



## Good Friday – Tenebrae Service

March 30, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

### Theme: Christ's Seven Words From The Cross

#### The First Word - Luke 23: 33-34 New International Version (NIV)

When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Word Homily:** Can you even imagine praying what Jesus prayed as the Roman soldiers drove iron spikes through His wrists and ankles: “**Father, forgive them**”? I can only imagine that most of those who were crucified called out curses on the ones inflicting such incredible pain on them. But not Jesus. Jesus was different. Instead of asking His Heavenly Father to damn His executioners to hell, Jesus pleaded with His Dad to pardon them for carrying out their commanding officer’s orders. They were only doing their job. They had no clue that the One they were putting to death that day was their Savior from sin, too, for Jesus’ death on the cross paid the price they owed to God for the guilt of all of their transgressions—not just the one they were in the process of committing when they crucified Jesus.

And Jesus’ death on the cross has paid for each and every offensive act of rebellion against God on our parts, too. Every misdeed; every careless, unkind word; every hateful or lustful thought; every tidbit of gossip; every lie; every act of violence; every ounce of covetousness; every addiction and every bit of pain and sadness we’ve brought into the life of a loved one by our selfish, me-first attitude. For us Jesus prays, “**Father, forgive them**” even though we do “**know what we do.**”

#### The Second Word - Luke 23:35-43 New International Version (NIV)

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.”

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

There was a written notice above him, which read:

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

But the other criminal rebuked him, “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus answered him,

“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

**2<sup>nd</sup> Word Homily:** At first both criminals crucified that day on either side of Jesus’ cross hurled insults at Him and challenged Him to save not only Himself but them as well—if He really was the divine Son of God. But over time, one of those dying men came to the realization that Jesus was not only the king of the Jews but His Savior-King as well. He’d heard Jesus pray for His executioners’ pardon. That both intrigued him and impressed him. He’d heard about this Jesus. Is it possible that he’d even been present when Jesus delivered one of His powerful sermons or performed one of His astounding miraculous acts of compassion? It’s conceivable.

But even if that wasn’t the case, this dying thief came to believe in Jesus that day by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. He’d seen the living gospel play out before his eyes that Friday afternoon in the way that Jesus dealt with His baseless suffering and faced His cruel fate. He wanted what Jesus had. He wanted peace in the face of his own impending demise; he yearned for forgiveness for the crimes he’d committed against both God and his fellowman. And although Jesus didn’t appear to be a conquering king as He hung bleeding and dying on an adjacent cross, a crown of thorns cocked on His brow, the Spirit of God led him to believe.

He rebuked the other criminal and reminded him that they were both **“getting what their deeds deserved.”** Yet He recognized that Jesus **“had done nothing wrong.”** And so he turned to Him in Spirit-worked faith and asked, **“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”** And the Lord replied with the sweetest words the man had ever heard, **“I tell you the truth: today you will be with me in Paradise.”** And oh how that promise sustained him to the bitter end! That same promise of heaven enables us to persevere in faith until the day we die.

**The Third Word - John 19:23-27 New International Version (NIV)**

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

“Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said,

“They divided my clothes among them  
and cast lots for my garment.”

So this is what the soldiers did.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

**3rd Word Homily: “The disciple whom Jesus loved.”** Was it sinful pride or humble pie that caused the apostle John to refer to himself that way in his Gospel? It was neither! In the first place, remember that God the Holy Spirit inspired John to pen every word of his account. And Jesus Himself prayed for His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane only hours earlier, **“Father, sanctify them—make them holy—by the truth; your word is truth.”** So it was true! John really was **“the disciple whom Jesus loved.”** But so are we. And the truth of the matter is that Jesus loves no one person more than another. He loves every single one of us just the same: with perfect, self-sacrificing, unconditional agape love! Jesus said, **“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep”** (John 10:14-15).

That’s love! Jesus knows us by name, and He calls us to follow where He leads us in life. And He always calls us to demonstrate the kind of love for parents that He did for His dear mother, Mary. Even as He hung in humiliation on Calvary’s cross, Jesus entrusted His by then no doubt widowed mother to the care of His dearest friend, John. And John took her into his home from that very day. Even in the hour of His death, Jesus was fulfilling God’s commandments in our place by “Honoring his Father”—His heavenly Father, in this case—and “his mother” Mary who bore Him in Bethlehem’s stable 33 years hence for this very purpose: that He might offer Himself up “as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. And not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Praise God for Jesus’ undying devotion: to His Father’s will, for the care of His mother, Mary; and for us tonight!

### **The Fourth Word - Mark 15:33-36 New International Version (NIV)**

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”* (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

**4<sup>th</sup> Word Homily:** **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”** Jesus cried out in despair in the midst of the mid-day darkness that cloaked the world that Friday. **“Why?”** Have you ever asked God **“Why?”** I have and I’ll bet you have, too.

Our laments go something like this: **“Why do you let such a good person suffer the way my sister is? She’s your lamb, Lord! I thought you said you’d work everything out for the good of those who love you—those who have been called according to your purpose. If anyone loves you, Lord, it’s my sister! She’s devoted herself to you her entire life: she taught Sunday School for decades, sang in the church choir since she was in Jr. High, headed up the kitchen crew for potlucks for years, sewed countless quilts for newlyweds and knit sweaters for every single newborn in her congregation for almost 40 years. And now this. She’s suffering from a rare form of leukemia for which there’s no known cure. Is this how you deal with someone who has so clearly put you first in her heart all her life? You just chuck ‘em on life’s junk-heap—just discard ‘em like a worn-out rag? My God, my God, why have you forsaken her? Why have you forsaken me?”**

Have you ever felt that way? Jesus has. And the circumstances under which He experienced that kind of abandonment at the hands of His Father were genuine: Jesus really was forsaken by God while He bore our sins in His body on the cross. Truly, **“the deepest stroke that pierced him was the stroke that Justice gave.”** God abandoned His beloved Son on the altar of the cross so that He could render the supreme sacrifice for our sins and pay for them completely by His unjust death. And because He was abandoned by His Dad that day, we can rest assured that His promise holds true for us every moment of our earthly lives: **“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”** (Heb. 13:5). At times it may not seem like that. But it’s true. No matter what curve-ball life throws our way, Jesus has our best interests in mind. And He will keep His promise to work all things out for our eternal good!

