

Seven Words of Wisdom, Part 1  
The Laurel Center  
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Introduction

When the most powerful studies I have ever done is to study the seventh things that Jesus said from across. All of this happens on the day we have designated Good Friday. Good Friday is good not because Jesus died but because his death products life. Jesus taught us so much from the cross in his moment of death in need. We would be in this to ignore these words he spoke and the intent and heart behind them.

Let us look at them briefly and see what Jesus is teaching us even as he is about to die. In his death, he continued to teach what he taught life. The same principles undergird the Christian faith and ethic. We do as our Savior and Lord has taught us all those years. In the moment where we have the biggest trials of our life and when we are close to death, these words must be in our heart because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Let us learn from our Lord in the moment of our greatest suffering and demonstrate his character as if it were our first nature.

***"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."***

***Gospel of Luke 23:34***

As we look at this first statement from the cross, despite everything that Jesus had suffered, being accused of blasphemy by the Jews and being put on a cross after scourging and mocking by the Romans, the first thing Jesus says to those mocking him as he lays on the cross and struggles even to breathe is to forgive them. Like Moses in the wilderness when the Jews were stiffnecked against his leadership, when God wanted to destroy them Moses interceded for them.

So also Jesus is like Moses interceding for those who are treating him with such disdain. He taught forgiveness when he was teaching as a Rabbi and now teaches at through example. Jesus is our example in all things, especially those of forgiveness. When we want to keep from forgiving someone, we must look to Jesus who had no reason to forget anyone that day. What has happened to us so unjust as what happened to Jesus on that day? How can we withhold forgiveness from others when we have never seen ourselves wrong like Jesus was on that Friday?

We must become master for givers like the master taught us to forget. Though it is hardest to forgive in the midst of injustice and trial and suffering, this is exactly what Jesus did. And he

meant it for us to learn by example. Anytime that you feel wronged, look to Jesus on the cross who forgave even in the worst moment when he suffered the most injustice of anyone ever.

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***"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."***  
***Gospel of Luke 23:43***

Looking at the second statement from the cross, the context of this statement helps us to understand its importance. Jesus said this in the midst of conversation with the two criminals that hung with him that day. One of them reacted to his crucifixion the way almost all of us would. He complained about it in command of Jesus to do his "Messiah thing" and get them down from the cross.

While he scoffed at Jesus much like the crowd, the other criminal realize that justice was being served in their case. He saw that he was a sinner before God and felt the conviction of God for his wickedness. He realized that he was deserving of this punishment, cool that it may be. For even a small bit of our wickedness, we deserve the full measure of justice.

When he talked to Jesus, he was repentance and wanted to be with Jesus when they died. This is where Jesus says, "Today you will be with me in paradise. Paradise was one of the words in Jesus' day for heaven. Jesus promised him that at the end of their trial he would see Jesus again. Jesus showed not only forgiveness to this young man but God's grace. This is the word full of grace for all of us to trust in Jesus and serve him.

Some might argue it unfair that this man lived a life of sin and on his "deathbed" he got to be with Jesus. But Jesus takes all who trust in him no matter what point or stage in life they come to him. That's is the grace of God. None of us deserves to be with Jesus in paradise and yet he promises to those of us who trust in him that we will be with him today.

Shows forgiveness in the second word shows grace. In the hour of Jesus' aloneness in need, it demonstrates an uncanny and dividing forgiveness and grace that we must remember and emulate. In the moment of suffering is when we know we are his and like him when we can also follow his example. In that moment when we want to lash out for the injustice done to us in the suffering we must go through, will we be like Jesus, full of forgiveness and grace, or will we be like we used to be before we met him?

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***"Jesus said to his mother: "Woman, this is your son."  
Then he said to the disciple: "This is your mother."  
Gospel of John 19:26-27***

As you look of the third statement on the cross, Jesus stills with one of his duties as the oldest Jewish male in his family. He speaks to things in one shot. We must remember that he is in the midst of the most painful experience known to humankind. For every one of these statements, Jesus would have to push up with his arms, his hands being nailed to the cross. The excruciating pain that would go through his nerves because of pulling his hands to get his body up to take the breath speak these words is incalculable.

You would have to push up with his feet against the nail all of this excruciating pain coming at once to him. All of this to breathe to pull his body up so that his lungs can take breath. On the cross he would speak these words, the most important words that he spoke. These are not more important than the others because they trumped any teachings he already gave. They are his most important and powerful words because he is suffering when he gives them and because he is leading by example. They epitomize his teachings in the midst of suffering. They show his true nature which has been seen his entire life.

Jesus now turns to the care of his mother as the oldest Jewish male. Because he was firstborn, it was his duty to take care of his mother when the end of his life to near. Third, he shows the selflessness unseen by anyone. In the midst of his suffering, the physical pain and the mental and emotional suffering, along with the sins of the whole world weighing on his shoulders, Jesus demonstrates a selflessness like none other.

