

Jesus' Statements from the Cross

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you for joining us. I know many of you are new. You've just come here just for an Easter service. But we are, the service today is going to be on the seven sayings of Jesus from the cross of Calvary. The seven sayings of Jesus from the cross at Calvary. So if you have your Bibles out, some of you may want to turn to Luke 23, Luke 23, and also John 19. So if you knew, I'm just going to give you a quick little recap on where we've been going. As a church, we've been studying the life of Christ, looking into the historical and cultural understanding of Jesus as he walked on this earth. And obviously, we're getting to the end of his mission. We believe by this time, he is somewhere between the ages of 37, 34, 37. And we know what this day is all about. But one of the things that we've been focused on, and I want to continue focusing on in this series, is how Jesus was fully man as well as being fully God. The idea of Jesus being the Son of God kind of gets the most talked the most pressed. But there's also this understanding that Jesus was fully man, that he was just like us in every way. So if you're interested, we have this series called The Life of Christ. It is on our website. But today is the day we're going to be looking at the cross.

It's almost the culmination of his humanity as it meets his deity, as it comes to this depths of his love that is displayed for the people he has called. So as I said this morning, I want to focus on the final seven sayings of Jesus from the cross. His last words to a world that is totally and fully rejected him. Now, when we look at this, not one gospel contains every single word that he spoke. So what I'm doing is called a harmonization. What that means is we're looking at Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And in case you don't know, at the very beginning of the United Testaments, that is the gospels. And gospel means good news. And this is the story of Jesus Christ's life on earth. Jesus did not write these stories, but four eyewitnesses to the accounts of Jesus wrote them. The first one being Matthew. Matthew was one of his apostles. He was called by Jesus. He was a former tax collector. And then after Jesus had called him to write the gospel of Matthew. The gospel of Mark was written by a man named Mark, who we believe was eyewitness to some of the events. But Peter was kind of his disciple. So that Mark was writing a lot of what Peter experienced. And we know Peter was one of

Jesus's kind of primary disciples who walked with him. Then we have Luke. And Luke's a little bit different. Luke was a doctor and a bit of a historian. And he went back years later and interviewed the people who saw Jesus. He even interviewed Mary, the mother of Jesus. He wanted to know how they felt, what they saw, what they saw, and what was going on in that history. And then there's John, who was the one who called himself loved by Jesus. And he lived until he was later in life. And he penned his gospel many years later, looking back and kind of filling in some of the perspectives. But now we are coming to what is considered the great sign of Christianity, which is a cross. When considering the cross of Jesus Christ, one scholar writes, the gruesome death of our Lord at the hands of his enemies is not a happy subject. And yet, it is equally true that no subject, no incident in all of sacred or human history is so worthy of our consideration. And while the scenes of Golgotha are uniformly wretched, these scenes are at the same moment, the most sublime and the most blessed that a sanctified soul can receive.

Most of us know this story. It began on a Thursday evening as Jesus was enjoying a meal with his disciples. He took them down to a garden where he could pray into the anticipation of the events of Friday.

It was here in the garden that Jesus was surrounded by 600 Roman soldiers who arrested him and turned him over to the Jewish authorities. Now, it says that the Jewish authorities were going to hold a trial to try Jesus, but that's really not what happened. They had already come to the agreement that Jesus was a blasphemer who claimed to be the son of God and that he should be put to death.

[5 : 49] But because they were a vassal state, meaning they were under the power of Rome, they had no means to truly kill him. So what meant is they had to come up with some proof from this trial to take to the governor of Israel at that time was a man named Pilate who represented Rome and they needed to give this proof to Pilate who was the only one in the land who could crucify an individual.

So many hours they mocked Jesus, they mocked their own laws, and they tried to come up and even brought false testimonies. But every single testimony, even the ones they planned to lie, did not work out.

