

Thursday Evening - English

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Date: 23 August 2018

Preacher: Rev R J Campbell

[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let us turn back to the portion of scripture that we read together in the New Testament, in the Gospel, according to Luke, and we shall read verse 34.

And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Amen. These words that Luke records here are the first of what is known as the seven sayings of Jesus Christ on the cross.

He may have said more, but we are not told what these words may have been. But we have the seven, and they are sufficient to tell us what Jesus was thinking and experiencing while he was hanging on the cross.

I am sure that most of us, if not all of us, are familiar with the seven sayings, but I hope that it will benefit us to revisit this first saying of the cross.

[1 : 25] Not all the seven sayings are found together in any single gospel, but Luke records for us the first saying, which we have here this evening, and also the second in verse 43, and the seventh in verse 46.

And there are many significant features that belong to the saints of Jesus from the cross. That Jesus spoke seven times, or else that it is recorded for us, seven of his saints, is significant, as we know that the number seven in the Bible speaks of completeness.

And the order in which he speaks these sayings is also significant. The first three sayings were uttered before noon.

They made their way to the place of the skull around 9 a.m. And between 9 a.m. and noon, these first three sayings were uttered.

And in them he brings before us his relationship to men. They register for us his relationship to others.

[2 : 51] In the first saying, which we're going to consider this evening, he intercedes to the Father on behalf of others. Father, forgive them. And the second saying, he speaks to the thief who has repented and exercised faith in him.

And he gives him a word of promise and assurance. Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. And then he speaks to Mary, his mother, and his disciple John, and shows his concern for his mother.

To Mary he said, woman, behold thy son. And to John, behold thy mother. Then the cross at noon was shrouded in darkness until around 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

And then we come to the fourth saying when Jesus cried out the first words of Psalm 22. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Then he cried, I thirst. After which he was offered a drink. Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus refused the initial drink of vinegar, gall, and myrrh that was offered to him to alleviate his sufferings.

[4 : 10] But here, several hours later, we see Jesus fulfilling the Masonic prophecy found in Psalm 69.

They gave me also gall for my meat, and in thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Then came the sixth saying, it is finished. His final act of obedience was complete.

Then we have the seventh saying, where Jesus closes with the words of Psalm 31, verse 5. That he commits his spirit into the hands of the Father.

And in doing so, we see his complete trust in the Father. Jesus entered death in the same way that he lived every day of his life.

Offering up his life as the perfect sacrifice. And placing himself always in the Father's hand. Now these last four sayings took place very close to one another within minutes of each other.

[5 : 21] Because this was now around three o'clock, and he was buried by six. Joseph had to go and beg or ask for his body.

So these last sayings on the cross was very close to one another. And after uttering his seventh saying, he bowed his head and he died.

Now another significant feature about these sayings is that the first and the last are addressed to the Father. In fact, Luke lays great emphasis more than any other gospel writers on the prayer life of our Lord.

Luke records for us that at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry, when he was baptized by John, he says, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him.

And a voice came from heaven which said, thou art my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased. And now we find Jesus coming to the end of his earthly ministry.

[6 : 35] No longer free to move, but nailed to a cross. His ministry has so restricted, but yet he prays.

And we have Jesus here as an example for us. Here he was about to enter the darkest moments, and yet he is giving priority to prayer.

Earlier he had prayed for himself, the disciples and the church as he entered into the Garden of Gethsemane, recorded for us by John in chapter 17.

And in the Garden, it is recorded for us the intensity of his prayer and to the Father, where he wrestled in prayer that was so passionate and so intense that his sweat became as great drops of blood as he laid prostrate on the cold ground of the Garden of Gethsemane.

And now on the cross, he turns to a prayer of intercession. The example of Christ here on the cross is an encouragement for those who may feel that their own ministry and serving Christ is so restricted, perhaps by ill health or old age or other circumstances, that they are no longer able to do what they once were able and willing to do.

[8 : 09] But this is one thing that you can still do. You can pray. There is no place from where you cannot pray.

Jesus is no longer able to do what he used to do, but he can pray. He began his public ministry with prayer, and now as he ends his public ministry, he does so pray.

