

Good Friday "Seven Last Words"

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

So the first word I'll be reading from Luke chapter 23 verse 34, which says, And Jesus said, Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. So when I read this, a lot of questions come to mind.

And one of the first one, which shows my sin nature and the flesh rising up whenever I'm called to forgive or to do the right thing, the first question is, God, are you saying that in a way I can keep a grudge when someone does know what they're doing? And that's just me resisting the call from the Lord. And part of the reason why I think like this, I think it's because I have a hard time believing that people just don't know when something is wrong, that they don't know the evil they're committing. And I've also often wondered at this passage, how could they not have known what they were doing? Lord, surely you don't mean that they don't understand that the act that they're committing is evil. And don't you say somewhere in your word something about the law being written in our hearts? Surely they must know. So all these thoughts, they go through my mind. And

[2 : 40] I spent the last couple of weeks just meditating on this passage over and over again and trying to figure out, okay, what is the Lord calling me to and what does he want us to take away from this passage? And I think for most of you, it's obvious, but for me, the Lord had to really, there was a humbling process that needed to happen in order for me to truly understand the depth of his love and what he's calling us to. And for me, I've been through some very difficult things, especially in childhood. And I think over time that has hardened me and made me callous when it comes to giving people the benefit of the doubt. I have a hard time believing that someone can hurt you without knowing to some extent that what they did is wrong. And I'll go so far as to say, as strange as it might be, that when someone hurts me deeply or commits an evil act without knowing, that can often scare me more than if the person did it unintentionally. And the reason for that is because it means they can do it again and again and again and again and again and that I would also be called then to forgive them again and again, as the Father does for us so often. And so as I go through this thought of they must know, there's no way they don't know, or there's no way someone can't know, the thought comes back to me, and I know it was the Lord asking me, so you think you've never hurt anyone without being aware of it? You've never committed an act unintentionally or not know the deep, the ripple effects, and you know all the varying degrees of how that hurts someone or how that affects the world around you. And I think I felt in that moment like

Joe being called to give an account and explain because clearly I'm so wise. And so in that moment, I realized that Christ not only is asking the Father in his deep love and mercy to forgive them for the things they do know, but to go so much further and even all the smallest things, great however they are, to forgive them for all of that, even the unknown, even what they don't ask for. And I think Stephen grasped that at his stoning where he cries out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. Forgive them because they don't know also what they're doing.

And so Christ, as he's hanging there on the cross, he's saying, Lord, forgive to the uttermost, even those who below are casting lots while men above are dying a horrible death. And so he's asking us to forgive just like he has. Luke 23, 43, a criminal being crucified along with Jesus, has just said a word to defend Jesus and made a plea for mercy asking to be remembered. And Jesus says to him, truly, I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise.

The American Puritan, Jonathan Edwards, is rumored to have once said that he had contributed nothing to his salvation, but the sin that made it necessary. I suppose this man being crucified alongside Jesus might be inclined to agree. We don't know much about this man except what he confesses during his own execution. He's a felon. He's being killed for his crimes. And at least as far as he's concerned, he deserves to die.

Catholic tradition holds that this criminal's name is Dismas, St. Dismas, to be precise, the patron saint of prisoners. Now, I'm neither Catholic myself, nor at least at present a prisoner.

[6 : 45] But if I were Catholic, I might choose Dismas to be my own patron saint anyway. Not because of what he's done, but because of what he hasn't. That he's contributed the sin that made his salvation necessary is clear. Aside from this, he has nothing to offer but a word or two spoken in Jesus' defense and a plea not even for salvation, but simply for remembrance. I mean, what else can he do? His hands are literally nailed to a board. As far as we can tell, Dismas is no follower of Jesus up to this point. He's never been baptized, never even heard Jesus' teachings, let alone put them into practice.

Far from being a pillar of his community or even a respectable member of it, Dismas is a wretched criminal, possibly a violent one, suffering a shameful death for the harm that he's done.

Dismas has nothing to offer Jesus but his confession, and no motivation for making that confession except to be remembered. And how does Jesus respond? Knowing him, we might not be surprised to see him grant Dismas' request and say, truly, I say to you, I will remember you when I come into my kingdom.

