

JESUS' SEVEN LAST SAYINGS

LUKE 23, JOHN 19

A person's last sayings are *sometimes memorable*, and *oftentimes revealing*. It would seem the last words a person utters would unveil the state of their heart at that moment, if not the momentum of their entire life.

I'm sure to be up against the reality of one's death has to be a sobering experience. Face to face with the grim reaper is a challenging vantage point. It causes a person to drop any pretense, and become brutally honest.

Thus, last words can give you a glimpse behind the veneer of a man - like windows into his or her soul.

For example, just before he died in 1891, the great circus showman, P.T. Barnum, made his last statement.

He uttered these final words, "[How were the receipts today at Madison Square Garden?](#)" It was revealing indeed. It showed he was all about *the money*.

In 1603, Elizabeth 1, Queen of England, breathed her last, but before doing so, she made an offer that had no takers, "[All my possessions for a moment of time.](#)"

It seems at death's door, even all the world's treasure, is worthless. It can't be traded for a single second.

In 1942, proud actor and patriarch of a famous acting family, John Barrymore, said to a friend, "[Die? I should say not, dear friend. No Barrymore would allow such a conventional thing to happen to him.](#)" *Yet, die he did.*

Barrymore's last words revealed both his arrogance and ignorance. No one escapes their date with death.

Louise the queen of Prussia was a beloved monarch.

After her death she was hailed "*the ideal German woman.*" Yet tragically, in 1820, at the young age of 34, Louise lay dying. She uttered her final words, "**I am the Queen, but I have not the power to move my arms.**"

She'd had become a woman who could order armies into battle, but couldn't bring her own hand to her mouth.

One more...

The great British statesman, Winston Churchill, who bravely steadied his English countrymen through the dark days of World War 2, died in 1965 at the age of 90.

Just before slipping into the coma from which he never recovered, his final words were, "**I'm bored with it all.**"

Even an illustrious life like Churchill's held no ultimate meaning for him. He died in a state of boredom.

Again, you can tell a lot about a person by taking heed to their final words. This is why the last words of our Lord Jesus are so important. Even from the cross, while in excruciating physical pain and discomfort, He manage to steady Himself so that He could utter seven statements.

And these were not random outbursts. For the most part, on the cross Jesus quoted Scripture. He spoke to fulfill divine prophecy. His final words were well-timed declarations planned by God from before the beginning.

Jesus' last words were the culmination of God's purposes from ages past. His sayings are like a time warp - a wrinkle in time - little glimpses into eternity.

These final seven sayings of Jesus from the cross are windows into the heart and mind of Almighty God.

And tonight, on Good Friday, I want us to look afresh at Jesus' final seven sayings in their proper order...

Let's turn in our Bibles to **Luke 23** and **John 19**. We'll refer to Matthew and Mark, but turn to Luke and John.

From the cross, in a timeframe of six hours, our Lord Jesus spoke forgiveness to His Jewish condemners...

He gave hope to a thief... He provided comfort to His mother... He suffered and endured a breach with His Father... He emptied Himself completely... He announced that His mission had been finished... Then Jesus breathed His last, and released His spirit to God...

And He did it with seven succinct statements that are jammed with incredible, far-reaching implications.

First, we read, Luke 23:34, "Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

In the previous verse we're told, "When they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him..."

The crucifixion had begun. Hot spit and fresh blood rolls down Jesus' face. He's been abused. His body has been bludgeoned. Like an animal on a spit, Jesus thrashes to breathe - He squirms against the raw wood.

Nails were pounded through His metacarpals. Bones in His feet were splintered by the penetration of the spike. Dozens of sharp thorns puncture Jesus' brow.

Imagine too, the taunts He endured. All along the path from the Judgment Hall to Skull Hill angry men tried to justify their hatred and injustice with reviling accusations.

Even now, on the cross, they keep attacking Him by screaming provocations, *"He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."* And again, *"If You are the king of the Jews, save yourself."*

And yet rather than defend Himself - rather than bemoan His unjust plight - He focuses on the very folks who minutes earlier cried, *"Crucify Him"* - and amazingly He prays to His Father in heaven for their forgiveness.

