



SEVEN

LAST WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST

A REFLECTION FOR LENT
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ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN
NELSON BAY

ONE CHURCH ONE COMMUNITY

Seven Last Words of Jesus Christ: A Reflection for Lent.

What would you say if you knew you were in the midst of your life's dying moments? "I love you," I say to my family members at the end of every conversation. If something happens to me, I want my final words as a husband and father to be ones of love.

Jesus chose to make seven remarks while he hung on the cross, about to die. Seven things that have stood the test of time and continue to challenge us today. These brief statements appear seven times in the Gospel accounts: three times in Luke, one each in Matthew and Mark, and three times in John. Taken together, they provide a peek into Jesus' soul as he was dying in our place.

These are Jesus' final words to his mother Mary, as well as his dear companion Mary Magdalene, the apostle who stood at the foot of the cross as he died. His final words to his Father in Heaven. His final remarks to the crowd that kidnapped, thrashed, and nailed him to the cross. His final remarks to those who stood by and watched him die. These Seven Last Words provide us a glimpse into what matters most to the person who is dying on the cross.

To accompany our Lent sermon series in church, I ask you to examine these Seven Last Words - one each Sunday. Spend some time considering the personal meditation questions at the conclusion of each word. You'll find yourself stretched and sharpened as you begin to put things into your own words that have stayed simply hazy in your mind up to this point.

My prayer is that as you savour these Seven Last Words of Christ from the Cross, that they will bless you and draw you closer to the One who died for you, and that you may encounter Christ in them.

Rev. Can. Kesh Rico Govan.

Ever loving God,
whose blessed son endured
the loneliness of the cross,
so that we may know eternal fellowship with you:
Inspire me and speak to me
as I ponder on these last words Jesus spoke from the cross.
Make my journey back to you this Lent
one of grace, forgiveness and gentle love.
Bring me to the foot of the Cross
to stand next to the one who,
looking into Jesus' eyes declared
'Surely this is the Son of God'.
This I ask, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, world without end. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

Luke 23:34

Connect

In principle, forgiveness is lovely, in reality, it is far more difficult. Our nature is to become enraged, harbour spiteful thoughts, or seek vengeance. Nonetheless, Jesus urged his followers to love even their enemies, to pray for those who persecute us, and to forgive those who sin against us, no matter how many times they do so. From the crucifixion, Jesus exemplifies the radical character of the forgiveness he preached, not just as an example, but also as a source of encouragement for us when we are aware of our own wrongdoing.

Study

Read Matthew 18:21-35:

- The servant "was not able to pay" his debt, Jesus adds in verse 25. Have you ever been in a similar situation? How did it make you feel? How simple or difficult do you think it is for you to imagine yourself being forgiven of a large debt, as this servant was? Why?
- Why do you think Jesus recounts this narrative so soon after Peter asks him how many times, he should forgive a sinner? What is the relationship between giving and receiving forgiveness? What motivates and empowers us to forgive others as a result of the forgiveness we've received? What message is Jesus trying to convey by having one debt be so much larger than the other?
- Read verse 35 again. Why would God be unwilling to forgive us if we are unwilling to forgive others? What does refusing to forgive others indicate about your acceptance of your own forgiveness?
- Read Luke 17:3-4. This verse suggests that we should not put a limit on how much we forgive others. How does this affect you? Is there someone in your life who need forgiveness on a regular basis? What makes this difficult?
- Read Matthew 5:43-48. Who is it that this chapter instructs us to forgive? Why is it possible that this is more difficult than forgiving your friends? On this topic, how does Jesus 'practise what he preaches'?

Think

- What do you do when you're publicly humiliated? What rises up in your heart and comes out of your words when someone wrongs you? It is said that when we forgive people who have harmed us, we become more like Jesus. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you," (Ephesians 4:32).

- Consider the relationships in your life, particularly those in which you've had a conflict. Is there someone in your life who you need to ask for forgiveness? Is there someone you need to extend forgiveness to?
- What are some specific habits you may develop that will allow the Holy Spirit to assist you in becoming the kind of person who forgives like Jesus did?

Apply

- “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,” say it aloud, and listen to yourself. Despite hours of shame, tremendous pain, anxiety, and despair, Jesus asks God to pardon those who played a part in his death. Consider yourself in Jesus' shoes. Would you pray to God for forgiveness for those who have hurt you?
- Call to mind those you haven't forgiven, some recently, others maybe many years ago. Speak those words once more, “Father, forgive them.”
- Maybe you've never forgiven yourself? Do you truly believe God has forgiven you of your sins? Do you need a new experience of God's forgiveness today?
- Read and reflect on Romans 12:17-21. Have a conversation with God about how He would have you live this passage out.
- Pray the Lord's Prayer every day this week. Spend extra time on the “forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us” section.

