

WORDS FROM THE CROSS

Day 1: The Power of Forgiveness

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

During the French Revolution's Reign of Terror, spectators, known as Tricoteuses, knit while watching executions, displaying casual support for the violence. Similarly, lynching in the United States, from 1882 to 1968, claimed thousands of Black lives in a deliberately performative manner aimed at instilling fear and maintaining power.

Although performative executions have always been part of human history, Crucifixion stands out as perhaps the most performative execution method in history. Designed to inflict maximum pain, fear, and horror on the victims and spectators, it symbolized Rome's absolute authority. Roman orator Cicero describes death by crucifixion as "the most cruel and shameful of all punishments. Let it never come near the body of a Roman citizen."

Jesus, obedient unto death, endured this brutal fate. Moreover, beyond physical agony, He faced mockery from Roman soldiers, religious leaders, and the crowd, revealing humanity's depth of depravity. Yet, in this darkness, Jesus exemplified unparalleled love and grace.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," He prayed, demonstrating divine compassion amidst unimaginable suffering. Jesus recognized the ignorance behind their actions and chose forgiveness over condemnation or retribution.

His act challenges us to transcend our inclination towards vengeance, extending radical forgiveness even in the face of injustice. By forgiving His executioners, Jesus showcased God's boundless love and invited us to participate in His redemptive work.

Therefore, forgiveness becomes not just a historical event but a transformative pattern. It frees the offender and the offended from the shackles of guilt and resentment, embodying reconciliation and love.

The words of Jesus on the cross are an invitation to embrace forgiveness's power - to extend grace where it is least deserved and embody love amidst hatred. Let us, like Jesus, choose forgiveness and, by God's grace, "forgive each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven us."

