

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED:
THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS (KJV)

1. *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23:34)
2. *Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.* (Luke 23:43)
3. *Woman, behold thy Son. Behold, thy mother.* (John 19:26, 27)
4. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* (Matthew. 27:46 and Mark 15:34)
5. *I thirst.* (John 19:28)
6. *It is finished.* (John 19:30)
7. *Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.* (Luke 23:46)

1. *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23:34)

Jesus was nailed to the cross according to His Father's will. He held no animosity in His heart toward God in heaven. He addressed Him as Father.

Jesus held no animosity in His heart toward those who were doing this to Him. If you have ever been unjustly mistreated by others, laughed at, or physically abused, what comes out of your mouth? "I'll get you for this!" What festers in your heart? Pay back and revenge. Jesus prayed for forgiveness for them.

Who is the "them"? Whom did He mean? Certainly the soldiers—they were just following orders. Certainly many Jewish people in the crowds—incited and re-acting according to mob psychology, being misled by the chief priest and elders. What about the chief priest and elders? Yes, Jesus prayed even for them, blinded as they were by Satan and their own sinful flesh, Jesus. Finally, what about you? Did He mean you too? with your foolish, careless, and ignorant sins? Yes, you too.

"Father forgive them--send their sins away." He took the load and the debt for them and for you. He took it upon Himself. Cling to Him, your Savior!

2. *Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.* (Luke 23:43)

Matthew's Gospel tells us that both thieves crucified with Jesus reviled Him and mocked Him. But Luke tells us that one had a change of heart. He rebuked the other for his vile comments. "Don't you fear God? We get what we deserve. This man has done nothing wrong." Then he turned to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into Your Kingdom." And Jesus' marvelous reply, *Today you shall be with me in Paradise.*

Here was an eleventh hour convert indeed. Someone at the end of his life coming to Christ. It is never too late to turn to Jesus and cling to Him by faith—not for you, or a friend, or a relative. There is welcome in the Savior's arms.

"Today in Paradise." Upon death, the soul of the Christian goes to be with the Lord in heaven. The body sleeps in the grave. The soul goes to the Lord. At the Last Day, soul and body will be re-united and go to heaven. "Paradise" was a Persian word meaning "park." It was also used to name the Garden of Eden.

"Today in Paradise." Note, there is no stopping off point between death and heaven for the soul. Indeed NO PURGATORY. If anyone should have gone to purgatory, this man should have. But purgatory is not Biblical.

You too have the paradise of heaven awaiting your soul when you die. There you will be with Jesus. The body will sleep in the grave until the great day of Resurrection. Cling to Jesus by faith.

3. *Woman, behold thy Son. . . . Behold, thy mother.* (John 19:26, 27)

In the midst of Jesus' unjust suffering and pain of body, as well as the mental taunting that was heaped upon Him, He showed concern for His earthly mother. Mary was standing there with Jesus' closest disciple, John. The Lord honored His mother and cared for her, entrusting her to John. She was not perfect or holy, but He honored and loved her anyway. Have your parents been perfect and holy? No. Does that give you a reason to disrespect and disregard them? No. While at the seminary I worked at a nursing home, and I personally knew a man who was put into the nursing home, to get him out of the way. He knew it. He died after a couple of months--I am convinced of a broken heart. "Honor your father and mother." Run to the Lord for forgiveness, where you have failed. Honor your parents. Cling to Jesus.

4. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* (Matthew. 27:46 and Mark 15:34)

These words were spoken during the three hours of darkness from noon until three, when the sun stopped shining, as the Bible says. In fact it was near the end of those three hours. Why had the sun stopped shining? This was the depth of Jesus' woe. He was "forsaken" by His Father in heaven. Abandoned, deserted, left alone with the world's sin on His conscience, record, and soul. This was His mission, to face the Father's wrath for every sin.

Sin brings death. Death is separation. Thus physical death is separation of soul from body, spiritual death is separation of sinner from God, eternal death or hellfire is to be separated from every blessing of God forever--physical torment, as well as psychological torment, and spiritual torment. "God has cast me out!" will be the mournful cry. Like a child sent away from the table. Though He was physically alive, Jesus suffered total separation from God. He suffered hell, for the world, and for you, on the cross.

What about Jesus question Why? Did He not know why this had to be? Certainly, He knew. It was an expression of grief and suffering. Like a spouse left alone after death, "Why did you have to leave me!"

Jesus was forsaken on Good Friday, that you will never be forsaken because of your sins. He is your Savior. Cling to Him.

5. *I thirst.* (John 19:28)

Jesus' suffering on the cross was not make-believe. We should not think, "Well that was easy for Him. He is God. God can do anything. It didn't faze Him." Jesus was also true man. He was the God-man, which I can't explain or understand. But He got tired, got hungry, slept, cried. In humiliation, Jesus willingly set aside the full use of His godliness. Here Jesus the God-man, the eternal Son of God!, was thirsty. This was an ordeal for Him.

Earlier He had refused the drink offered to Him—wine mingled with gall, a pain deadener. There would be no short-cuts. He would suffer it all. But now His deepest anguish was past. He needed to be refreshed.

Jesus thirsts for you, for your soul. "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). He also knows your every need, whether thirsty, or hungry, or afraid. Cling to Him.

6. *It is finished.* (John 19:30)

With His mouth moistened and His end at hand, Jesus cried out "It is finished." Either this statement or the next, was shouted out "with a loud voice." This was not the typical end for someone crucified. They died slowly and agonizingly from suffocation, their chest muscles growing too fatigued to breath. Jesus with strength gave His life into death. He willingly had come to this sacrifice. In the Garden of Gethsemane, John tells us, the soldiers fell back the first time Jesus answered, "I am He." In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told Peter to put away His sword, for He could have twelve legions of angels, thousands!, at His disposal. He cried out in strength, "It is finished."

What was finished? His life? Yes. He suffering for sin? Yes. The full payment for the world's sin? Yes. All was finished. No more sacrifice, no more payment for sin is required. Your account is paid in full in Jesus' name. "By grace—by a gift, an undeserved gift—you have been saved through faith. And that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). "By the deeds of the Law, no flesh will be justified in His sight. A man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the Law" (Romans 3: 20 and 28). This is the Gospel—the Good News of forgiveness and righteousness in Jesus.

7. *Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.* (Luke 23:46)

Jesus died without animosity in His heart toward the Father. He was at peace with His Father. His depth of sorrow was done. Now in simple unity with the Father, He entrusted His spirit to Him. Jesus body would be taken down and placed in the grave to await resurrection on the third day.

So it is that you through Jesus can say at the hour of your death, "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The gates of heaven are open, as gloriously displayed on Easter Sunday morning! Cling to Jesus.

CONCLUSION: Today's day of sorrow at the death of Jesus, is our day of Life. It is truly a Good Friday!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---