how hast Thou offended, that man to judge Thee hath in hate pretended? By foes derided, by thine own rejected, O most afflicted. Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon Thee? Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone Thee. 'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied Thee! I crucified Thee. Lo, the Good Shepherd for the sheep is offered; the slave hath sinned, and the Son hath suffered; for man's atonement, while he nothing heedeth, God intercedeth. For me, kind Jesus, was thy incarnation, thy mortal sorrow, and thy life's oblation; thy death of anguish and thy bitter passion, for my salvation. Therefore, kind Jesus, since I cannot pay Thee, I do adore Thee, and will ever pray Thee; think on Thy pity and Thy love unswerving, not my deserving.

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The Second Word
“Today You Will Be With Me”

Luke 23:39-43

New Revised Standard Version

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding [Jesus] and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Meditation

The Reverend Thomas Korkuch
First United Methodist Church

Music for Reflection

God So Loved the World, Bob Chilcott
Coventry Choir, Trinity Episcopal Church

God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoso believeth, in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

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The Third Word
“Woman, Behold Your Son”

John 19:23-27

New King James Version

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: “They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” Therefore the soldiers did these things.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

Meditation

The Reverend Marsha Harris
Second Baptist Church

Music for Reflection

Stabat Mater, Giovanni Pergolesi
Abigail Merk and Shannon Lally, Trinity Episcopal Church

Stabat mater dolorosa, juxta crucem lacrymosa, dum pendebat filius.
At the cross her vigil keeping, stood the mournful mother weeping, where he hung, the dying Lord.

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The Fourth Word “My God, My God”

Mark:15:29-35

New Revised Standard Version

Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!” In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “Listen, he is calling for Elijah.”

Meditation

The Reverend Eric Trozzo
St. Matthew Lutheran Church

Music for Reflection

Herzliebster Jesu, was has du verbrocken, Helmut Walcha
Cantor David Harp, St. Matthew Lutheran Church

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The Fifth Word “I Thirst”

John 19:28-29

Amplified Version

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said in fulfillment of the Scripture, “I am thirsty.” A jar full of [n]sour wine was placed there; so they put a sponge soaked in the sour wine on [a branch of] hyssop and held it to His mouth.

Meditation

The Reverend Thomas Holmes
Second Baptist Church

Music for Reflection

As the Deer, Martin J. Nystrom
Sister Carol Jones and Minister Regina Holmes, Second Baptist Church

As the deer panteth for the water So my soul longeth after Thee. You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship Thee. You alone are my strength, my shield; to You alone does my spirit yield. You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship Thee. You're my friend and You are my brother even though You are my King. I love You more than any other, so much more than anything. You alone are my strength, my shield; to You alone does my spirit yield. You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship Thee. Oh my soul, it thirsts for Thee. Yes, my soul it thirsts for Thee.

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The Sixth Word "It Is Finished"

John 19:30-37

New Revised Standard Version

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

Meditation

The Reverend Emily Mellott
Trinity Episcopal Church

Music for Reflection

Go to Dark Gethsemane, Gilbert Martin
Coventry Choir, Trinity Episcopal Church

Go to dark Gethsemane, ye that feel the tempter's power; your Redeemer's conflict see, watch with Him one bitter hour; turn not from His griefs away, learn of Jesus Christ to pray. Follow to the judgment hall, view the Lord of Life arraigned; O the wormwood and the gall, O the pangs His soul sustained! Shun not suffering, shame, or loss, learn of Him to bear the cross. Calvary's mournful mountain climb; there adoring at His feet, mark that miracle of time, God's own sacrifice complete! "It is finished!" hear Him cry; learn of Jesus Christ to die.

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The Seventh Word
“Father, Into Your Hands”

Luke 23:44-49

New Living Translation

By this time it was about noon, and darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. The light from the sun was gone. And suddenly, the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn down the middle. Then Jesus shouted, “Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!” And with those words he breathed his last.

When the Roman officer overseeing the execution saw what had happened, he worshiped God and said, “Surely this man was innocent. And when all the crowd that came to see the crucifixion saw what had happened, they went home in deep sorrow. But Jesus’ friends, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching.

Meditation

The Reverend Stuart Spencer
First Presbyterian Church

Music for Reflection

I Choose Love, Mark Miller
Abbie Fuss and Kathy Gunsallus, First Presbyterian Church

In the midst of pain I choose love. In the midst of pain, sorrow falling down like rain, I await the sun again, I choose love. I choose love. In the midst of war I choose peace. In the midst of war, hate and anger keeping score, I will seek the good once more, I choose peace. I choose peace. When my world falls down I will rise. When my world falls down, explanations can't be found, I will climb to holy ground, I will rise. I will rise. In the midst of pain I choose love. In the midst of pain, sorrow falling down like rain, I await the sun again, I choose love. I choose love.

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Concluding Prayer

The Reverend Emily Mellott
Trinity Episcopal Church

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, we pray you to set your passion, cross, and death between your judgment and our souls, now and in the hour of our death. Give mercy and grace to the living; pardon and rest to the dead; to your holy Church peace and concord; and to us sinners everlasting life and glory; for with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Postlude

Herzliebster Jesu (Ah, Holy Jesus), Johannes Brahms
Vernon Williams, Trinity Episcopal Church

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