

# VII SEVEN

## *HOW JESUS' FINAL WORDS LEAD TO WHOLENESS*

Throughout the Bible, the number 7 is the number of completion and of wholeness. Therefore, it's no coincidence that throughout the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) Jesus is recorded uttering 7 final phrases. Throughout history and cultures, someone's final words have always seemed to carry more weight and significance. In the case of Jesus, he knew the fate that awaited him, and these were the phrases he chose to speak. True to the character and nature of Jesus, his final words reflect the same tenderness, compassion, and unfailing love that he exhibited during his short time on Earth. His final words solidify his faith and trust in the Father, as well as his desire to welcome everyone into his Kingdom. They not only showcase his humanity, they also point to his divinity that leads to reassurance, hope, life and joy for all people.

Jesus' last words also provide an invitation to lean in and listen closely to the messages that are for us. It is especially important to reflect on Jesus' final words on Good Friday because ultimately we are on the same journey as Jesus. A journey to our own cross, where we strip away the things of this world that won't satisfy, where we let go of lesser things in order to embrace the GREATEST thing. Jesus' dying words are guideposts for our own journey and when we embrace them they will lead to wholeness in our lives: wholeness with God, with ourselves and with others.

GOOD FRIDAY

*at new life*



# FATHER FORGIVE THEM...

FOR THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

LUKE 23:34

If you are familiar with the story of Jesus, you might understand the context in which Jesus uttered these words. Just days before, he triumphantly rode into Jerusalem on a donkey where he was praised and recognized as the promised Messiah. Oh, how quickly things took a dark turn. Within a week, he was betrayed, beaten, mocked, dehumanized, and ultimately nailed to a cross to die a criminal's death. However, in the midst of unimaginable and profound cruelty, Jesus looks at his persecutors with compassion. He pleads to the Father on their behalf and responds with mercy and forgiveness.

To embark on this journey of Lent is to recognize our brokenness...to identify on some level with those that put Jesus on that cross. We've all been there. We've chosen our own kingdom. We've settled for the easy, temporary fixes and we've hurt others in the process. However, in his inconceivable grace, Jesus offers to us that same compassion and forgiveness. He looks at us and declares that we will not be defined by our darkest moments and our worst choices. He opens the door to redemption and invites us to step across the threshold.

When we experience the freedom that comes when we accept this forgiveness, we can't help but overflow with gratitude. We learn to extend that same forgiveness to others...not because they deserve it, but because we want to experience the fullness of Christ's freedom.\*

\*please note, forgiving others does not mean inviting toxic people and situations back in your life...it is about choosing your own freedom through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## PRAY:

JESUS, I CONFESS... I HAVE ALLOWED THE THINGS I'VE DONE, AND THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN DONE TO ME, TO DEFINE ME. I NO LONGER WANT TO LIVE IN THE PRISON OF UNFORGIVENESS. I WANT TO EXPERIENCE THE FREEDOM THAT COMES THROUGH YOUR GRACE... YOUR AMAZING, UNDESERVED GRACE. EVEN THOUGH IT IS SO PROFOUNDLY HARD, HELP ME TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE HURT ME... NOT FOR THEIR BENEFIT, BUT SO I CAN EXPERIENCE YOUR WHOLENESS. JESUS, THERE WILL NEVER BE ENOUGH WORDS TO THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE FOR ME. THANK YOU FOR YOUR FORGIVENESS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR GRACE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SACRIFICE.

## AMEN.



# TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE...

LUKE 23:43

PARADISE. Think about that for a moment. This paradise Jesus mentions is nothing compared to the visions of quiet, sandy beaches that might come to our mind. Even the “Pismo-dise” we live in is still home to much heartache, brokenness, and despair. No, the paradise Jesus promises, to a convicted thief of all people, is a place far beyond our imagination. In fact, the use of this Greek word “paradeisō” is only found in one other verse in the Bible, Revelation 2:7. “To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.” Sound familiar? In fact, in Greek that word paradeisō actually means “garden”. Jesus was telling this thief that TODAY, he was going to be WITH Jesus in the GARDEN. The place where everything is as God intended when He first created the world. The place with no shame, no fear, no anxiety, no sadness. The place where humans lived in perfect relationship with their Creator, and with each other. Amazing!

Even more amazing...when God created this paradeisō, He created it with the desire and intention that YOU would live there forever with Him. You are so deeply loved that God was willing to move heaven and earth in order to spend eternity in perfect relationship with you. And not just you. Your family. Your neighbor. That one kid in your class... If you've never experienced salvation and the promise of paradise...as Jesus himself said...TODAY is the day! It just starts with a humble heart and a simple prayer.