But when they finally asked him who he was, he said, I'm Jesus, the son of the living God. That was enough for their ears. It was blasphemy. So they sent him to Pilate. And Pilate, being the judge and the jury and the executioner, examined Jesus versus their accusations. But Pilate did not declare him guilty. Pilate said on five different occasions, I find no fault in this man. Nothing, of course, that would deserve a death sentence. However, after the crowd threatened to undermine Pilate politically, he regrettably turned Jesus over to the crowds to be crucified. The scriptures tell us that Pilate handed Jesus to the crowds at around 7, 6 a.m. that morning. And three hours later, Jesus was led out to Golgotha, which means the place of the skull, where he was to be crucified. We know that during those three hours before he went to the cross, he was beaten by the Roman soldiers. We know that he would have suffered physically great pain. For as Jesus was compelled to carry his cross to Golgotha, he was unable to do so. So much so that the Romans pulled a man out of the crowd, a man by the name of Simon of

Cyrene, to help him. We are told from the Gospels that there was a great multitude of people who mourned and lamented Jesus as they followed Jesus to the place where he would be nailed to this cross.

When Jesus was at the location of the crucifixion, he was offered some what's called sour wine or gall. It's a putrid type of drink that is like spoiled wine, vinegar. And a lot of people believe that they were given that they were given that to him, which would dull the pain, that the Romans were somehow wanting to show some sort of mercy. But that's not why they gave victims of the cross this gall, this sour wine. It served a more practical purpose. The first being it was used to calm the victim down. So when the victim was laid on the cross, the nails could be driven into his hands more precisely because he would not be squirming. And the other reason they gave it is that it seemed to allow the victim to last longer, to suffer more.

[9 : 34] Jesus refused to drink on that day. When we look at the cross, what they would have done, and the cross would have been larger, it would have been on a hill, not a great hill, but the vertical part of the cross was a permanent fixture in that hill. And the part that Jesus would have brought would have been that horizontal section.

So they would have laid down that piece of wood on the ground and they would have separated Jesus. They would have sprawled out his hands and they would have nailed, put the nails into his hands.

Then they would take this beam and they had a mechanism for hoisting it up and attaching it to the cross. Now as his arms would be spread out and before they actually put the nails in his hands, we believe that his shoulder joints would be pushing out, trying to sustain himself.

Let me say something about this act of crucifixion on the cross. The cross was considered the most painful form of execution in the Roman arsenal.

But there's four elements of the cross that I need you to understand this morning. Not because we can greatly more appreciate the physical suffering and therefore take homage on that because it's the spiritual suffering that was far greater.

[11 : 17] But the cross, first of all, was considered for the worst of society. A Roman citizen could not be executed by a cross.

It was used for foreigners, murderers, rebels, seditionists. So they had four rules and I'm going to tell you about these four rules of Roman execution on the cross.

The first rule is that the cross had to be excruciatingly cruel. Excruciatingly cruel.

See, the cross was not meant to kill a rebel. The cross was meant to kill a rebellion. Do you understand?

It was meant to exact so much cruelty and pain that if someone there thought that they could raise their fist against Rome, they would see the suffering, the crying out of pain of that individual on the cross that it would dull their interest in ever doing so.

[12:26] So as I said, when they would have mounted Jesus on the cross, his arms would have been spread out and at the beginning, there'd be no way to support his body until they actually nailed his feet into the cross because at least he could push up with his feet to hold himself on this cross.

With no way to support his body at the very beginning, Jesus' shoulder and arm joints would have been painfully pulled out of their sockets.

This would have immediately led to a swelling of the chest cavity which immediately made it more difficult for Jesus to breathe. With oxygen being so limited, this would cause his heart to pound harder as he would be hyperventilating for a time.

And then they'd finally nail that nail into his feet and at least at then he could push up again and breathe.

Now during this time, the body would heave and cramp and often provide shock to the central nervous system. As Jesus would continue to hang on the cross, his organs would begin to signal his brain through pain that there was a lack of oxygen as well and they were ceasing to function.

[14:02] The shock of the loss of blood would result in nausea and dizziness and vomiting. When the pain would get to a point of going from 10 to 10 and a half, he would need to press on his feet, experiencing the pain once again of nails being pushed into his feet.

But just earlier, he would have been whipped on his back. He'd have these slices up on his back. And as he pushed up against this rugged cross, the splinters from the cross would enter the wounds of his back, giving more pain.

The victim could not sleep or pass out, for they would suffocate. The fact of the matter is, most people died by asphyxiation on the cross.

