

## 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)

Only the trappings are left of the big celebration. The joy, the excitement, the acclamation is gone. A few drying palm branches are left standing like silent sentinels. Gathering today on Good Friday is like going back to the banquet hall where the big party was held—birthday, anniversary, launching someone into their new job and career. The celebration was top notch—not in regard to the money spent, or the extravagance used—but in regard to the joy and thanks for the present, the hopes for the future, the love from the hearts of family and friends. Except the next day, the guest or guests of honor were seized by the federal agents for being subversive activists of all things, or perhaps were brutally gunned down in a chance or a deliberate shooting spree. Going back to the banquet hall and seeing the remnants of the big and joyous day—how empty—how painful—how worthless it all would seem. Today we come back to church with the palms of peace and joy still standing, and melodies of “Hosanna! Loud Hosanna!” “Ride on, Ride on, in Majesty!” still ringing in our ears, replaced by “O Sorrow Dread, God’s Son Is Dead!” All the celebrating was worthless.

Was it all worthless? Today we are privileged to hear and ponder the words spoken by the mistreated guest of honor, and to understand in retrospect, the value of it all and the end result of it all.

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

Such a heart of love. To be unjustly apprehended by the authorities, to be given a hearing based on lies and false personal attacks, to be physically struck with hands of hatred, to be spit upon by scoundrels, to be sentenced and condemned by a dishonest and self-concerned judge, to be turned over to hard business-like soldiers, nailed to a cross, and suspended to die to the glee of the opponents! AND JESUS YET SAYS, *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* Such a heart of love.

You need to understand that you are right there with the attacking and marauding villains. Do you realize that you also attack and offend Jesus? You might say, ‘Well, not on purpose. It’s really bad to attack Jesus on purpose.’ True----but what does it say about you that you sin against Him and attack Him thoughtlessly? Do you realize how deeply corrupt you are to sin against Him *naturally*, from the inside out? That you can’t even help yourself, or stop yourself. You are a sorry mess—rotten to the core. What ought Jesus to say? “Father, ditch them! Bury them alive in a trench forever!” But Jesus says,” Father forgive them, the inept, bumbling, and deliberate failures that they have become. They don’t even realize what they’re like and what they’re doing. Father, forgive them.” That is what Jesus says for you; He is your Savior.

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

Jesus does not just speak words of love and friendship. He acts upon His love and friendship to bring about a blessed and undeserved outcome for you. Here was a thief on the cross next to Him, who was being justly punished for His crimes—surely not just petty theft, or small scale shoplifting, but big enough to bring down the justice of the Roman legal system. A big-time thief. Earlier as hung there on his own cross next to Jesus, he joined with the mockers, “If you are the Christ, save yourself and us”—implying that Jesus should give him a pass for his bad behavior both before his fellow man and before God in heaven. But this thief heard and saw Jesus on the cross, and surely thought back to Scriptures he had learned earlier in his Jewish upbringing, He recognized who this Jesus was, and in faith humbly asked for Jesus to remember him, to think kindly on him, to forgive him, to bless him. To this thief Jesus says, *Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.* Son, you’re not going to get a “Get off the Cross Free” card, but I am taking care of it. You will enter the joys of heaven to be with Me forever.

You are in those same shoes. You break the Lord’s commands, stealing or other. You join with the mockers of this world in the way you talk, in the things you love. Humbly go to Jesus. “Savior, remember me. Think kindly on me. Forgive me. Take me to heaven.” And to you Jesus says, *Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.* Understand, on the day the sinner-trusting-in-Christ dies, the soul goes home to heaven to be with the Lord forever!

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

You are assured of heaven upon your death in Christ. You are also assured of His care while you are on this earth. Here Jesus tends to the needs of His earthly mother Mary. He is not so caught up in His own load and pain, that He neglects His mother, the woman who carried Him nine months in her womb, then nursed Him, and cared for Him in infancy. He was not “so big for his britches” that He cast His mother aside. Did He “owe” it to her? That’s not the question. He simply loved her. Take it to heart in regard to your own mother.