Pray

Lord, may us be reminded of your great love for us as we consider this saying. Thank you for praying for people who had no idea what they were doing; may we be included in that prayer as well. Allow us to see our need for forgiveness and to grant forgiveness to others in your name. We pray in the name of Jesus, who gave his life so that we could be forgiven. Amen!

“Whenever you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

Mark 11:25

THE SECOND WORD

"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Luke 23:43

Connect

Jesus not only forgave those who crucified Him, but He also forgave one of the thieves who was crucified with Him. When the thieves were nailed to the cross, both cursed Jesus, but as time passed, one of them changed his mind and said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom' (Luke 23:39-42). It was at this point that Jesus made His second statement from the cross promising to forgive the penitent thief, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise," (Luke 23:43). This term gives us hope for salvation because it promises that if we turn our hearts and prayers to Him and accept His forgiveness, we will be with Jesus Christ at the end of our lives.

Study

- Why do you think one of the criminals on the cross insulted and mocked Jesus? What human trait prompted him to do this? (Luke 23:39)
- Why does the other criminal rebuke him for his insults? On what grounds does he try to stop him? (Luke 23:40-41)
- What did the thief have to believe about Jesus to cause him to ask him, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). What are the elements of his faith?
- Did the thief confess his sins? Was he repentant?
- How do you think the thief's request make Jesus feel?
- What are the elements of Jesus' promise to the thief in Luke 23:43?
- What are we disciples supposed to learn from this strange exchange on the crosses above our heads? What does Jesus intend us to get out of this?

Think

- How did you usually react as a child when things didn't go your way or you didn't get what you wanted when you wanted it? If you have children, how do your children react? What do these responses reveal about how we are naturally wired?
- Believing in a good God, even when horrible things happen to us and around us, is one of the most challenging aspects of practising the Christian faith. Consider a period when someone struggled to believe but remained faithful in the face of adversity. What did the person gain from the experience, and what did you gain from witnessing it?

- Consider the fact that Jesus only responded to the second offender, he generously forgave him and assured him of salvation. What did the second offender do correctly? What did the first criminal do wrong? How do we get it right with our attitude and actions, and how do we get it wrong?
- Read Matthew 6:21. Consider Jesus' warning to 'seek first the Kingdom of God' rather than temporal things, because our hearts are inextricably linked to our most prized possessions.

Apply

- How do you picture yourself in each of the two thieves as you think about them? What is one step you can take this week to focus less about yourself and more about Christ and others, and to grow in your faith in Jesus?
- It is clear that Christ's love and concern for others extends to everyone. Jesus loves even those we consider to be the lowest of the low. As you pray this week, ask that your heart be inspired to love everyone around you, and that you will have the opportunity to share the love of Christ with them.
- If you belong to a life group or a prayer group, during this season of Lent, how can others be praying for you?

Pray

How amazed I am by your grace and mercy, Lord Jesus! You hear us when we call out to you. When we ask you to remember us when you enter your kingdom, you promise us paradise. Your mercy is beyond our wildest dreams. It welcomes us in, supports us, and heals us. So I pray: Jesus, please remember me when you enter your kingdom! Remember me today, Jesus, as I strive to live in your kingdom! Amen.

***“And when I am lifted up from the earth,
I will draw everyone to myself.”***

John 12:32

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

***"Jesus said to his mother: "Woman, this is your son."
Then he said to the disciple: "This is your mother."***

John 19:26-27

Connect

Mary's presence at the cross adds humanity as well as horror to the scene. We are reminded that Jesus was a real human being, a man who was once a boy who was borne in his mother's womb.

The death of a child is one of the most traumatic events a parent can have. It must have been unbearable to watch your child suffer the horrific torment of crucifixion. We're reminded of the prophecy of Simeon shortly after Jesus' birth, when he said to Mary: "And a sword will pierce your very soul" (Luke 2:35).

Here he is dying in agony, gasping for each breath. He sees his mother, the one who comforted him through all of childhood's cuts and bruises, teases and taunts. When he was a boy, he would run home to mother and instantly be wrapped in her protective, comforting motherly-love. But now as he sees her at the foot of the cross, heartbroken, weeping, inconsolable, his heart goes out to her, "Woman, this is your son." Then he says to the disciple: "This is your mother."