People died when they either gave up the will or had no ability to hold themselves up. And that leads to the third rule of Roman execution.

The punishment needed to be lingering. It needed to be lingering. I got out of place there, guys.

[15:31] Sorry. First, it had to be excruciatingly painful. Five, it needed... Or second rule of Roman execution is the crucifixion was to be public.

It needed to be at a front gate going into a city. It had to be a place where not only people could see, but people could hear the cries of those who were suffering on the cross. They would usually do it at bottlenecks of gates where you could not not notice the anguish of those.

You might be able to hide your eyes or your children's eyes from that scene, but they would not... couldn't hide themselves from the anguish. The third rule was that it needed to be lingering.

They wanted the victim to suffer for hours, if not days. Oftentimes, they would purposely put a saddle on the cross, just enough so the victim could continue to sit on the cross and suffer even longer, and also to prevent the body from ripping apart and falling to the ground.

And the fourth rule of Roman execution is death on the cross needed to be publicly certifiable. Publicly certifiable. What that means is they had to die on the cross because Rome could never have someone beat the cross.

[17:04] That is why we read in the pages of Scripture, they had to get Jesus off that cross before the Sabbath came that night. And the soldiers, it reads, came and broke the legs of the thieves that were next to Jesus because they were stronger.

They were able to uphold them, but with their legs broken, their body would sink down, and the cage would push down, and you could not take a breath, and you would eventually die of asphyxiation.

So with all that going on is the context for the seven sayings of Jesus this morning. The first statement we find is in Luke 23.

Luke 23, verses 33 to 34. Now I remember Jesus has just had nails put in his hands, his feet. He's experiencing incredible pain. And the text reads, And when they came to the place that is called the skull, there they crucified him.

[18:28] And the criminals, one on the right and one on the left, and Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

The question that comes out is, who is the they? If you were with us last Sunday, you would know how to answer that question. The reality is, it's not just the Jews, it's not just the Romans, but God willed it to happen.

We know that Jesus was rejected, not for being unclear, or unconvincing in his claims to be the Son of God.

Scripture states that the reason Jesus was rejected is that people loved their sin more than they loved the truth. Yet at the same time, the claims of Jesus were difficult to understand.

Scripture says that men were ignorant. And to give them some way out, Jesus had not yet resurrected.

[19 : 41] Men were not imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit to lead them in truth. But the simple reason that Jesus called for forgiveness is because he loved his enemies.

Jesus loved his enemies. Regardless if they knew what they were doing or not, whether it was purpose or in ignorance, Jesus has taught, but I say to you who hear, love your enemies.

Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. It's incredible to think, with the physical pain that he's enduring on this day, the immense pain, to those who taunted him, to those who cried out to him, if you are truly the Son of God, step off this cross.

Jesus remained, in other some words, to turn the other cheek. What Jesus did is he asked them to forgive them.

The second statement that Jesus makes, as we find it in Luke 23, but let me see, set the scene a little bit.

[21 : 08] Scripture tells us, then two robbers were crucified with Jesus, one on his right and one on his left, and Jesus in the center. And in Luke 23, 39, it says, then one of the criminals, who were hanged, blasphemed him, saying, if you are the Christ, save yourself and us.

But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?

And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward for our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong.

Then he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. You see, this man is demonstrating that he is schooled in Old Testament theology.

He would have been a Jew. He understood that the life he was leading was wrong. And that he deserved death on the cross that day for what he did.

[22 : 17] But anybody who lived in Jerusalem or greater Israel, Judea, knew that Jesus was certainly not a rebel. And he understood it as he mocked Jesus at first, then confronted his friend on the other cross.

And he simply said, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus said to him, assuredly, I say to you, today, you will be with me in paradise.

And he said, I always was thinking, Jesus always saves. Amen. Even on the cross, not only asking that God forgive these people, he in that moment is forgiving this man.

To think the first one who would enter into the kingdom with Jesus would not be a great religious leader, would not be one of the great disciples, would not be a great man of faith, or some man who did some great humanitarian work.

But it was a man who at first mocked Jesus, yet could see his own sin, and understand that redemption only lay with the Son of God.