To do so would be forgiving. To do so would be merciful. You know, I can't help at this point but to think of a story that Jesus once told about a different man, one who had insulted his father, abandoned his family, and squandered his inheritance.

This young man, whose reckless decisions soon come to ruin his life, one day comes to his senses and staggers home, broken, hungry, and ashamed.

[8 : 45] He hopes for nothing more than a small measure of conditional forgiveness. Not restoration as a son, but acceptance as a hired hand. He hopes for mercy.

But the father in Jesus' story offers something much greater than this. When he sees his son returning home, he throws all modesty aside, and he runs down his driveway, throws his arms around his filthy, foolish son, and wholeheartedly forgives him.

Without condition and without qualification, he even throws him a party. The father offers something much greater than mercy.

He offers grace. It's in this moment, dying on the cross, that Jesus shows the world who God is.

Jesus does more than grant his mislerynancy in his final moments. He does more than spare him the obscurity he deserves. He grants him eternal life.

[9 : 54] No waiting period. No purgatory. No need to itemize his sins and confess them one by one. No need to have someone in the crowd splash some water on him in an impromptu emergency baptism ceremony.

Jesus offers Dismas what he's also offered you and me and all who have confessed their corruption before God. He offers him grace. He loves him.

Now, I'm not Catholic and I'm not much on patron saints, but maybe I should find a picture of Dismas to keep around the house anyway. Something to remind me that the greatest thing that I contribute to my own salvation is the sin that makes it necessary.

something to remind me that as far as earning my place or my keep in God's kingdom goes, my hands might as well be nailed to a board. Something to remind me that every victory I experience in this world and every joy I will experience in the next, I owe to his mercy, his forgiveness, his love, and his grace.

The third word is from John chapter 19 verse 26 to 27.

[11 : 16] When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, Woman, behold your son.

and then he said to the disciple, Behold your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

In July 2009, is that exactly a year after my dear father passed away, I decided to check on my mother who was then living alone in Peter Maritzburg, South Africa.

The dust had settled, the visits had dwindled, and the vultures and opportunists who had been circling around eyeing for the chance to capitalize on my father's connections, reputation, and prestige had all dispersed.

All was calm and serene. at last. When I arrived at her place, instead of the customary large gathering, she welcomed me privately, albeit warmly.

[12 : 45] Though she was alone with her dearest husband gone and all her children living abroad, she was not lonely. she had learned to fill her solitude with prayer, praise, and adoration.

Something about that moment, perhaps her peace that transcended her dire circumstances, perhaps her utter reliance on God, told me that there was a side to my dearest mother that had escaped my knowledge.

All these years, I had known her as my father's wife and as my dear mother, but never as a full person, a woman in her own right.

I had not yet asked her about her childhood fears and dreams, her regrets and accomplishments, her hopes and aspirations, or her plans.

She was very generous in her responses, and you will be glad to know that unlike some Illuminati and Glitterati that will remain in this Easter season, she knew exactly who she was as a woman and what she stands for.

[14 : 14] Through our week-long conversations, I learned that she excelled at math and athletics, how and why she fell in love with my father, that at 62, she still wanted to earn a bachelor's degree, which she did, that when she arrived in Canada, she preferred to live on her own.

Obviously, learning who she is as a person, as a woman, who also happens to be my dear mother, allowed me to better minister to her needs.

May I submit to you that Jesus, the Lord who in the beginning was with God and was himself God, he, the all-knowing God, needed not week-long conversations after Joseph's death to know his mother.

mother. May I also submit to you that calling her mother woman was not a result of insolence or bad upbringing, but rather of the deep privilege of knowing her infinitely better than she knew herself.

but why did Jesus, of all the soothing words, he could have said to his mother when referring to John, chose, behold, your mother, your son, and to John when referring to his mother, behold, your mother.

[16 : 08] perhaps the simplest explanation, the one glaring before our eyes, may be the correct one.

Maybe it is because Jesus knew that Mary needed the care of an adopted son and that John needed the love of a surrogate mother, both of which culminated in John taking Mary to his own home.

finally, because I still have a lot of questions, but I will just limit to this one. Why did Jesus in his excruciatingly pivotal moment!