And although there are many things in our Christian life that may fail us because of the frailty that belongs to us, nevertheless, we can always pray.

Another significant feature of these sayings is that they fall from the lips of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

When we come to reflect upon the person of Jesus Christ and the work of atonement and his actions on the cross, we must do so remembering his relationship with the Father and with the Holy Spirit and with ourselves.

[9 : 23] On the cross, here we have the unique Son of God. But he is also the unique servant of God.

We must be mindful of the unique relationship in which he stood also as the mediator of the church, a relationship in which he could say, My Father is greater than I.

We must be mindful that as mediator, he is in covenant with the Father, which we call the covenant of redemption. That is the covenant that was transacted between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And what is the essence of that covenant? What is the essence of the covenant of redemption? Well, it is as if the Father is saying to the Son, I will be your God and you, my Son, will be my servant.

It is a relationship that requires him to call his Father God. Now that is a unique relationship, but nevertheless, a covenant relationship in which the Son is as a servant to the Father.

[10 : 48] Psalm 40 brings before us the essence of this relationship in these words, He came as servant to save us from the consequences, consequences of our sin.

And it is on our reflection of Jesus in his relationship to God the Father as the servant, that we can truly understand these sayings of the cross.

As we look at each sayings, we must look at them on the understanding of his relationship as the servant to the Father.

What is the relationship of Jesus as servant to the Father and the Holy Spirit? Well, as the servant has come to do the Father's will and purpose, and in doing so, he is totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

One of the unique features of the atonement is the fact that it is the work of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[12:34] Our salvation is the work of the triune God. The Father is giving the Son. The Son gives himself, and through the Spirit, he can offer up himself without spot to God.

So as a servant, Jesus is dependent upon the Father and the Holy Spirit. His prayer life is evidence for us of that very fact.

Prayer in itself shows forth our dependency upon someone else. As a servant of God, what is his relationship to us?

Well, he is acting as the mediator of the church, and in his mediatorial role, his functions are as prophet, priest, and king.

So on the cross, we have the Son of God. On the cross, we have the servant of Jehovah. And on the cross, we have the mediator of the church.

[13:51] And as we look at the cross, we must always remember who we have on the cross and its relationship to the Father, the Holy Spirit, and to us.

Now, for these soldiers who had taken the Lord Jesus to the cross, this crucifixion seemed no different from previous ones. And perhaps the only detail that interested them was which of them would take home the garments worn by the condemned men, and especially the seamless coat of the Lord Jesus.

Because that was one of the few activities that belonged to the soldiers.

After nailing the victim to the cross and lowering the cross into the hole that was prepared for it, their activity would be to gamble for the victim's clothes.

Now, I am sure that in crucifying condemned people, there would be cries of pain, possibly often intermingled with an amount of blasphemy.

[15:14] But here is one who is unique. Here is one who does not curse. He does not blaspheme. Despite the intense pain that he is suffering after the scourging and all the other physical abuse that his body had undergone, so that the prophet said, as many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance and is foreign beyond that of the children of mankind.

But added to the physical pain that he was suffering, there was the emotional pain. We must not forget that he did not feel when he was betrayed by his disciple Judas.

We must not think that he did not feel the injustice from the Jewish Sanhedrin. He was truly human. And he would have felt emotionally the pain of betrayal and the pain of injustice.

And he would have felt the denial of Peter. And then the scattering of the disciples. He would have felt all that emotionally.

So, not only the physical pain that he was suffering, but also the emotional pain that he was suffering. However, instead of showing any anger, he makes this prayer.

[16:51] Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And the word translated said here is in the Greek and in perfect tense, which indicates continuous action.

This means that Christ prayed this prayer over and over and over again. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

And we know that the first saying is the fulfillment of scripture. For Isaiah prophesied regarding the servant.

He was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Although he would appear before his shearers as dumb, in accordance again with the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the servant, he was oppressed, he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.

He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers as dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. Yet having been numbered among the transgressors, he would make intercession for them.

[18:20] He would pray for them. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Although Jesus, he was truly man, and although he felt the pain and suffering, nevertheless, although he had come into the depths of his suffering, both physically, emotionally, and mentally, yet he prays for the transgressors.