## PRAY:

JESUS, THANK YOU FOR SAVING ME. I WAS TRYING TO DO THINGS MY OWN WAY AND I WAS HEADED FOR DESTRUCTION. AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME YOU CAME INTO MY LIFE AND CALLED ME TO YOURSELF. I AM UNDESERVING, BUT I AM SO THANKFUL. I WAIT WITH ANTICIPATION FOR THE DAY WHEN WILL BE TOGETHER IN PARADISE FOREVER!

I WANT OTHERS TO BE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE THE SALVATION AND ASSURANCE I HAVE EXPERIENCED. I'M GOING TO SPEND SOME TIME IN PRAYER FOR THOSE IN MY LIFE WHO DO NOT YET KNOW YOU AND WHO ARE STILL STRUGGLING THROUGH LIFE ON THEIR OWN. COME AND CHANGE THEIR LIVES, LIKE YOU DID MINE.



SIMPLE PRAYER OF SALVATION



# AMEN.

# A PRAYER OF SALVATION

Dear God,

First, I want to start by saying that I'm sorry. I've been trying to do things my way, and I recognize that it was not always the right way. I've disobeyed you and hurt others in the process and I'm sorry. Please forgive me.

Thank you for loving me so deeply that you were willing to send your Son to die for me. Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you for taking upon yourself the consequences for my actions. It is more than I deserve, but I am thankful.

In response to your sacrificial love, I am choosing to trust you with my life. I am turning from my old life in order to embrace the fullness of life that you've promised me. Today, I choose to follow you, to love you, and to trust you until you call me home to heaven.

**AMEN.**

# 3

# WOMAN, BEHOLD YOUR SON

JOHN 19:26

Jesus is addressing his own mother in this verse. While it may seem odd to call your own mother, "Woman" (in fact, I don't recommend trying it), Jesus was making a profound point when he said these words. What does it mean to be family? By referring to his mother this way, Jesus was acknowledging his time as her earthly son was coming to an end and was imploring His disciple, John, to treat her as his own. You see, with a few simple words, Jesus was creating a whole new family...one you and I have been adopted into.

Family is a complicated and deeply emotional concept. No matter how you feel about your earthly family, there is no denying we need others in our lives. Jesus knew a life of loneliness and self-reliance was not the full life he promised. He didn't want that for his own mother and he doesn't want that for you either. For that reason you've been given a spiritual family. When Jesus began his ministry on earth he was forming a new kind of family. A family that would not be identified by ancestry or DNA or skin tone or who we live with. No, this new family would have new distinctive marks. We would be identified simply by our baptism into the family and the LOVE we have for each other. By all earthly accounts, a family made up of different generations, different races, different political leanings, different sports teams even...shouldn't work. And by all means, it isn't easy, but it is such a beautiful thing when the family of God loves each other humbly and authentically, sacrificing our own opinions and desires in order to love those whom we are bound to by the blood of Jesus.

## PRAY:

JESUS, THANK YOU FOR MY SPIRITUAL FAMILY. I PRAY THAT OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER WOULD BE A BEACON OF HOPE TO A WORLD DESPERATE TO SEE UNITY DESPITE DIFFERENCES. WHILE WE MAY NOT ALWAYS AGREE OR TREAT EACH OTHER THE WAY YOU HAVE CALLED US TO, I PRAY THAT YOU WOULD BIND OUR HEARTS TOGETHER. THAT WE WOULD MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER WITH ONE PURPOSE... TO SEE YOUR KINGDOM COME, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. GOD, I ASK YOU TO BRING TO MY MIND SOMEONE FROM MY SPIRITUAL FAMILY WHO COULD USE SOME ENCOURAGEMENT, HOPE, AND LOVE SO THAT I MAY PRAY FOR THEM AND SUPPORT THEM.

## AMEN.



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

MARK 15:34

In the verses leading up to this cry from Jesus, scripture says a vast darkness swept over the whole land, even though it was midday. It felt like a god-forsaken place. God-forsaken? We use that phrase causally in our language, but have we stopped to think about what we are saying? A place or person forsaken by God. Abandoned. Forgotten. Left to rot and decay. Have you ever felt abandoned by God? Ever felt the assurances of God's love and presence were simply empty promises. I'm sure you have. In fact the Psalms are full of cries of lament, expressing these same feelings. We can take comfort in knowing that even Jesus felt forsaken by God in the darkest moments of his earthly life. Can you imagine being ONE with and equal to God, and then experience the feelings of separation and abandonment that came as Jesus took on the sin of the world?