[23 : 52] If you're familiar with the Alistair Begg saying, he knew that redemption laid with the man in the middle. Lord, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

This man demonstrated remarkable insight into who Jesus is, and the kingdom that Jesus preached about. The third statement we find in the Gospel of John.

The Gospel of John. I will read it to you here. 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, the disciple took her into his own house. The question we should be asking here is, where are Jesus' brothers? Scripture tells us they had several brothers.

[25 : 02] Several, in fact, went on to be great Christian leaders in the New Testament church. The scriptures are clear, like I said, that Mary and Joseph had other children, including sisters.

But it seems that not a single one is here, watching their brother die.

You see, before we become too harsh on the Roman soldiers, or the Jewish leaders, it's important to realize that the people who lived with Jesus day in, day out, he, as the older sibling, would have

taken care of them after Joseph had passed, did not believe that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. They rejected him as well. But this is the incredible human side to Jesus. He still cares for his mom. The saying is, what son doesn't care for his mother, or his concern. Jesus, in his full humanity, he doesn't know the future. He does not know that his brothers are going to become strong leaders in the church.

[26 : 20] At that point, he doesn't have that. He has given away that power. He's not calling upon it. So in those first three hours of the cross, from nine till twelve, we find Jesus forgiving his enemies, welcoming a new friend into the kingdom, and he's taking care of his mom.

However, from noon to three, something else happens. Matthew, Mark, and Luke teach that a supernatural darkness descended on the earth for three hours.

It wasn't a pitch blackness. It was not an eclipse. But it was a supernatural darkness. The three-hour darkness, as we believe, was intended to be supernatural and a graphic demonstration of the unspeakable injustice that had been carried out on Jesus.

As Jesus hung on that cross, his body falling apart, the real pain began. His Father in heaven began to pour out the wrath of all sinners who ever lived, who were there, and were to come on his son that day.

One author writes, the suffering of the perfect Lamb of God was a violation of all that is right and noble, and of the infinite measure of ineffable emotional trauma being endured by both father and son.

[28 : 10] For the period of those three hours, the son accepted the role of man's sin sacrifice and was judiciously forsaken by the father.

To be sure, all of the injustice intrinsic to what occurred during these three hours was purposed by an all-wise and perfectly righteous God who was pleased to bruise and to put to grief his own innocent but willing son for the sake of his own ultimate glory and of man's gracious deliverance from the curse of sin.

The greatest pain that Jesus endured was not the physical pain on the cross, but it was on the cross when his father turned his back on the son and Jesus willingly accepted that he would be the sacrifice for my sin, for your sin.

There was quiet in the land for three hours. At about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eli, Eli, lama sabbathani, that is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Jesus' cry is the most clearest and most soul-stirring insight into the infinitely deep and ultimately inscrutable significance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

[30 : 10] The cry is representative of an experience and a relationship that are truly beyond our ability to comprehend. It transcends our capacity to fully grasp the moment of gut-wrenching, messianic despair.

a commentary from the early 1900s writes, it was not mere bodily anguish that elicited this cry. It arose from some incalculable affliction of soul. Jesus was bearing the sins of the whole world. The Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all.

There was no one to comfort him in his heaviness and the light of God's countenance was for the time withdrawn from him. He was left that he might bear man's sins in the full and crushing weight and by bearing same.

You see what's interesting about that would have been in Aramaic, his native love, his native language, the language of his heart.

[31 : 30] You see physical death is not what Jesus feared. Six weeks earlier when they found Lazarus in the tomb, what did he do? Lazarus, rise, death was conquered. So this isn't what he fears.

What he feared is that death was alienation from God. who he had enjoyed an eternity of perfection with. For those who argue that perhaps that's not what happened, if you remember the story of Adam in the Garden of Eve, when he sinned, when he bit into that apple, he brought on death. Adam didn't die at that moment, did he? He went on to live, but that relationship with God the Father died. my friends, this is what theologians call the work of the atonement, which occurred on that cross for you and me.

My sins and your sins were atoned on that day by God's perfect son who died a death we could not die.

let me tell you about Jesus' fifth statement. If we could say that there was one statement that is not like the other, this is it.