When it comes to suffering, most of us would rather be selfish lashing out at others, demanding our rights in the midst of injustice. But not Jesus. He was not concerned about himself or his own sufferings are what he was going through and feeling, but he was concerned about his mother's estate and well-being. He took a moment in this third saying to selflessly ask his beloved disciple John to take his mother in to his own house. It is most apparent throughout Jesus' ministry that Joseph, his earthly father, had probably passed away. Joseph is not mentioned in the Scriptures after the beginnings of his life.

So Jesus took the initiative to care for his mother and provide for her now that he could not. He gave her a place to live under a friend's roof. John, whom Jesus trusted with his dear mother, would become his Jesus to her. He would not provide for all of her needs, protect her from danger and serve her. He would become her son and she would become his mother. And Jesus cared for both of them with a complete selflessness and lack of care for his own needs at the moment.

Would that we could be so selfless in our afflictions and suffering. Jesus calls us first to be for givers, next to be gracious. And third, to be selfless in the midst of our darkest trials. He calls us

to his life and his nature. This can only be done by his Holy Spirit placed in us. This can only be done when our hearts are truly his and along to him.

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***"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"***

***Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34***

A look at the fourth statement from the cross, demonstrates two principles about Jesus. The first is that the study year of the Psalms would realize Jesus is quoting the opening to Psalm 22. In Jewish understanding and study, to allude or quote one part is to allude to the entire. Let's take a look at Psalm 22 and why Jesus may have quoted its opening phrase from the cross.

You should read Psalm 22 on your own this Easter but I want to focus on a few verses that are quite prophetic by David.

- **Psalm 22:7–8 (ESV)** — **7** All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; **8** “He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”
- **Psalm 22:14–15 (ESV)** — **14** I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; **15** my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.
- **Psalm 22:16–18 (ESV)** — **16** For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— **17** I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; **18** they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

Throughout the entire song, even though the person is crying out for God to come near to them and save them, they vacillate between calling out for help and talking about how the Lord always saves everyone cries out to him. This song is impressive because it is prophetic of images of Jesus on the cross and yet it talks about the salvation of God. This is exactly what Jesus came to do and did on the cross. He made a way for us to have sinned against God to be forgiven and changed into God's children.

On the other hand, this is also the moment of greatest and darkest trial for Jesus. Remember that the Bible tells us in Hebrews that he was sinless and remember that he has never been away from his father or not had the connection to the father. These two things will lay him down beyond measure. On the cross, Paul tells us that Jesus became sin for us. Jesus literally took on the weight of the world's sin, past present and future. For someone who had never felt the weight of any sin or send himself, this had to have been in unbearable burden.

Also at the same time, Jesus is experiencing the loss of connection to the father. Because of the weight of sin upon, the father must turn away from his son while on the cross. The Bible even tells us that the skies became black and the sun did not show its light. We must understand that the father cannot look upon sin. Since Jesus became sin for us, he also had to endure the separation and the severing momentarily of that connection with the father.

These are two brand-new experiences full of suffering for Jesus as he hangs on a cross. Just as anyone who sins is separated from God, so also Jesus experienced this momentary separation from the father. Both of these must of been unbearable on top of the physical pain that Jesus was experiencing. In that moment he cries out, my God my God, why have you forsaken me?" This does not mean that God forsaken but at this is how Jesus felt at that moment. It is not a moment of weakness but a moment of strength. Jesus suffered this loss of connection and still bore the weight of our sin.

It must also be understood that just because God turned his back does not mean that his presence was gone from Jesus. Who has not felt a momentary loss of connection with the father? In times of prayer we call this the brass ceiling where we feel like even our requests are not being heard. But everyone knows even in those moments that God never leaves us and never forsakes us. We still feel like he does, but he doesn't. Sure, God must turn his back and not look upon the sin that Jesus was becoming, the weight of the sin of the world. But turning his back and not looking does not mean that he laughed. He was still there was Jesus even if Jesus didn't feel his presence.

And we know that even in these moments when we feel God has left us he never does. He promised so in his word in Hebrews 13:5. We can be confident that even in the darkest moment and the hardest trial God is still with us. He feels are paying just like felt Jesus' pain on that cross. He does not leave us but walks with us through every trial no matter how dark it gets. Just like in Psalm 22, we can trust that God is working out salvation even in the moments when we can't even feel his presence. Jesus knew this but had to express it just like we do. He knows everything that we are going through because he also went through it. The writer of Hebrews tells us that we do not have a high priest who is far away from us and does not know us. Instead, he suffered everything we suffered and knows exactly how we feel. Jesus is not far off. He sympathizes with us and empathizes. He knows our pain. He has been there and he will guide us through it.

## Conclusion

Although we've only covered the first four of the seven statements from the cross, we can already see how Jesus ministered to us in his moment of weakness. Even his weakness was strength. We have learned from him to be forgiving in our trials, to be gracious and to be selfless. We have also learned that God knows what we are going through and he never leaves us in the

midst of the worst trial. We can trust that Jesus will teach us more when we look at the final three statements. But these statements lead by example and show that Jesus knew pain and suffering before we did. He will walk with us through our trials and pain-and-suffering. He never leaves the store forsakes us and he is working out our salvation even when we can't feel them there.