Study

- What do you suppose Mary is thinking as she waits for Jesus to die at the cross? What kinds of thoughts do you think she's having? (John 19:29-27)
- Why do you suppose John, out of all the disciples, is at the cross?
- Why didn't Jesus assign Mary's care to Jesus' brothers? Why is John doing this? (See Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).
- What does this 'Third Word' teach us about Jesus?
- What does Jesus' Third Word imply for our own personal family relationships? How can we put this into practise in our own lives? (John 19:26-27)

Think

- Consider your relationships with your immediate family and your 'spiritual' family (the Church). Consider whether you have caused or perpetuated division in either, or whether you are a minister of reconciliation, as God has called you to be.
- What emotions do you associate with Mary's presence at the cross? Why do you believe it was essential for Jesus to die in physical pain?

- Think of a time when you had to watch someone you love die. What emotions did you feel? Where did you feel God was during this time?

Apply

- How do you get along with your parents and other relatives? What could you do to improve your relationship with them?
- Consider friends who are like family, such as the cherished disciple. Write about how important they are to you and how you may express your feelings to them.
- This week reflect on Psalm 139 and especially verses 13 to 18. Give thanks to God that he knows you intimately.

Pray

We see in Jesus, near the end of his life, the profound love of a son for his mother, a mother who had occasionally misunderstood him. "Dear woman, here is your son... Here is your mother," he says as he dies, settling his worldly commitments as best he can (John 19:26-27).

Loving Father, while I witness the Lord Jesus' tender compassion for His mother as He died on the cross, I am grateful that you are concerned about every element of my life and those for whom I am responsible. Family relationships can be amazing and loving, but they are also complicated and occasionally painful. I'd like you to assist me in sorting them out. Show me how to love you and my family members as you want me to. Please give me the heavenly understanding I need to love as Jesus loves. I pray this in His name. Amen.

“Behold I make all things new.”

Revelation 21:5

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34

Connect

The fourth of Jesus' crucifixion sayings is possibly the most difficult for us to comprehend. After hours of physical and psychological suffering, Jesus screamed these words of desperation. We understand that Jesus was feeling alone and abandoned at a moment when he most needed help. It's difficult to say whether Jesus felt abandoned by God as a result of the sin he was suffering for or because he was in so much anguish and misery that God looked far away; it could have been both. Regardless of the cause, Jesus posed a question that many of us have pondered at some point in our lives. “I'm doing what you asked, and now I'm paying the price; where are you?”

The Father's beloved Son knew what it felt like to be rejected by Him. As we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God caused him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” God has forsaken Jesus because he has taken our sins onto himself. He is making atonement for our sins. “The Lamb of God, who wipes away the sin of the world,” says the Bible. (See John 1:29) John is most likely referring to Jesus as the ultimate Paschal or Passover Lamb, who made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of the entire world (Exodus 12:1-13).

Study

- How long did Jesus spend nailed to the cross? In what ways did the period appear to shift around the halfway point? (Mark 15:25, 33-34)
- What do you believe happened to the sun? What did that mean? (Mark 15:33)
- What can we learn about Jesus' mental and emotional states from the volume of his voice? (Mark 15:34)
- What is the significance of Mark 15:34 including a quotation from Psalm 22?
- What did Jesus mean when he said he was forsaken? Why is he being abandoned at this time? (Mark 15:34)
- In the Garden of Gethsemane, what was the “cup” that Jesus accepted? (Luke 22:41-44)
- How does the Fourth Word reveal love in this context? (Mark 15:34)
- What can we learn about faith from Jesus' fourth word from the cross? About commitment? What impact should this understanding have on our daily lives? (Mark 15:34)

Think

- There is a lot of terrible news in the world. What is your favourite technique to 'escape' for a moment when you're feeling overwhelmed by the gloom of the world around you? (Take a nap, go for a run, watch a movie, etc.)
- Have you ever felt betrayed by someone you care about? What kinds of feelings did this encounter elicit in you?
- Today you may feel like God has forsaken you in a similar way Jesus felt, but you need to understand that God may take away from a Christian his comfort, but He never takes away His sustaining presence. "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you". (Hebrews 13:5)