Here is the heart of God. From the Garden of Eden humanity rebelled against their Creator, yet God kept loving, reaching, wooing, and longing for us to return.

If the Jewish leaders had known God's heart. If they'd seen what made Jesus tick, it would've never come to this... They would've fallen on their faces in surrender. Instead, they were blinded by ignorance.

And in a way that not one of us deserve, Jesus understood. In His mind, He knew we're all but dust.

He showed compassion from a cross - *a cross no less*. From the least compassionate place - Jesus is tortured and executed - yet He shows compassion.

Our Lord cries to heaven, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”* And you can be sure, His request was answered. Forgiveness fell that day.

Of course, on the cross, in the context of the horrible events that transpired that day, when Jesus prayed, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”* - He was praying for the Jews, and their leaders, particularly those who were taunting Him at the time.

His death was indeed their immediate idea.

But I believe Jesus' prayed a time-released prayer. He prayed proactively for generations yet to come.

Remember when Mel Gibson released his film on the last twelve hours of Jesus' life... *“The Passion Of The Christ”* was criticized for being anti-Semitic. They said Mel overplayed the role of the Jews in the execution of Jesus. *I don't think that at all.* The Jews were culpable.

But what people didn't realize was that Mel Gibson played a role in his own movie. You won't find his name listed as an actor in the credits, but you can see his hands in the film. The hands that drove the nails into Jesus' hands, *belong to none other than Mel Gibson.*

It was Mel's way of saying that all of us are guilty. It was his sin and our sin that nailed Jesus to the wood.

When Jesus asked God to forgive those who caused His death, He was praying in advance for you and me.

Perhaps you've heard the poem, *“And I cried, “Who nailed Him there - this Child of peace and mercy.”*

Who nailed Him there? *Come and face me like a man. Who nailed Him there?*” *And the crowd began to mock me. I cried, “Oh my God, I just don’t understand!”*

Then I turned and saw the hammer in **my** hand.

But Jesus speaks a **second** time in Luke 23:39. We hear from a brigand who was crucified with Him, *“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”*

Imagine, the audacity. A condemned criminal joined the jeers of the crowd. Even his sidekick rebukes his arrogance, *“But the other, answering... saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds...”* The Greek word translated, *“criminal”* means *“one who uses violence to rob openly.”*

Which means this man wasn’t being crucified for credit card theft. He was an armed robber - guilty of murder and mayhem. He undoubtedly had earned his sentence!

But Jesus was innocent of any wrongdoing. As the sidekick said, *“But this Man has done nothing wrong.”*

How he reached that conclusion we really don’t know.

Perhaps, He’d known of Jesus earlier... Or maybe he heard Pilate exonerate Him... Or he could’ve drawn the same conclusion reached by the centurion on duty...

There was something inherent in Jesus that made Him different than other men. *Surely, He was a righteous man.* Whatever it was, criminals know criminals, and it was obvious to this thief that Jesus was not one of them.

But this man went further... he didn't just apprise Jesus' character, he asked something of Him. He trusted Jesus with his eternal destiny. "He said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

We're told in verse 43, "Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

In response to his faith, Jesus gave this man hope.

He was given the promise that after He closes his eyes for the last time in this life, he'll reopen his eyes in the life to come, together with Jesus, in Paradise!

And notice, it had nothing to do with *the works of this man's hands* - they were nailed to a piece of wood...

Nor did it have anything to do with *the places his feet might go to spread God's kindness* - they too were nailed to that wood... And it wasn't because *he joined a church* - nailed to a cross, you can't go to church.

There was only one thing this man could do - that was have faith, and look to Jesus for His salvation. *This was all he could do, but it was all he had to do!*

We all come to God by grace through faith.

I often think of this boy's poor parents. Were they there? Did they hear the exchange? Or were they hiding in shame. Did they go to bed that night and every night thereafter thinking their son was burning in the flames of hell. The moral of the story is *you never really know what happens in a heart in its final minutes.*

There is such a thing as a death bed conversion!