He insisted on meeting and John's earthly needs even though he knew he would conquer death, he would receive a name above all names, he would send the Holy Spirit, the paraclete, the comforter to minister to Mary's and John's spiritual needs after his ascension to heaven.

My educated guest is in the mystery of incarnation. Kindly allow me to remind you how it all started.

[17 : 29] Now, this reading is taken from the collection of the Gen Z Bible stories. And I will have to explain two words before I read.

So, the first word is pick me girl, and that one means someone who is desperate for God. And the second one is simping, which means imploring.

So, now, I read. Mary was a pick me girl for God, and was simping for him in prayer, when the angel Gabriel appeared to her in prayer and said, you've passed God's vibe check, and he wants you to be the mother of the main character, the son of the top G.

Then Mary said, how can this be when I promised him my body count will always be zero. He said, this I ain't about coughing season, for the Holy Spirit will live rent-free in you.

So, she said, bet. And Gabriel left her on red, and she let the Holy Spirit cook.

[18 : 54] And, of course, nine months later, when the word became flesh and dwelled among us and we beheld his glory, he validated our, that our bodies and our earthly needs matter, because he took on the flesh.

When he suffered in the body, on the cross, he redeemed our suffering in the body. After all, even though he was the son of God, God deemed it necessary to make him perfect through suffering.

And his resurrection in the body reminds us to sanctify our bodies as a living sacrifice and to care for the earthly needs of our neighbors.

Otherwise, how could we pretend to love God we do not see if we do not love and care for our neighbors whom we see?

Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which is translated, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[20 : 21] This fourth and literally central of the last seven sayings of Christ is a direct quote from the opening verse of Psalm 22. So what better idea than to read that psalm?

I will start with the reading and then offer a few thoughts to finish off my meditation. Starting in verse one, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me and from the words of my groaning? Oh my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not hear, and in the night season, and am not silent.

But you are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in you, they trusted and you delivered them.

They cried to you and were delivered, they trusted in you and were not ashamed. But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised by the people.

[21 : 28] All those who see me ridicule me, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, he trusted in the Lord, let him rescue him, let him deliver him, since he delights in him.

But you are he who took me out of the womb, you made me trust while on my mother's breast, I was cast upon you from birth, from my mother's womb, you have been my God.

Be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded me, strong bulls of passion, have encircled me, they gape at me with their mouths like a raging and roaring lion, I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax, it has melted within me, my strength is dried up like a pot shirt, and my tongue clings to my jaws, you have brought me to the dust of death, for dogs have surrounded me, the congregation of the wicked has enclosed me, they pierced my hands and my feet, I can count all my bones, they look and stare at me, they divide my garments among them, and from my clothing they cast lots, but you, O Lord, do not be far from me, O my strength, hasten to help me, deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog, save me from the lion's mouth, and from the horns of the wild oxen, you have answered me,

I will declare your name to my brethren, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you, you who fear the Lord, praise him, all you descendants of Jacob, glorify him, and fear him, all you offspring of Israel, for he has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, nor has he hidden his face from him, but when he cried to him, he heard, my praise shall be of you in the great assembly, I will pay my vows before those who fear him, the poor shall eat and be satisfied, those who seek him will praise the Lord, let your heart live forever, all the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you, for the kingdom is the Lord's and he rules over the nations, all the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship, all those who go down to the dust shall bow before him, even he who cannot keep himself alive, a posterity shall serve him, it will be recounted of the

Lord to the next generation, they will come and declare his righteousness to a people who will be born, that he has done this. If you've ever felt forsaken by God, you're in good company.

- [24 : 35] King David and even the Lord Jesus Christ can relate. Digging into the psalm, I believe you can find instructions on what to do in that moment of despair, regardless of where you are in your relationship with God.

Unrepentantly following your flesh, fear the Lord. Searching for something to believe in? Seek him.

Walking away from the faith, remember and turn to him. Following the Lord, trust and delight in him.

The results for those who do these things are laid out in the psalm. They will be satisfied. They will praise. They will declare that God has done this, which is, in verse 24, that he did not despise nor abhor the affliction of the afflicted son.

He did not hide his face from him, but when Jesus cried to him, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He heard. He, our God, holy, enthroned, is never far from us.