Being fully divine, Jesus knew that his suffering was not the period and the end of his story. However, being fully human, he also experienced the deep agonizing emotions of abandonment, shame, and despair. With this phrase he taught us an important lesson: It is possible, and even spiritually mature, to have faith and hope at the same time we have doubt and sadness. As the people of God, we are not immune to pain. We are not people who gloss over the senseless tragedies of this world with hollow platitudes. We grieve, we cry out, and we even shake our fists at God. However, we are also people who hold on for dear life to the hope the gospels didn't end at the cross, that God is setting things right...even if it doesn't feel like it as we sit in the sorrow of the brokenness of this world.

## PRAY:

JESUS, I AM SO SORRY THAT YOU HAD TO EXPERIENCE THE PAINFUL EMOTIONS OF ABANDONMENT, SEPARATION, AND BEING FORGOTTEN. I CONFESS THAT I HAVE FELT THAT WAY TOO. WHEN I LOOK AROUND AT THE BROKENNESS AND THE SORROW, THE PAIN IN MY OWN LIFE, AND IN THE LIVES OF THOSE I LOVE, I QUESTION WHERE YOU HAVE GONE. IT FEELS LIKE YOU AREN'T WORKING ANYMORE. I GRIEVE. HOWEVER, I KNOW THAT I DON'T GRIEVE ALONE. I KNOW THAT YOU UNDERSTAND MY PAIN, JESUS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE FELT THAT PAIN TOO. I ALSO DON'T GRIEVE WITHOUT HOPE. EVEN THOUGH MY FEELINGS MAY BETRAY ME, I KNOW THAT YOU ARE WORKING TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW. I TRUST YOU.

## AMEN.



# I THIRST

JOHN 19:28

It is often uncomfortable to picture Jesus' humanness...to hear Jesus be in need, to express desire for such a basic necessity as relief from his thirst. We like to think of Jesus as in complete control of the natural world: turning water to wine, healing the blind, effervescently laughing over a meal with his disciples. However, it is his humanity that is on full display on Good Friday. Likely the last liquid Jesus drank would have been the cup of wine used during Passover the night before. Earlier during the crucifixion Jesus is *offered* wine mixed with myrrh or gall. Many believe this wine mixture was meant to alleviate his pain or even hasten his death. Jesus refuses it. He faced his suffering and the sin of the world with eyes wide open and fully awake, acutely aware of his own thirst.

As you contemplate Jesus' humanity today, I ask you, what are you thirsty for? Is there a deep longing you need satisfied? Perhaps it's physical healing or financial stability, or a relational wound you need mended. Perhaps there's an intangible, underlying dissatisfaction you've been experiencing in life. Are you thirsty for justice and righteousness to flow like rivers? Thirsty for the very presence of God?

If you are thirsty, there is good news for you today! Jesus himself said "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink! Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in me..." (John 7:37-38) Oh, the spiritual complexity! The man who once described himself as the source of living water, now hangs on the cross, suffering from thirst. Good thing his thirst was only temporary...and so is ours. He is the source of living water that will quench our thirsty souls!

## PRAY:

JESUS, I AM THIRSTY. I AM DESPERATE FOR YOU TO SHOW UP IN MY LIFE. I'M FEELING DISSATISFIED, APATHETIC, AND IN NEED OF YOUR LIVING WATER. I DON'T ALWAYS FEEL LIKE I'M LIVING OUT THE FULL LIFE THAT YOU'VE PROMISED ME. I NEED YOU TO FILL ME. I WANT TO BE BRIMMING OVER AND SPILLING OUT YOUR LOVE AND HOPE ONTO OTHERS, BUT I CAN'T DO IT ON MY OWN. I NEED YOU. I WANT TO FEEL JOY AND SATISFACTION FROM THE DEPTHS OF MY SOUL. BUT RIGHT NOW, I ONLY SEE MY THIRST. LORD, I'M GOING TO SPEND SOME TIME PRESENTING MY NEEDS TO YOU, ASKING THAT YOU WOULD SHOW UP AND SATISFY THEM, AS ONLY YOU ARE ABLE.