And what great evidence we have here of the great love of God for sinners. What great evidence we have here of the great love of Jesus for sinners.

Listen to him and the painful experience that he has been going through and is going through. Yet he has no thoughts for himself.

His first cry is for the transgressors, for the lawbreakers. He prays for sinners. He is pleading with his father for forgiveness for those who are treating him so shamefully and who are using him so wrongly.

He is working there as the great high priest on the church. On the cross, for the Old Testament reveals to us that the high priestly function had two aspects to it, and that was the aspect of sacrifice and the aspect of intercession.

[20 : 12] And as he offers this prayer to the Father, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. He is establishing the basis upon which forgiveness can be given and enjoyed by men.

For forgiveness is only obtained based on the atoning sacrifice and on the intercessory ministry of the one who makes the sacrifice.

He is working out the basis on which forgiveness could be given. For forgiveness is through the shedding of blood.

And here is the one who is laying down his life, who is shedding his blood so that forgiveness would be possible for me and for you.

His plea to the Father is not to destroy, but to forgive. He is one who knows the Father.

[21 : 29] He is one with the Father. He knows that the Father's delight is always in showing forgiveness, and showing mercy and that judgment to God is a strange work.

He delighteth in mercy. He reveals to us that his heart is the same as his Father's heart.

That he delighteth in mercy. And we find not only the delight of the Father and the delight of the Son in showing mercy, but they're also given to us the delight of the Holy Spirit to apply to us the benefits of the atoning work of the Son showing us the delight of the Holy Spirit in forgiveness.

The delight of the triune God to show us mercy. Isn't that a wonderful thing to think of at the beginning of a communion season?

as you prepare yourselves to go forward to remember the cost of your salvation, to remember the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, to remember the shedding of his blood, is it not wonderful to think that it also shows us the love of a triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to our sinners such as you and I.

[23 : 07] The first saying uttered by Jesus from the cross is also unique for he has never pleaded in this manner before. He has forgiven sin before.

He himself on several occasions pronounced the words of absolution, your sins are forgiven. many wondered at that for they said who can forgive sins but God only and yet here he was many on many occasions forgiving sins, many occasions he said your sins are forgiven.

and he told the people around him that he as the son of man had authority or not to forgive sins, the authority, power, and right to forgive sins that belonged to him.

But on the cross he does not announce the absolution because he is now acting in his office as the mediator and intercessor for the transgressor.

He is working in his role as given out in Psalm 2. Ask of me says the father ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost powers of the earth for thy possession.

[24 : 38] and there is a particular reason why he craves the mercy of heaven for those who are crucifying him.

For he says they do not know what they are doing. Of course this does not mean that they were ignorant of the fact that they were crucifying him.

They did know that they were crucifying. They are watching him and there are many around who are crying out for his crucifixion crucify him.

There are many who are delighting in the very fact of his crucifixion. What then does he mean when he says father forgive them for they know not what they do.

They were ignorant of who he was that they were crucifying. Their minds and their understanding was so darkened that they did not realize who he was that they were crucifying.

[26 : 00] Paul writing to the church of Corinth says which none of the princes of this world knew for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

They did not realize that the one on the cross is the king of glory. the people standing at the cross do not know it because there is blindness over their hearts.

This is always the devil's method to hide the truth from the people. As Paul writes and says if our gospel be hid it is said to them that are lost in whom the God of this world have blinded the minds of them which believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them.

Because of the blindness of their hearts they had rejected Jesus and they were ignorant of the enormity of their sin of what they were actually doing.