- [26 : 00] For when we came out of our mother's womb, to the dust of death, and through all the times in between, when trouble is near, he is never far.

When we are reproached by man, despised by the people, enclosed by the congregation of the wicked, he is never far. He, our rescuer, hears us.

When we cry in the daytime, and when we say that he does not hear, he hears. When we groan and are not silent at night, he hears.

So to close, if you are in a season of groaning and crying and thinking he does not hear, trust him. The day will come when you will say like the prophetic psalmist, you, God, have answered me.

Know this, in the end, you will be delivered and you will not be ashamed. Let's read John 19, verse 28.

- [27 : 10] After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, to fulfill the scripture, said, I thirst. when the Roman soldiers at the cross hear the statement, they give Jesus sour wine, a gesture of mockery.

In doing so, prophecy was fulfilled in Psalm, from the prophet, sorry, in doing so, fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 69, verse 21. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst, they gave me sour wine to drink.

I was thinking, what other significance does this statement of I thirst hold? My mind is drawn back to the times in Matthew when Jesus talks about drinking a cup.

In Matthew 20, verse 22, Jesus responds to a seat assignment request by the mother of James and John. He said, you do not know what you are asking.

Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink? And again in Matthew 26, verse 39, Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane saying, my father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.

- [28 : 27] Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. Jesus didn't specify who he was speaking to when making that statement, I thirst.

The soldiers, assuming Jesus was talking to them, gave Jesus something to drink that would not quench his thirst. And so did God. Jesus took on the bitter cup of punishment that was for us to drink.

God's wrath was fully satisfied with Jesus drinking it. Christ's statement of I thirst after all that was finished shows the cup that was for mankind was one that did not satisfy or give any type of sustenance.

Rather, it was one of death, agony, futility, and famine. this passage here in John reminds me of another passage where Jesus requests a drink.

In John chapter 4, verse 7, 14, there's a story of the Samaritan woman at the well. Let me just read that quickly. A woman from Samaria came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, give me a drink.

[29 : 44] The Samaritan woman said to him, how is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? For Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. And Jesus answered her, if you knew the gift of God and who it was, or who it is that is saying to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would give you living water.

The woman said to him, sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, and so did his sons and his livestock.

Jesus said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

Jesus thirsted in our stead so that we would never thirst again.

He paid the ultimate price his life by drinking our cup so we would not have to. He drank death and we have the opportunity to experience eternal life.

[31 : 07] Jesus being fully man and fully God experienced real human physical thirst. Christ also experienced in our place the wages of sin and being forsaken by God.

Romans 6 23 for the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. We don't have to face death because Jesus did for us.

We don't have that bitter cup in front of us any longer. Jesus has provided living water which is eternal life. In closing out this word I'd like to share a verse from a beautiful old hymn.

death and the curse were in our cup O Christ was full for thee but thou hast drained the last dark drop tis empty now for me that bitter cup love drink it up now blessings draft for me sixth last word of Jesus from 19 John 19 30 when Jesus had received the sorrow wine he said it is finished and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit that's one of the weirdest last things to say on when you're dying why do you say it is finished if I was dying in excruciating pain what I would say is I hope it would finish eventually soon so I don't have to die for three days but he says it is finished it's also a very peculiar word to study and to meditate on very weird so

I think the answer lies in Romans where Paul explains what Christ has done for us the entire letter is just a fantastical treatise upon this as you all know Paul was a Jew he pursued Christians and he became a Christ and how does he understand the work of the cross what Christ has done on that he says in Romans chapter 4 verse 7 to 8 of the man who is blessed blessed are they whose inequities are forgiven and whose sins are covered blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin and how is that why does he say that because later in Christ died for us if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life and not only so but we also joy in

[33 : 59] God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the atonement so I did a bit of research because there's two words here that most of us don't!