I've heard it put, "God included one death bed conversion in the Bible to give us hope, but only one not to create false hope." You may die an instant death and not get a final chance. It's certainly not guaranteed. That's why if you don't know Jesus, come to Him tonight. It may be your last opportunity.

But Jesus speaks a **third** time in John 19:26-27...

According to John a group of four female followers had trudged behind Jesus to the place of the cross.

Three "Marys" - Jesus' mother, the wife of Clopas, and Mary from Magdala - as well as, His mother's sister.

The other three Gospels mention one more woman, **Salome**, the mother of James and John. It could be she was a fifth woman in the group, or she could've been the woman John's Gospel calls, "*His mother's sister.*"

Which is a provocative idea. That would mean Salome was Jesus' aunt - making James and John His cousins.

If this is true, the family connection sheds interesting light on what happens next in John 19:26, "**When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved (this the way John referred to himself) standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!"**

Then He said to the disciple, "**Behold your mother!"**

And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." In ancient Israel, usually, a widow was taken in by her relatives. It could be John and Mary were family.

It's appalling to me, what Roman Catholicism has done to Jesus' mother, Mary of Nazareth. They've made her Co-Redemptrix. In Roman Catholic doctrine, not only does Jesus give salvation, so does Mary.

According to the Pope *Mary is the Mother of God, she's sinless, she ascended to heaven, she was a perpetual virgin*, yet none of these ideas are biblical.

Mary was a good girl - a godly girl - a simple girl we can admire and respect, but she wasn't close to divine.

Mary was a sinner. After Jesus' birth she had sexual relations with Joseph. She birthed at least six kids. She eventually died and her body was buried. She has no more clout with God than any other believer...

Yet don't be guilty of a Mary backlash. She did follow Jesus and showed an exemplary devotion to her Lord.

Of all His disciples, it's possible Mary made the greatest sacrifices to follow Jesus. Three decades earlier, her whole world had been turned upside down by the news that she would miraculously birth a child.

Now at the foot of the cross Mary watches that child brutally tortured and executed. Mothers put yourself in her shoes, and taste her tears. Her sacrifice had no atoning effects, but it was significant in God's sight, and an example to us of a whole-hearted surrender.

Think of what must've gone through Mary's mind as she stood at the cross... Did she remember the myrrh, the embalming fluid the wise men brought to her baby? Did the purpose of the present finally dawn on Mary?

Perhaps the words of old Simeon in the Temple were still ringing in Mary's ears, "Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also." Now she feels the stab!

Mary had surrendered all her dreams to the will of God, and now Jesus rewards her sacrifice by insuring her future. He turns her care over to the Apostle John. She would spend the rest of her life under John's roof.

Jesus' **fourth** saying from the cross is recorded in both Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. This is the most cryptic and mystic of our Lord's seven last sayings...

Matthew 27:45 reads, "Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land."

The sixth hour was 12:00 noon - the ninth was 3:00 pm. So for three full hours the world was blanketed in a supernatural darkness. Call it, **midnight at midday**.

Notice, John says the darkness was over "*all the land*." The Greek word translated "*land*" is "*geo*" - from which we get our word "**geography**." The term implies a worldwide darkness, not just a local phenomena.

Realize, when Jesus was born - God's Light came into the world. A star was seen shining in the night sky, that guided wise men from the East to worship Him.

Now when Jesus dies the sky turns black. That light has been snuffed out, at least for a short time.

Verse 46, "About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Jesus spoke in Aramaic - the street language of the commoners. That's why the next line reads, "Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" His cry had nothing to do with Elijah. They misunderstood what Jesus said.

The words Jesus shouted came from Scripture.

They were the opening line of Psalm 22 - a remarkable psalm that describes in amazing detail the death and sufferings of the Messiah over 1000 years before they occurred. In His final sayings Jesus is tying His crucifixion to the promises of God from ages past.

Jesus' cried out, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" And this marks, what is perhaps the most mysterious moment in history. For somehow, in some way, on the cross, God the Son became alienated from God the Father - a breach occurred in the Godhead - God became severed from God.

In John 8:29, Jesus had said, "He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." From eternity past, Jesus had enjoyed perfect, unbroken harmony with His Father, yet now He's stung by the Father's rejection.