## AMEN.



# IT IS FINISHED

JOHN 19:30

When Jesus said, "It is finished," he didn't say it as a whisper of concession, but rather as a shout of victory! He had officially completed the work that could only have been done on the cross. At this point the sky had been dark for hours, as if God himself was mourning the impending death of his Son. Then, at what seemed like the darkest moment for Jesus, and for humanity, just as all hope seemed lost, Jesus claimed that moment for victory and breathes his last. The whole land shook and the veil was torn in the temple. This veil was a heavy curtain that separated the very presence of God from the people of God. Only the high priest was allowed behind the curtain, once a year, to perform a sacrifice for the atonement of sin. Now in this single moment, Jesus broke that barrier and became our high priest to offer us direct access to God's own presence. His was the perfect and final sacrifice.

It. Is. Finished.

There is nothing more to be done. You don't need to keep striving, to keep proving your worth, to somehow keep paying a debt that has already been paid. There is no veil, no curtain, separating us from the love and mercy of God. Jesus is victorious and he invites us to share in his victory.

It. Is. Finished.

Your past has been forgiven. Your sin has been washed away. Here you stand, a new creation, ready to live fully alive in Jesus. So take a breath. Relax. It's been taken care of.

It. Is. Finished!

## PRAY:

JESUS, THANK YOU FOR PAYING MY DEBT. ONCE, AND FOR ALL. YOUR SACRIFICE WAS COMPLETE. NOTHING MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE. HELP ME TO REST IN THIS TRUTH. TODAY I BRING BEFORE YOU ALL THOSE THINGS THAT I'M STILL HANGING ON TO. ALL MY GUILT. MY SHAME. THOSE THINGS THAT ARE WEIGHING ME DOWN. I AM LAYING THEM AT YOUR FEET AND LEAVING THEM THERE. ON THOSE DAYS (THAT ARE BOUND TO COME) WHEN I DOUBT THE COMPLETENESS OF YOUR SACRIFICE, REMIND ME THAT THERE IS NOTHING SEPARATING ME FROM YOUR LOVE. WHEN I'M TEMPTED TO SEE MYSELF THROUGH THE LENS OF MY PAST, REMIND ME THAT THE OLD ME IS GONE. I AM MADE NEW.

## AMEN.





# FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT

LUKE 23:46

Jesus' last words on the cross were a simple prayer. A prayer of trust and submission. Jesus didn't have his spirit seized from him by force. He willingly and freely gave it up, and safely placed it in his Father's hands.

The story of Good Friday is a story of self-sacrifice. Jesus offering up his life for the sake of ours. However, if we only talk about Jesus' sacrifice, we miss out on the power of how deeply personal Good Friday is for our own lives. Because ultimately we are on the same journey as Jesus. We may not be betrayed, humiliated, and nailed to a cross...but his road to Golgotha should lead us to our own road of surrender. Our response to the cross should be that of gratitude, as well as offering our lives back to him. Romans 12:1 says, "Because of ALL he has done for you, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God." This should be our response.

Giving up is hard. Letting go of something you love, usually doesn't come willingly. However, when you KNOW into whose hands you are placing your beloved treasures, it makes the sacrifice a little easier. God has proved himself trustworthy. His hands are the safest place to store our hopes, our desires, and our deepest longings. And as we've seen, time and time again, throughout the Bible, and throughout our own lives...when we bring God what we have and lay it at his feet, he is faithful to take it and do more with it than we can ever hope or imagine!

So now is the time for letting go. God's hands are strong enough to carry your burdens and worries, as well as your dreams and your future.

## PRAY:

FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS  
I LAY DOWN MY LIFE. YOU  
HAVE BEEN SO FAITHFUL  
AND I HAVE SEEN HOW YOUR  
GOODNESS HAS FOLLOWED  
ME THROUGHOUT MY LIFE. I  
TRUST YOU. NOT ONLY WITH  
MY FEARS AND MY DOUBTS,  
BUT ALSO WITH MY GIFTS, MY  
TALENTS AND ALL MY HOPES  
FOR MY LIFE. ALL OF THE  
GOODNESS IN MY LIFE COMES  
FROM YOU ANYWAY. SO I AM  
SIMPLY RETURNING THEM  
BACK TO YOUR CARE. MY  
OFFERINGS MAY SEEM FEEBLE,  
OR BROKEN, OR NOTHING MORE  
THAN ASHES, BUT I KNOW YOU  
CAN TRANSFORM THEM INTO  
SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL. I PRAY  
THAT YOU WILL USE MY LIFE  
FOR YOUR GLORY, TO SHOW  
HOPE TO A HURTING WORLD.

## AMEN.