

Famous Last Words: Distress

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, Braemar Baptists. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my privilege to be your lead pastor here.

Now, this morning we're going to continue. I have the remote on this time, guys, so don't panic, actually. It's green. It's a good sign. This morning we're going to be continuing our series called Famous Last Words as we focus on the last words or phrases that Jesus said from the cross as recorded in the Bible.

And we've reflected on the fact that these are powerful words both because of who said them and what he means to us, but also because of where he said them from, the cross.

Last week we looked at the fourth phrase of Jesus from the cross found in Matthew 27, 45, and 46, where we read, From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the land.

About three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[1 : 15] We learned that in saying these words, Jesus was actually quoting Psalm 22 here, declaring his fulfillment of that prophecy in both its agony and its exaltation.

And we recognize that deep sense of abandonment that was on display at that moment. We also recognize together a unique challenge of Jesus in those words.

We tried to understand how could it be that the one who is true God and true man, even as he was dying, be abandoned by God.

But we began to understand that even in that hour of darkness and death, God was at work. God was present.

Today is Palm Sunday, the day that begins the last week before Easter in the Christian church. And it ends this coming Friday with Good Friday, with our Good Friday service, as Pat mentioned, here at Bramart at 10.

[2 : 27] So this is a shameless plug. We could still use some help from folks. This is my idea lately, to get out into our community with information about what we're doing here and connect with people in an intentional way.

So we do have the multicolored flyer options for you. So thank you very much to those who have already helped with that. I forced my children to do it yesterday.

They work quite well. So we're actually hosting several other congregations here at Bramart for that community service. And I encourage you to be here, but I also encourage you to invite family and friends to join you.

And it wasn't that long ago that I was in your place. I was sitting in a pew and a pastor would ask me, invite my friends, invite my family. And I would think, gosh, that's uncomfortable.

That seems awkward. Do I want to do that? But I encourage you that what's the worst thing that could happen to you? Someone says, no, thanks. But what if they say, yes, I'd love to come?

[3 : 38] And so we've also included flyers in your bulletin this morning, and that is your personal opportunity. I'm encouraging you to take that one specifically and give it to somebody that you know with your personal invitation to come.

Because we do have some great events that are coming up. Not only services, but some fun and some opportunities to connect as community with people who matter to us.

because a personal invitation to come to church from you and through an existing relationship that you have with someone, folks, it simply has the greatest impact on bringing people in our doors to hear that good news of Jesus Christ and all that God has done for them.

We could advertise. We can put it on Facebook. I can talk about it. But that personal invitation from you through a personal relationship will make the difference.

So I encourage everyone to always be thinking about people who are important to you who don't know Jesus. because, again, what's the worst thing that they can say?

[4 : 49] No thanks. It won't hurt your relationship. I promise you that. I have friends who are atheists. I have friends who are from other belief groups. And yet they respect my conviction about my faith.

And so, if anything, it will deepen your relationship. I promise you that as well. But invite them to come with you, not just for Easter events that we have this coming weekend, but for every opportunity that you can keep in mind, for every service, every event that we have here at Braemar. And that's not about growing numbers. That's not about me saying, we've got to pack this sanctuary just because. That's irrelevant. We could be five people and be connecting with God and connecting with others.

So I encourage you to make those connections. Be intentional about it. And you've heard this before. The greatest gift that you can give to someone who doesn't know Jesus is introduce them to him.

You will change their life. So as we celebrated with the waving of palm branches this morning, today we remember and celebrate that day that Jesus entered Jerusalem as Savior and King.

[6 : 09] Scripture tells us that as Jesus entered the city riding on a donkey, a large crowd gathered and laid palm branches and their cloaks down on the road, giving him a royal welcome.

The crowd that was gathered that day shouted, Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest heaven.

And so as I thought about this service and all the different pieces that we have working together this morning, you may be a bit confused by some of the things that we've done. We've waved palm branches.

Hosanna in the highest heaven. Then we've had children come and lay bricks at the cross that symbolize their burdens, their struggles, their pain. And so how does this day when we usually celebrate fit in with our series on the last words or phrases of Jesus from the cross?

particularly when our sermon this morning is titled Distress. My friends, this is the nature of Palm Sunday and the complexity that we find in the events that surround it.

[7 : 30] The air of celebration and honor that surrounded Jesus' entry into Jerusalem can often cause us to forget. This day was the beginning of the end for Jesus.

And he knew that. This day marked the beginning of that final terrible path to the cross. A path that he knew he had to walk to make the only sacrifice that could save all of humanity.

when people that day shouted Hosanna they were hailing Christ as king. Did you know that the word Hosanna actually means save now?

Or some theologians even suggest that it means God save us. Did they realize that? And the context that it meant?

Well the crowd may have been recognizing and celebrating Jesus as an earthly king who had come to help them defeat their enemies help them defeat the Romans to free them.

[8 : 47] God had a different definition of salvation. And as we now know God's greater plan was to bring true salvation not salvation in the sense of deliverance from Roman oppression but ultimate salvation and a restored relationship for all who would trust him.

And that salvation and restoration would only be possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This morning we reflect on the fifth phrase of Jesus from the cross as David read for us and we find that in John 19 28 and 29 later knowing that everything had now been finished and so that 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 the hyssop plant and lifted it to Jesus' lips. Our sermon this morning is titled Distress and we'll unpack that concept together this morning as it's revealed both in scripture and through our humanity.

