

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA

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Scripture: Various

"Final Words from the Cross" (part 2)

YOU CAN'T HAVE EASTER WITHOUT THE CROSS

Recall from last week we began a two part series on the final words Jesus said while on the cross. Most physicians will tell you that when one is going through the torment of crucifixion it is very difficult to say anything because you are literally gasping for air to prevent asphyxiation. But we know that Jesus was able to not only say words but He cried out in a loud voice on at least two occasions. I believe this was to demonstrate that He was still in control even though He was going through great suffering, and also to give us a message to remember and proclaim to the whole world.

You see, as believers, we can never forget that you can't have Easter without the cross. The cross was the essential work of Christ while on earth, while His resurrection was the vindication of that work. And it is what Jesus said on the cross that again reiterates what He taught during His years of ministry. Recall the following seven sayings...

SEVEN SAYINGS IN FOUR GOSPELS (review from last sermon)

Matthew's and Mark's Gospels record the words that Jesus said to the Father, "*My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?*" (**Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34**). Jesus is not only conveying the weight of the world's sin and rejection that He is feeling, but the abandonment of His Father, as well. He is also quoting **Psalm 22:1**, a Messianic Psalm that highlights the suffering the Messiah will go through.

In **Luke's Gospel** we have three sayings: "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*" (**Lk. 23:34**)

Jesus' words to the thief who repented, "*Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise.*" (**Lk. 23:43**)

And before His actual death, the words Jesus prayed, "*Father, into Your hands, I commit My spirit.*" (**Lk. 23:46**)

In **John's Gospel**, we have three more sayings: Jesus looking down from the cross at His mother, Mary and the apostle John. He says to John, "*Woman, behold your son!*" and then to His disciple, "*Behold, your mother!*" (**Jn. 19:26-27**)

We are then told in **Jn. 19:28**, that after hanging on the cross for a lengthy period of time, Jesus said, ***"I thirst,"*** after which some standing by soaked a sponge in a jar of sour wine and after attaching it to a branch of hyssop gave him a drink.

And then finally, before giving up His spirit, John records that Jesus says ***"It is finished."*** (**Jn.19:30**)

Seven profound statements from the mouth of God, from the mouth of Jesus Christ.

If you study the four accounts, one can figure out the order in which they were said. The traditional order is as follows as well as the theme of each saying:

- 1) ***"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*** (forgiveness)
- 2) ***"Truly I say to you, today, you will be with me in paradise."*** (salvation)
- 3) ***Jesus said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son". Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother".*** (relationship)
- 4) ***"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*** (abandonment)
- 5) ***"I thirst."*** (distress)
- 6) ***"It is finished."*** (triumph)
- 7) ***"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."*** (reunion)

"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Here are the incredible words of despair that Jesus utters when faced with the weight of the world's sin. These words were first proclaimed in **Psalm 22:1**. **Psalm 22** is considered a messianic psalm that foretells the suffering of Jesus. Most scholars say that one cannot fully understand the depth of anguish that Jesus must have faced in light of bearing the weight of the worlds' evil and sin. It was so intense that He for a moment felt separated from His Father - a real sense that the Father was not there. Of course, His Father was and is always there. As **Psalm 139:7** says, ***"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?"***

What does this mean for us? Evil and sin are real and they are spiritual problems. As a result of living in a fallen world, there will be times in our lives that we feel God is not there, or that we have been abandoned by God. It isn't the case but we will feel that way. This may be the result of intentional sin, spiritual apathy, or even very trying circumstances that have nothing to do with our unfaithfulness or sin. In other words, there will be times when we will be walking with the Lord, but the trials of life will be overwhelming.

One of the great truths of Scripture, of life is that God became man, He became flesh. As a result, Jesus felt everything we feel. As a song from Petra goes, ***"He has been in my shoes, been down this road***

before, He has been tested too, been through this door, He feels the pain, and He heals the bruise, He has been in my shoes."

If the Son felt abandonment, do you not think you will, too? It is part of the journey, part of the walk with Christ. It is the way of the cross.

"I THIRST"

And then following up on that saying, we hear the words, "*I thirst.*" We go from a feeling of abandonment to one of distress. Do you remember the Samaritan woman at the well? She came to get water, but Jesus said, *I will give you water that will never make your thirst again.* He was talking about spiritual water. The Holy Spirit. God can only satisfy the inmost desires of our heart.

But as long as we are in the flesh, we will still battle with the desires of the flesh and the shortcomings of the flesh. So too, Jesus. In humbling himself, he took upon himself flesh. He was susceptible to the same shortcomings that we face even though He is the source of living water.

Jesus was vulnerable, He was in need. The Master, the King, the Lord of life, thirsty!

It only stands to reason that He would utter such words of despair after he felt abandoned by the Father. There is a lesson here. Without God, we have nothing, we are nothing. Without Him, there is no hope, no purpose, no meaning, no life.

But as soon as we see Jesus gripped by such feelings of abandonment and distress, Jesus says words of triumph.

"IT IS FINISHED"

Jesus knows He has faithfully fulfilled the work the Father has sent Him to do. He can now say "*It is finished,*" because it really is. Salvation's price has been paid. We read in **Hebrews 12:2**, "*that for fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*". In other words, Jesus endured because He knew in the end it would be worth it. Life would conquer death. Listen to these words also from **Hebrews 2:14-15**: "*Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.*"

But this is all because of Christ's death. You have heard me say recently that the Cross says, "Done, done, done." There is nothing more, nothing less needed for salvation. The world's religions, on the other

hand, say, "Do, do, do." They teach that it is our achievement and work that somehow makes us accepted or saved. But not the cross. The cross is God's gift that we simply receive.

It is why there is no other way of salvation. If Jesus' death is not sufficient, then it was unnecessary. And if it was unnecessary, then why did He even endure it?

FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS, I COMMIT MY SPIRIT"

Finally, we come to the last words of Jesus. In **Luke 23:46**, we are told that Jesus said, "***Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit.***" Here we have words of reunion. They are also found in **Psalm 31:5** and used by Jews as an evening prayer.

When all is said and done, Jesus goes back to His Father. He came from the Father and now He returns to the Father. In **Jn. 14:2**, Jesus said on the night before He died, "***I go to prepare a place for you that where I am, there you may be also.***" Jesus came to restore our relationship with God.

But it is also meant to tell us that not only do we have destiny to be with God forever, we have a destiny here on earth and the only way we can truly fulfill our destiny is to place our life - our plans, our desires, our aspirations and hopes into His hands. There is no other way. We can choose other ways, but it will not work out in the end.

So we see that even on the cross, Jesus was showing us the way of life. He was telling the world, that yes, we are sinners in need of a Savior. Yes, there is Savior who saves. Yes, there is a God who wants to be in relationship with His people. Yes, there will be times even in a faithful walk where we will feel God is not there, there will be hardship, but do not fret or fear, God will give us the victory, for we have a place waiting for us and our duty is to commit ourselves to God until that time. Let us pray....