Peter tells the people after seeing the miracle of the lame man walking ye men of Israel why marvel ye at this or why look ye so earnestly on us as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk the God of Abraham of Isaac and Jacob the God of our fathers hath glorified his son Jesus whom ye delivered up and denied him in the presence of Pilate when he was determined to let him go but ye denied the holy one and the just and desired a murderer to be granted unto and killed the prince of life whom God hath raised from the dead whereof we are witnesses and he goes on and he says and now brethren I would that though through ignorance ye did it as also your rulers but those things which God before are showed by the mouth of all his prophets that Christ should suffer he has so fulfilled

[28 : 18] Peter is telling them that they had no idea that they were crucifying the Lord of glory but though the deed was done in ignorance we must remember it was not excusable they had sinned and it needed to be forgiven and here we come also to see the perfection of the atoning work of Jesus we have a picture of it in the Old Testament it's always good to take both Testaments together don't neglect the old for the new and don't do it vice versa either for in the Old Testament there was this law a specific provision made for the sins of ignorance there had to be a sacrifice for those sins just as much as for known sin in this perfect atoning work of

Christ he is covering every sin the sins of omission things that ought to have been done and weren't and the sins of commission things that should never have been done and were the atonement covers it all it covers the sins that we know and the sins that we don't know about it is a complete atonement these people ought to have known better but unbelief blinded their minds and understanding and Jesus recognises this and pleads on behalf for forgiveness for what they are doing now we can ask the question for whom did he pray was it simply for the soldiers who was crucifying him or for those around the cross that was watching him was it simply a prayer such as Jesus taught all his followers to pray for their enemies you will recall the sermon on the mount where we have these words you have heard that it had been said thou shall love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy but I say unto you love your enemies bless them that curse you do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitably use you and persecute you that you may be the children of your father which in heaven you see he are teaching them by example that he never taught anything to do which he was not prepared to do himself at the beginning he taught them love your enemies bless them curse you do good to them and pray for them which despitably use you and persecute you and now here at the end he is giving himself as the perfect example to do all that he taught here he is praying for the very ones who are causing his pain and affliction he is praying for the very ones who shouted out for his death get rid of him destroy him crucify him kill him but I think his prayer here is much wider than that I think that we should look upon this prayer as part of the official intercessory work of Christ Daphne believes that it was and that the objects of this prayer were later converted Jesus prays for all those for whom he was hanging on the cross for all those who were given to him by the father in the covenant of redemption and for whom he came into this world to die on the cross all those elected in Christ here he is praying for them all for all those whose sins has been reckoned to him and for those only remember what he said what is recorded for us in John 17 Jesus tells us that he prays for his immediate disciples and those who would believe in him through their word he says

I am praying for them I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me for they are yours and that is the essence of the intercessory ministry of Christ he is praying for those given to him by the father in the covenant of redemption and that is the ones that are included in this prayer father forgive them for they know not what they do there were around the cross some of those who were included in that prayer first soon he sees the fruit of his prayer the Roman centurion coming to faith and we find people beholding the things that were done smacking their breasts and returned and six weeks later we find about 3,000 people on the day of Pentecost falling

down in repentance and believing in the

[34 : 00] Lord and among these three thousands were those who were at the cross some of them crying out crucify him crucify him because Peter preaches to them and he says ye men of Israel hear these words Jesus of Nazareth a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know him being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken you have taken and by wicked hands you have crucified and you have slain and what was the response what was the reaction we are told now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles men and brethren what shall we do then said Peter unto them repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus

Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost for the promises unto you and to your children and to all that far off even as many as the Lord our God shall call for they heard this they were pricked in their hearts the conviction of the Holy Spirit setting and the guilt of the crime that they had committed the sin that they had committed has come upon them the fact that they were responsible for the Saviour's death or had taken part in the Saviour's death overwhelmed their souls and their cry was men and brethren what shall we do and they were pointed to the Saviour by the Apostle Peter and three thousand were converted many of them I believe were at the cross many of them were in the Saviour's prayer father forgive them for they know not what they do the prayer of Golgotha is answered and repentance and remission of sins is granted we are told in the book of Acts chapter 6 that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith and the word of

God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith there's another group that was at the cross a section of the Jewish people who were responsible for the Saviour's death yet we are told that many of them were obedient to the faith they came to Jesus Christ for you for you up to this point you may have rejected the pleadings of the gospel you may have rejected