I believe when Jesus shrieked, "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?*" - all the sins, of all the men, from all the ages were being thrust upon His sacrificial shoulders. The Lamb received His load.

Jesus was spotless. Morally, his heart was as tender as a baby's behind. It would've been a shock to His system to feel

a mere speck of sin - but imagine the piercing fright, the staggering horror that shook Him, when suddenly He sensed the sin of the whole world.

The sin of the rapist, the serial killer, the child molester, the secret gossip, the greedy betrayer - the sin of all men was thrust upon His innocent shoulders.

2 Corinthians 5:21 sums it up, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus was God. He never ceased being God. He lived forever with the Father in warm, unbroken fellowship. Yet for a moment the *Son of God* became an *Orphaned Child*. God was separated from God, so we could be united to Him.

I've told this story many times, but it really is my best effort at illustrating this passage. My son, Zach, was two, when he was hospitalized with a serious infection.

The doctor needed to feed him antibiotics through an IV. Well, when they went to insert the needle, the nurse asked us to leave the room. It would be painful for Zach, and she didn't want him to associate the pain with us. Being a nurse, Kath was smart. She complied.

But I refused to budge. I stood outside the procedure room door to be as close to my little buddy as possible.

And I wasn't prepared for what happened.

Suddenly, the screaming started. I'll never forget my little guy shouting, "I want my Daddy, where is my Daddy?" I could've jerked the door right off its hinges.

But I didn't. For love made me wait until the procedure was done!... And standing in that hallway, tears rolling down my

cheeks, God spoke to me, “Now you know what I endured when My Son died for You.”

I've never known God's love as strong as I did that day! Love made the Father wait just beyond the door!

Well, flip back to John 19:28, for we're told there of Jesus' **fifth** statement, “After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth.” This was the cheap vinegar-wine that the Roman soldiers drank.

Earlier in his ordeal, Mark tells us Jesus was offered the “myrrh.” This was a narcotic - an ancient version of morphine. It would've numbed the victim, but Jesus rejected such help. When He chose not to take the myrrh, it would've been like a man scheduled for open heart surgery turning down the appropriate anesthesia.

Amazingly, Jesus wanted to bear the full brunt of our sin. Jesus went to extremes to pay our penalty **in full**.

But now the lion's share of the work is finished.

By this point, Jesus' throat is dry - His lips are cracked. His mouth needs to be moistened if He's to utter his final three statements, so he says, “*I thirst.*”

The soldiers fill a sponge with the sour sauce, put it on a hyssop branch, and lift it up to wet his lips. Jesus must've been several feet off the ground since they needed the hyssop to reach His lips with the sponge.

Here, so much is tied up in just two words, *“I thirst!”*

Realize, this is the only mention Jesus made of His physical status on the cross. Yet Psalm 22 provides us a prophetic account of what He actually experienced.

The psalmist cries out a gut-wrenching description in verses 14-15, *“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 potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; you have brought Me to the dust of death.”* He’s totally depleted.

The body of Jesus is racked with fever. He suffers from dehydration. His bones has been dislocated. Jesus compares Himself to a broken shard of pottery. His mouth is dry. His lips are bleeding and parched.

It’s ironic, that the One who promised us, *“If any man thirst let him come to me and drink,”* now suffers from a lack of fluids... He cries, *“I am poured out like water.”*

Jesus became thirsty physically, so that He can quench our spiritual thirst! All He could taste was dust... so that we can taste the sweet mercies of God.

Jesus **sixth** statement is found in John 19:30, *“So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!”* The phrase, *“It is finished”* is actually just one word in the original Greek language, *“Tetelestai.”*

And it was used in a number of ways...

A **servant** who finished an assignment for his master would say, *“Tetelestai...”* A **priest** upon declaring *“faultless”* the sacrifice he had inspected declared, *“Tetelestai...”* An **artist**

upon putting the finishing touches on a painting, might sigh, "*Tetelestai,..*" And when a **customer** paid off his bill, the merchant would write across the ledger, "*Tetelestai...*" (or **paid in full.**)

And on the cross Jesus did all this and more...

