

They Demanded His Crucifixion! But What Did He Say?

Introduction

As we approach Easter, we take time to reflect on the final moments of Jesus' earthly ministry—His crucifixion. While enduring unimaginable suffering, Jesus spoke seven profound statements from the cross. Each one reveals His heart, His mission, and the depth of His love for us.

Scripture: Luke 23:34 (CSB)

“Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided his clothes and cast lots.” — Luke 23:34 (CSB)

Opening Question

When was the last time you found it difficult to forgive someone? What made it so challenging?

Background

Luke 23:34 takes place as Jesus is being crucified. After enduring betrayal, false accusations, brutal beatings, and being nailed to the cross, Jesus responds not with anger, but with mercy. He prays for those who are executing Him, asking the Father to forgive them. This verse reveals the depth of Jesus' love and the power of forgiveness, even in the face of extreme suffering.

1. The Heart of Jesus: Forgiving the Unforgivable:

Imagine someone being falsely accused, beaten, and publicly humiliated. Instead of seeking revenge or demanding justice, they plead for the forgiveness of their attackers. This is exactly what Jesus did. While suffering on the cross, He interceded for those who crucified Him, demonstrating divine love and grace.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Jesus' prayer reveal about His heart?
 - o Jesus' prayer reveals His deep love and mercy. Even in agony, His concern is not for Himself but for others. He intercedes for those who are crucifying

Him, showing that His mission was to seek and save the lost, even His enemies.

2. How does this contrast with how people typically respond to injustice or suffering?
 - Most people respond to injustice with anger, bitterness, or a desire for revenge. Our natural inclination is to defend ourselves and retaliate. Jesus, however, responds with grace and forgiveness, demonstrating divine love.
3. What does it mean that they “do not know what they are doing”?
 - The Roman soldiers, Jewish leaders, and the crowd did not fully grasp the significance of their actions. They were executing the Son of God without realizing the eternal consequences. Jesus acknowledges their ignorance and asks the Father to extend mercy.

2. The Challenge of Forgiveness:

A man loses his job because a co-worker spreads lies about him. Though deeply hurt, he eventually chooses to forgive and move forward instead of harboring bitterness. Forgiveness is not easy, but Jesus’ example teaches us that it is possible, even in the hardest situations.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is forgiveness so difficult, especially when we have been deeply wronged?
 - Forgiveness is hard because it often feels unjust. We may think that forgiving lets the offender “off the hook,” or we fear being hurt again. Our emotions and pride make it difficult to release anger and move forward.
2. Does forgiving someone mean excusing their actions? Why or why not?
 - No, forgiveness does not mean excusing or justifying the wrongdoing. It means releasing the desire for personal revenge and entrusting justice to God. Forgiveness is about freeing ourselves from bitterness, not denying the hurt.
3. How does Jesus’ example challenge the way we handle personal conflicts?
 - Jesus forgave even as He suffered. His example challenges us to let go of grudges and love our enemies. If He could forgive those who crucified Him, how much more should we forgive others in our daily lives?

3. The Cost of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is often costly—it requires letting go of the desire for revenge and trusting God to bring justice. Jesus’ prayer for forgiveness wasn’t just words; it was fulfilled when He gave His life on the cross. His sacrifice paid the price for our sins, making reconciliation with God possible.

Discussion Questions:

1. What did it cost Jesus to offer forgiveness to those who crucified Him?
2. How does understanding the cost of Jesus’ forgiveness help us extend grace to others?
3. How does knowing we have been forgiven change the way we forgive others?

4. Applying Jesus’ Forgiveness to Our Lives

A woman was deeply hurt by a friend’s betrayal. At first, she held onto resentment, but over time, God softened her heart. She realized that forgiving didn’t mean forgetting or excusing, but releasing the burden of bitterness to God.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we begin to forgive those who have wronged us?
 - It cost Him everything. Jesus bore the full weight of sin and endured physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering. His forgiveness was not just words—it required His sacrifice on the cross.
2. What role does prayer play in forgiving others?
 - When we grasp the magnitude of Jesus’ sacrifice, we realize that we, too, have been forgiven of much. This humbles us and makes it easier to extend grace to others. If Jesus could forgive us at such a great cost, we can forgive others.
3. How does forgiving others bring freedom to our own hearts?
 - When we understand how much we have been forgiven by God, it softens our hearts. Instead of holding onto resentment, we are motivated to extend the same mercy we have received.

Closing Reflection

Jesus showed radical forgiveness, even in His darkest moment. As we reflect on His example, let us ask God to help us extend that same forgiveness to others.