Jesus Christ in your ignorance although you've heard about him although you've read about him although you have been pleaded with yet you are blinded by unbelief you are still ignorant but here is the amazing prayer father forgive them for they know not what they do you are not at all outside the scope of forgiveness you are not at all outside the scope of salvation this is where the hope of a fallen world lies and the fact that there is one mediator between God and man the man Christ Jesus and that in his offer as mediator and his functions as priest in his atoning death and as the intercessor for the transgressors father forgive them for they know not what they do you may be asking how can

I have the assurance my sins have been forgiven the only way of having that assurance is by trusting in Jesus Christ in his atoning death the writer to the Hebrew says to us that Jesus can save to the uttermost all those who come to God by him because he ever lives to make intercession for us when he prays for he receives when he prays for he receives for us Psalm 21 tells us the king is joyful for he receives whatever his lips crave for thou has given him his heart desire and has not withholding the request of his lips we see in this prayer a picture of Jesus desire for sinners father forgive them you know Jesus desire for your forgiveness is much greater than your desire to be forgiven he desires your forgiveness much more than you desire his forgiveness if we had gone to [40 : 16] Golgotha that day we would have observed that his paramount desire was for sinners to be pardoned and his desire has not changed even in his glorified state this evening his desire is still for sinners to be pardoned for sinners to be saved forgiven we we could ascend to the throne of god where the once crucified christ now is and we would discover that his desire is still and the passion of his heart is still the same for sinners like me and you to be pardoned forgiven and saved do we not read that there is joy in the presence of the angels of god over one sinner that repenteth the joy communicated to the angels by the triune god father son and holy spirit we see in this saying the importance of forgiveness for our sins and the thing is that we must such ourselves do we as christians value for ourselves what the son of god wanted us to have pardon forgiveness for all our sins what value do you put upon forgiveness of sin you know sadly and surprisingly we can reach the stage where we can take our forgiveness for granted and our petitions for pardon our petitions for forgiveness can become so routine we just throw it on at the end of our prayer forgive us for our sins without really entering into the complexity of the forgiveness what it really entailed was god sending his son his son coming in humiliation his son going to the cross and the father not sparing

him his blood being shed at a great cost and his love for you and me his love for those given to him by the father his love for sinners was so great that he was willing to go to the very limit of that love which left him in a state of forsakenness he went into outer darkness for me and for you and yet we so often take our forgiveness for granted we so often put that petition for pardon just as a routine without really grasping and understanding the cost of our forgiveness you see we must and we need to take our place alongside those soldiers and others and they admire the one who not only prayed on the cross but who also suffered there instead of his people the awful wrath of

God against our sins we must place ourselves at Golgotha at Calvary at the skull we must place ourselves there and admire Jesus Christ it is the best place to be is to be at Golgotha every day to be there and to hear these words father forgive them for they know not what they do may the lord bless our thoughts let us pray eternal and ever blessed lord we give thanks to thee this night the revelation that thou hast made of thyself through thy son as a god who delighteth in mercy we we give thanks for that prayer on the cross father forgive them for they know not what they do and so soon after the efficacy of that prayer was witnessed and has still been witnessed to this very day and shall be to the end of time we pray oh lord that thou would bless our thoughts this night upon that prayer that it may be a means of encouragement and comfort to us knowing that we have a great high priest who has offered himself as the sacrifice and that we have that great intercessor at the right hand of the father we ask oh lord that thou would continue with us and all that we ask is in jesus name and for his sake amen we shall conclude by singing to the lord's praise from sing psalms psalm 25 at verse 4 on page 29 sing psalms psalm 25 on page 29 if you're using the blue book at verse 4 oh lord reveal to me your ways and all your paths help me to know direct and guide me in your truth instruct me in the way to go you are my savior and my god all day i hope in you alone remember lord your love and grace which from past ages you have shown do not recall my sins of youth or my rebellious evil ways remember me in your great love for you oh lord are good always down to the end of verse mark 11 psalm 25 verse 4 to 11 to the lord's praise oh lord reveal to me your ways and all your paths help me to know oh lord reveal to me your ways and all your paths help me ■■■■■ for you

And guide me in your truth and struggle Me in the way to go You are my Savior and my God All day I hope in you alone Remember Lord your love And grace with pride As riches you have shown You are my Savior and my God