nowadays most of us don't even understand what they mean and it's unfortunately reserved exclusively to biblical studies when it's actually a common word those words are first imputation imputation just means to lay a charge on someone so in the legal fashion if I charge you as a murderer I've imputed to you the charge and if you're guilty you must pay it back pay back whatever debt you owe life imprisonment or death and atonement is also another fancy word we think it's fancy because it's sometimes used in movies but atonement is to make reparation to make a right when you in the old testament these words are used frequently when the sacrifices for offering for sins and the imagery is very clear and this way is striking for us when you committed a sin before God when you make atonement reparation so in the old testament of worship the entire basis of the sacrificial system of worship is that you have done wrong against someone you must make atonement to him and to

God by way of sacrifice and so the meaning of Paul is very clear and it can be said in this sentence in this way that when Christ made an atonement for us or for me he imputed unto me his righteousness and considered me as such and then the father imputed unto him his son my sins and considered him as such so as a little bit of an exercise for me for the last for one evening I decided to write down all the accounts of one sin I committed for ten years and this is pretty easy because I did it for almost every single day so it's pretty easy to count I didn't have to think too much about it I just wrote on every single line I committed that sin and if I did so if I dedicated a page for a month the whole page would be filled so I would have 12 pages for one year and if for ten years that would be 120 pages to give you an idea this whole book and 40 pages would be filled with all these accounts of this one sin

I am not taking consideration lying although I'm pretty guilty of that or anger I'm also very guilty of that shocker but one personally I can't respect or have any care towards any religious system where the central claim of every religious system is if I am devotional if I pray if I do any form of devotional I will somehow be a good person because there are three things I would say to that one is do you really think that me praying more every day will clear the accounts I have on my soul the second thing is will when Satan laughs at you I need to ask you do you think that being more devotional will undo all my machination because a man who is possessed by allegiance of demons has a better chance to be freed than you are my machinations and the third is that as a form of teaching

God will punish me by sending me to hell to show that not one ounce of the law shall be broken and every depth shall be cleared do you think that being more devotional and more religious can clear you the depth so when we talk then about when I consider what Christ has done here's how I have understood he has taken all my sins all the accounts every single one of them he taken George's sins he taken Josiah's sins every single account every charge he taken Andrew and Victor's sins he took it and upon the cross when he says it to finish he ripped it every single charge all sins are done it is finished for we have now the atonement and righteousness of

[38 : 35] God I hear now the obvious question is how does one man's death for two hours clear that that's ridiculous how does one man's death do that because Christ is greater than all of our sins every sin has been cleared all of my sins and George's sin and all our sins if we put them on the scale of justice that none!

he tips it he is greater than all of my sins and all my unrighteousness all what I cannot do he has done on my behalf come taste and see how glorious and grace of the Lord is how blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord open the gates of heaven sing praises to the Lord almighty for the King of glory has arrived!

cried out with a loud voice father I surrender my spirit into your hands and he took his last breath died!

For me there are meaningful words from this verse the first is when Jesus cries out this is an indication of his work coming to completion to cry out with a loud voice can mean several things Jesus has made an audible sentence that is heard by others at the scene of the cross Jesus is speaking with urgency and emphasis on the cross in excruciating pain Jesus has the authority to speak the word father in Jesus final words he speaks to the father hands and Jesus surrendering his spirit

I think of Jesus in John 1:3 which speaks of Jesus and that through him all things were made without him nothing was made that has been made Jesus the creator of everything is choosing to be on the cross for you and for me I frequently use my hands for important daily and creative function this verse leads me to reflect on Jesus arms pinned to the cross by nails Jesus hands are in pain and Jesus my creator in his pain surrenders himself into God's hands Jesus his last words complete his earthly work for the people he created the phrase and he took his last breath and died what does this mean to me with

[42 : 06] Jesus his earthly work completed I have been invited to trusting in Jesus for my salvation Jesus had earthly work to do and so do I and I am called to Christ's example I would like to read 1 Peter 2:21 and I put my name in this verse and if you wish you can put yours in for to this Shana you have been called because Christ also suffered for Shana leaving Shana an example so that Shana might follow in his steps Jesus has made it possible for me to have relationship with God it is my choice to accept this and live this out in his strength in Jesus his last breath and words I now have work to do and I can rest in the promise from Philippians 1:6 and

I am sure of this that Christ who began a good work in Shana and Christ who begins a good work in my fellow believers will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ Father day by day may I surrender my spirit my will into your hands voy!

voy voy! voy