We read here that Jesus spoke these words later. He said these words after he had spoken to Mary and John as we studied together in our sermon on relationship a few weeks ago.

Now scripture is not clear on how much later this happened but the order is quite clear. Knowing that everything had now been finished Jesus seems to have had a clear sense that his work on the cross had been completed at that point.

[10 : 42] He seems to have had a sense that his human suffering his distress was almost over. our passage this morning says that Jesus said I am thirsty.

It also says so that scripture would be fulfilled. Have you ever wondered what scripture? As we know the life words and actions of Jesus fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies but to which one might this be referring?

Well some commentators suggest that Psalm 69 is the connection here. As we read in verse 3 I am worn out calling for help.

My throat is parched. My eyes fail looking for my God. And in verse 21 they put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

thirst. We read that a sponge was dipped in wine vinegar and lifted to Jesus lips on the end of a stick as he hung on the cross. I am thirsty.

[12:01] Of the phrases of Jesus from the cross this one is the most personal the most physical perhaps you might argue the most human.

You ever experienced extreme thirst? thirst. Now I am not talking about a nice drink of water on a hot day. But I am talking about a sense of extreme urgency and panic as your body begins to literally shut down as a result of dehydration.

Your joints begin to ache. Your vision becomes blurry. You can't think clearly. the adult human body is composed of approximately 60% water.

According to the Journal of Biological Chemistry the brain and heart 73%. The lungs 83%.

The skin contains 64% water. Muscles and kidneys are 79%. and even your bones as dense as they are contain 31% water.

[13:27] Water is essential to the proper functioning of every cell in our bodies. And scientists have concluded that there are approximately 37.2 trillion cells in the human body.

I am bad at math but that seems like a lot. 37.2 trillion. Water is absolutely critical to our survival. The average adult can survive for approximately three weeks without food. Mahatma Gandhi did it on a hunger strike. water is a very different story.

On average a human can likely only last approximately three to four days without water. But that would be under average conditions.

Medical professionals suggest that extreme thirst is one of the most excruciating sensations an individual can experience. Excruciating.

[14:37] particularly when there is no relief available. And in fact, here's your entomology lesson for today. Our English word excruciating, extremely painful, is derived from the Latin word excruciatum, which means out of the cross.

the cross. Imagine the agony of every cell in your body crying out for relief, and without water, that distress continues to get exponentially worse.

As you can imagine, crucifixion presents far from average conditions for the human body. as we've discussed previously in this series, Jesus had been flogged and beaten mercilessly for an extended period of time.

And then he walked from Pontius Pilate's palace, say that ten times fast, to Golgotha. And there they nailed him to the cross.

Jesus would have already experienced significant and near fatal blood loss. And without water to replenish that vital fluid, his dehydration would have compounded his pain and physical distress.

[16:13] His body was critically depleted, and he had no resources from which to replenish himself. But while this was definitely a physical thirst that Jesus was expressing, we can also imagine the great emotional and spiritual thirst he experienced as well in his very human experience on the cross.

He thirsted not only for physical relief from dehydration and pain, but also from the immense weight that he had taken upon himself in bearing the sins of the world.

This man, this man, this man, this man, this man, this man, this man, our Jesus, our Savior, experienced it all so that we wouldn't have to.

Have you ever experienced physical pain? So did he. Have you been misjudged or treated badly? So was he. have you ever had someone turn their back on you when you needed them most? So did he. In so many ways, Jesus already experienced the struggles that you may be experiencing right now.

[17:56] He has walked in your shoes and he is intimately familiar with your pain. Hebrews 2, 17 and 18 tells us, for this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make

atonement for the sins of all people.

Because he himself, suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted. You may remember another time Jesus was thirsty.

We read about it in John 4, 7 to 14. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, will you give me a drink?

His disciples had gone into town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, you are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?

For Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

[19 : 28] serve, the woman said, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and livestock?

Jesus answered, everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.

Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Jesus was clearly speaking of a literal thirst as he sat at that well with a Samaritan woman that day.

It was hot. It was the middle of a desert. But they shared an oasis together. But he was also speaking of a deeper thirst, a deeper longing that could never be fulfilled by a human relationship. Only by drawing close to God the living water could the Samaritan woman find true satisfaction. And that spiritual thirst of which Jesus was speaking is as real for us today as it was on that day in Samaria.

[21 : 00] It's a need that is far greater than any physical thirst we could ever have. Are you experiencing a spiritual thirst this morning?

have you tried to satisfy that thirst by drinking from another well? A well of self-reliance?

A well of success? A well of possessions? My friends, those sources will dry up.

Those sources will leave you wanting more. The only way to quench a thirsty soul is by crying out to God.

Hosanna to save us, to save you. so draw near to God and drink deeply because he thirsts for you.

[22 : 15] Let's pray. Lord God, we give you thanks for you are good and your mercy is endless.

here we stand at the start of this holy week, this week in which your church remembers Jesus' passion and death. And we are distracted by many things.

Father, turn our eyes now to the one who comes in your name, the one who opens the gates of righteousness, the one who answers when we call.

we bless you, Lord, for shining your light upon us and for sending your son to us in human frailty to walk the road that we walk.

Open our eyes that we may see him coming and may praise him with pure hearts. and may we walk in the way of his suffering and share also in his resurrection.

[23 : 27] Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.