[32 : 56] But it could possibly be the most important words we needed to hear. John 19, 28 says, after this, Jesus knowing that all was now finished to fulfill scripture, simply said, I thirst.

Now to put this into context, he had been sitting on a cross hanging in utter pain for another three hours. At this point, it's been six hours on the cross.

Now one of the torments of the cross and one of the most prominent effects of crucifixion was the extreme amount of fluids the body loses through open body wounds and perspiration.

In fact, it can get so extreme that the body begins to take moisture from our red blood cells in order to keep the body alive.

And as a result, the body begins to puff up. So at that moment, Jesus' throat would have been swollen and his tongue would have been swollen.

[34 : 11] It's at this point that some people choke. They can't move their tongue and they choke to death on their tongue. Breathing has become increasingly and increasingly more difficult.

But here Jesus is struggling to say what he most desperately needs to say, but he cannot. So with the energy that it would have taken for Jesus to simply say, I thirst, would indicate the type of news that he so desired to share with us.

So at the news as he hung and he trying to move his tongue just to utterly say, I thirst. Someone at the foot of the cross heard his cry and there was a verse 29 says a full jar full of sour wine stood there.

So they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. And he takes in this sour wine to to moisten his throat and to bring moisture to his tongue so he can find the strength and the physical capability to say what he now longs to say.

Which brings us to his sixth statement. It is finished.

[35 : 46] The victory cry came out. This cry, this statement is the most compelling evidence that the work of the atonement was accomplished on that cross at that moment.

All payment for our sins. That ledger destroyed every debt of our sin completely paid for. The wrath, this death, satisfied the demands of God's holy nature.

And make no mistake, Jesus did not have to pour out on his wrath because our sins are so gruesome. Don't get me wrong, they are. The reason God had to pour out his wrath is because God's holiness was so perfect and great.

Do you get that? It's not because of how bad we are, but it's how great God is. That he could not have us with him because of his holiness, so he had to satisfy something for us to be able to come to him in a relational peace that Adam enjoyed in the garden.

Genesis tells us that Adam walked in the cool of the day with God. There was an open relationship. There was no shame. There was no sin.

[37 : 04] It was a wonderful fellowship. Let's be honest. We don't even have that with one another. We may think we have open relationships with one another.

We can talk, but we know there's little places that we hide things. things. But Jesus on that day restored the relationship that we are meant to have.

And I pity the fool who believes somewhere in their heads that they can add any sort of work to what Jesus did.

You with me on that? And if you have this idea that you can do this extra work to get God's favor, you are a fool.

Jesus did it all. Do you not understand what happened on that cross? He paid it all. All we need to do is believe.

[38 : 11] Do we believe that Jesus Christ came to this earth as the Son of God? We do. believe that he lived a sinless life as a man, right?

We believe that he went on this cross and that he died for us so that we may have our relationship restored.

Anybody who thinks they can add to what Jesus did on that cross, is a fool.

And we've all been guilty of it. Maybe I can give a little bit more. Maybe I can be nicer to people. I'll make God happier. Nah. Just believe. Trust in Christ.

And Jesus' seventh and final statement was, and when Jesus has cried out with a loud voice, he said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

[39 : 16] Having said this and bowing his head, he breathed his last and yielded up his spirit. Let me read for you the rest of the story from the harmonizations of the gospel.

Then behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom and the earth quaked and the rocks were split and the graves were open and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

And coming out of the graves after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion who stood opposite Jesus and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw that he cried out like this and breathed his last and saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly and glorified God saying, Truly, this man was the Son of God.

And certainly this was a righteous man. And the whole crowd who came together to that site seeing what had been done beat their breasts in a sign of remorse and anguish and returned.

It's the saddest news. But later that day a man by the name of Joseph of Arimathea went to a man named Pilate.

[40 : 52] He said, Pilate, can I remove Jesus and put him in my family's tomb? Pilate said, yes, you may. So he took him with the help of many and they buried Jesus where he rested that Friday night, where he rested all day Saturday.

And on the Sunday, the third day, the day of all days, people who went to the grave to honor Jesus found it empty.

And it demonstrated that Jesus could conquer death after all. And that's how wonderful Good Friday leads to a superb Resurrection Sunday.

Happy Easter.