Jesus puts you into families too. He doesn't just plop people into life on this earth, and let them make it on their own. He supplies parents, brothers, sisters, wife, husband, children. Whether they be your family by blood or by adoption—just as He supplied Mary with His disciple John to love and care for her—Jesus provides your family for you, for your blessing! He Himself is your dearest Brother and Savior. In Him, God is your dear Father!

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

What was Jesus willing to forego in order to win the blessings of heaven and adoption into God's family for you? He was willing to give up earthly ease, He was willing to give up being treated right, He was willing to give up His own blood on the cross for you. He was willing to take the "due process" for all your inborn and ignorant sins against God, inexcusable every one of them, also for all your willful and deliberate sins against God. How often do you sin on purpose, sin willfully? You feel you have a legitimate excuse—but it's a lame excuse—"I wasn't trying to" (ha, ha), "I had no other choice" (ha, ha), "I wanted to see what it was like" (how smart is that when you've been warned), "I wanted to do it my way" (blatant contrariness). A rebel you are.

What was Jesus willing to forego? His own Father's love. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* God the Father ditched Him, dumped Him, assigned Him to the pangs of hell where no blessing of God exists.

Jesus gave up His status before the Father, so that you would not be cast away. Jesus asked "Why?" Jesus knew "why." He was not trying to figure it out. It was an expression of great sorrow. When God brings hardship your way, do not boldly complain and accuse Him of being careless, "Why would You do that God? What do You want?" Rather express your great love, "Father, why would You send Jesus for me? How great is Your love!."

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

Do not think that Jesus' rescue of you from abandonment in hell under the Father's justice, just meant that He, as true God, had to jump through a few minor hoops—all easy for Him to do, because He was God. Jesus the God-man truly suffered on the cross. Think of the loss of fluids from His body—bleeding and sweating. He craved something to drink. You understand such a craving for water, when you come in sweaty from working on the baler in summer or from shoveling what seems like a thousand pounds of snow in the winter. Indeed, thirst! Earlier Jesus had refused the drink offered to Him. It was sour wine (vinegar) mixed with myrrh / gall, a pain deadener. He would take no short cuts. He Himself would endure the full suffering for your sins. Now He thirsted.

Do you realize what He was really thirsty for? Your eternal salvation. He came to this earth to rescue you and would not be deterred. He would not stop, until you were safe. "Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising its shame" (Hebrews 12:2). He thirsts for your forgiveness and salvation.

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

No stone was left unturned Jesus carried the cross to the End. Every dime of the payment for sin was paid.

He would die and not descend into hell to suffer. His payment was finished. He would die, return to life, and descend into hell to proclaim His victory! You know the good feeling of “Finished!” when the last calf is born, the last shingle nailed on the roof, the last mile of the trip ended, the last bale of hay baled, the last day of school completed, the last cupboard in the house cleaned. Jesus statement was a statement of mission completed.

So then for you! Your salvation is a completed deal. You have already been reconciled to God—brought back together in peace with the Father through Jesus—completely. There is nothing for you to do, nothing by which to qualify for God’s mercy. Jesus has done it. In Jesus, your slate of sins is wiped completely clean. Finished!

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

Jesus ended His life at peace with God. He had accomplished His Father’s will in full. At the moment of death, He entrusted all to His Father. Did you, do you have a close relationship with your earthly father? If so, and even if not, imagine if your father had been perfect. Never mistreated you, never ignored you, never gave you bad advice, never lied to you, never let you down, never mis-handled anything, and suddenly you are about to die—with so much unfinished work, and so much concern for your own family. What a relief, in full confidence, to entrust it all to your father—knowing all will be well. So Jesus. And so you. If He calls you home today, “Father into Your hands I commend my spirit, my life. I know Your care. I know Your love in Jesus.”

CONCLUSION: Today, Good Friday, is not just a day of emptiness re-visiting the dead Palm Sunday festivities. It is a day of comfort and peace, that Christ has saved us. His own words say so. We say, “Hosanna, to Son of David!”

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---