The Servant of God **completed the mission** He had been sent to perform... God's High Priest **offered the faultless sacrifice...** The Artist of God's poema **put the finishing touches on His portrait of salvation**, the painting He'd been working on from creation... And our Redeemer **paid in full the debt our sin incurred.**

On the cross Jesus tied up all the loose ends that had been dangling since the beginning of time.

He completed the puzzle. He finished the picture.

He made everything that's eternal - finally, and wholly, and beautifully perfect. On the cross Jesus finished His work of redemption. And now all that comes afterward is simply the realization of that work.

There once was an eccentric old preacher named, Alexander Wooten. He was working in the shop behind his house, when he was visited by an exasperated young man. This boy just had to ask, "**Sir, what must I do to be saved?**" Wooten responded, "*It's too late!*"

The young man panicked, "**Please, isn't there anything I can do to be saved?**" The evangelist explained, "*It's too late for you to do anything. The work has already been done. All you have to do is believe!*" And this is the glorious hope of the Gospel.

Here again, is the rallying cry of saints throughout the ages, "**Tetelestai - it is finished.**" When Jesus died on the cross all that needed to be done had been done for you and I to be saved and live a victorious life.

Hebrews tells us when Jesus returned to heaven He sat down on the right hand of the Father. He sat down because His work is finished! *And Jesus is still sitting down!* He's still resting - and we need to rest with Him.

Let's trust in His finished work!

Then the **seventh** and final statement from the cross is found in Luke 23:46, "**When Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last.**"

Again, Jesus was quoting Scripture. Here Psalm 31:5 - *which is a bedtime prayer for Jewish children.*

It's amazing, that despite the searing pain Jesus had to have experienced, He died a peaceful death.

He died as a little child curling up in His Father's arms, ready to fall asleep. Peace and composure didn't escape our Lord Jesus even in the throes of His death.

The very last of Jesus' last words were, "**Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.**" The implication is, no one took Jesus' life - *not the Romans, not the Jews.*

Jesus gave His life voluntarily. And now God's Son re-assigns His spirit to return to His Father in heaven.

In fact, three short days later, His body and spirit will be reunited, at a tomb just outside Jerusalem.

Forever, *the work is finished, the price has been paid in full.* Jesus is certain His sacrifice has been accepted, and He can now send His spirit back into the Father's embrace! God's warrior heads home triumphant!

And this is the destiny of all those who follow Jesus.

In your mind's eye, see Jesus hanging on that cold, cruel cross - *suffering unimaginable pain, darkness overhead, torture all around. Yet realize all that, is at His back* - the storms of life are in His rearview mirror.

He dismisses His spirit to a better place, to a forward place - He sends His spirit ahead to heaven. Jesus says, *"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."*

And this is true for you. When Christians face death this is the direction they're pointed - *to a forward place.*

If the Father's hands welcomed the spirit of Jesus, His hands will be welcoming of you when you depart this world. *Why are we intimidated by death? Why be afraid when the Father's arms are our ultimate destiny?*

Death is not our end. *The storms of life are at our back.* Like Jesus, our spirit is destined for God's hands.

Henry Ward Beecher was a heretical preacher who lived in the mid-1800s. He developed *a compromised faith - lived a compromised life.* His final words were, *"Now comes the mystery"* - *not a confident confession.*

For those who are in Christ, death should hold no big mysteries. When we follow Jesus, our spirit is *"committed"* - it's destined for the Father's hands...

In comparison, when Thomas Edison, a devout believer let out his dying words. Edison said simply, “It is very beautiful over there.” Heaven is *very beautiful*.

And if you follow Jesus you’re headed “*over there.*”

Well, seven sayings from the cross...

They confirm to us that our Savior prays for our forgiveness... He cares for us all - from a condemned criminal to a faithful mom - and He’ll provide for both a home, either on earth, or in heaven... He suffered a breach, to reach us... He emptied out every ounce of energy so *by faith* we can eat and drink of Him and regain our spiritual strength... He’s paid our debt in full... now our spirit is destined for the Father’s hands.

Aren’t you glad! And we’ll celebrate with communion. The bread and cup are our perpetual reminders...