### **The Fifth Word - John 19:28-29 New International Version (NIV)**

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.

**5<sup>th</sup> Word Homily:** Experts maintain that of all the horrible suffering Jesus endured on the cross, His incredible thirst was quite likely the worst pain He experienced that Friday afternoon. If you’ve ever been in the hospital and your liquid intake has been curbed at next to nothing, you might have an inkling of how it felt for Jesus that day as He longed for but a drop of water to take the sting out of His parched throat. When He was first nailed to the tree, Matthew informs us in his Gospel that **“they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it”** (Matthew 27:34).

Jesus refused because that cocktail was a narcotic that would serve to ease the pain of the one being crucified. Jesus desired to be 100% present throughout His crucifixion without any pain relieving agent so that He might experience the full depth of the suffering you and I deserve for the guilt of our sin. He also wanted to remain completely reliant upon the strength that the Father would impart to Him by the Spirit so that He could honor God above all else when it came to the all-atoning sacrifice He was rendering on the cross for the sins of mankind. But now, “knowing that everything was finished, and so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled” Jesus accepted the drink that was offered Him. Jesus was always all about fulfilling the words the prophets had written at God’s behest that foreshadowed His Person and work in man’s behalf.

Our crucified King invites us, **“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me to drink”** (John 7:37). Jesus quenches our spiritual thirst for forgiveness and eternal life by means of His Spirit who does His soul-refreshing work through the gospel in the Bible, in Baptism and in Holy Communion. In very nearly the closing words of Scripture, Jesus vows: **“It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life” forever and ever in heaven** (Rev. 21:6). Come to Jesus, and drink deeply of His grace!

### **The Sixth Word - John 19:29-30 New International Version (NIV)**

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. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

**6<sup>th</sup> Word Homily: “It is finished.”** That expression is but one word in the Greek language in which the New Testament was originally written: *tetelestai*. Can you make that word out it on the banner to my left? It’s written out in Greek beneath the silhouette of our thorn-crowned King. *Tetelestai* is the word a merchant would write at the bottom of a line of credit when the debtor had paid off his or her account in full. That’s what the word literally means: paid in full. How apropos that Jesus would use that word at this point of His ordeal. He’d rendered the all-atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world having satisfied every aspect of God’s holy law in our stead. There was nothing more for Him to accomplish in order to complete the mission He’d embarked on some 33 years earlier when He left His Father’s side to take on our frail flesh and blood. *All—all—was finished now!* So Jesus humbly **“bowed his head”** and **“gave up his spirit”** in death. If you ever doubt whether or not Jesus has done enough for you; if you ever question His love or devotion; remember His dying words: **“It is finished!” “PAID IN FULL!”**

## The Seventh Word - Luke 23:44-49 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>44</sup> It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, <sup>45</sup> for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. <sup>46</sup> Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

<sup>47</sup> The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” <sup>48</sup> When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. <sup>49</sup> But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

**7<sup>th</sup> Word Homily:** Strange, mind-boggling events transpired in connection with Jesus’ execution: the eerie, midday dusk that swallowed up the scene as if creation itself couldn’t bear to watch the painful suffering and death of its Creator; the **“curtain of the temple was torn in two.”** This was no ordinary curtain, my friends. It was the shroud that separated the temple’s Most Holy Place from its Holy Place. Only sanctified priests were permitted into the temple proper itself. But only the High Priest was sanctioned to go behind that curtain—and then only once a year on the great Day of Atonement—for the purpose of sprinkling the Ark of the Covenant with sacrificial blood to symbolically atone for his own sins and the sins of all Israel, even the sins they weren’t even aware that they’d committed.

The Ark of the Covenant was topped by two center-facing, gold-plated, jewel-encrusted cherubim or angels of the highest order. Inside the ark was the budding-staff of Aaron, Moses’ brother and Israel’s first high priest; as well as the tablets of stone upon which were etched the Lord’s unchanging moral will for mankind in The Ten Commandments; and, finally, a jar of manna, the bread with which God miraculously sustained His hungry people

every day throughout their 40 year exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land of Canaan. The Ark of the Covenant represented God's abiding presence among His people. Anyone who touched the Ark died and even viewing it constituted an egregious offense in God's sight except for the annual event He'd sanctioned on the Day of Atonement.

The curtain that tore in two from top to bottom the moment Jesus committed His spirit to the Heavenly Father was a hand's-breadth thick and fashioned out of blue, purple and scarlet material and fine linen according to the book of Exodus. But as stunning as the drapery was, it signified the ugliness of our sin that separated us from the holy God. So when it tore in two, it declared in no uncertain terms that because Christ's death on the cross atoned for all sin of all time, we now have direct access to the Father whenever we choose to call upon Him in prayer, confess our sins to Him and seek His pardon. That's one more amazing privilege Jesus' death accomplished for us on that Good Friday long ago! Friends, turn to the Lord in prayer whenever, wherever and in whatever circumstances you find yourself in. He promises to hear and to answer in the way that's best for you.