Apply

- Have you ever felt abandoned or betrayed by your family or friends? Bring those instances to God and ask him to assist you in forgiving those who have wronged you.
- Have you ever felt as if God had abandoned you? In your prayer time this week, Ask God to help you to trust him again with your entire life.
- How may knowing that God will 'never abandon you or leave you' have an impact on your attitude? Your actions? What is one practical step you could take this week to better notice God's constant presence in your life?
- Do you know anyone in your life who feels abandoned, either by God or by others? With the promises we've discussed today, how could you encourage them this week? Is there any kind of invitation you could make to help this process get started (inviting someone to your house, inviting them to your Life Group or worship, etc?)
- Read and reflect on Deuteronomy 31:7-8 and Matthew 28:19-20 this week. Thank God regularly that He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Pray

Lord, It gives me great comfort to know that you understand how a human being feels when he or she feels abandoned by God. I'll never fully comprehend the wonder and tragedy of the Father's abandoning of you, but I'm overwhelmed with gratitude every time I read this 'word.' How can I possibly repay you for everything you've gone through for me? What else can I do but express my gratitude and praise for you? Thank you for taking my place. Thank you for being forsaken by the Father so that I might never be. Amen.

***"He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross,
so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness.
By his wounds you have been healed."***

1st Peter 2:24

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

"I thirst"

John 19:28

Connect

The fifth word delivered by Jesus from the cross reminds us that He was a human being who suffered. The Bible says, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst'" (John 19:28). He lived as a man and suffered as a man in order to empathise with humanity's pain.

Jesus would have been terribly dehydrated and in severe physical agony after such horrific suffering. Even before the crucifixion, he would have lost a significant amount of body fluid, both blood and perspiration, as a result of what he had gone through. Someone filled a sponge with sour wine, stuck it on a stick, and held it up to his mouth in response. Jesus drank it.

Study

- What are some of the reasons Jesus would have been thirsty? What would have been going on physiologically in a person suffering as Jesus did?
- What Scriptures are fulfilled or may refer to this part of the crucifixion by John 19:28-30? Why was it so vital to Jesus to fulfil the Scriptures?
- What is the significance of the sponge being placed on a hyssop branch and offered to Jesus? (John 19:29). See also Exodus 12:22
- Why do you think the New Testament makes such a strong point about Jesus' physical suffering?
- Would it make a difference if Jesus was a divine being who never suffered on the cross? What difference would it make if Jesus was simply a human person who was crucified?
- What does Jesus' Fifth Word, "I thirst," teach you? What does this say about Jesus? What does this tell us about his crucifixion experience?

Think

- Can you recall a time in your life when you were most thirsty? (Did you go on a hike? A bike ride, for example?)
- What are the various types of "thirsts" that people have? What are some of the methods they use to quench their thirst?

- Have you ever been in a state of distress and cried out for help? Who stepped in to help you?
- Read John 4:1-15 in its entirety. Explain verse 13 in your own terms. What does Jesus have to say about the well water? Why does it make a person thirsty after they drink it? On a spiritual level, what would Jesus be saying to us?
- Explain verse 14 in your own terms. What's the difference between the water Jesus gives you and the water you get from a well? In this verse, what is Jesus expressing about himself?
- Consider your own life: have you ever experienced the kind of thirst quenching that Jesus is referring to? If yes, how has Jesus satisfied your “hunger”?

Apply

- In your life, what are you longing for? What are some of the wells we visit that provide temporary relief but ultimately leave us thirsty?
- Read and reflect on Psalm 42. How are you thirsting for God this week? In what ways could you quench your thirst by drinking from Jesus’ life-giving stream?

Pray

Nothing outside of Him will ever quench our unending desire for living water, which is freely given to us by the grace of Him who thirsted in our place. Come and drink deeply from Christ. He thirsted for you so that you will never thirst again!

Lord, Your words, "I am thirsty," remind us of the human heart's cry. We are thirsty as well, but not for actual water. We need your Spirit's living water to flood our souls. We require your living water to rehydrate us. We long for you to fill us with your Spirit once more. Lord, we are thirsty for you. Amen.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, That he lay down his life for his friends.”

John 15:12-13

SIXTH SUNDAY OF LENT

“When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished;”
John 19:30

Connect

Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is the most difficult movie I've ever seen to watch. Even a cinematic rendition of a crucifixion was horrifying to behold, and it was unfathomable to conceive that this had happened to Jesus. I felt a sense of relief when *The Passion of the Christ* ended. It was a relief when it was finished.

The good news is that only Jesus Christ has accepted our sin and established a path for us to be reconciled to God, forgiven of our sins, and given us eternal life.

Study

"It is finished." What was finished?

- **Jesus Finished The Job That The Father Gave Him To Do.**

Specifically, to bring salvation for humanity. (Mark 10:45) “Christ Jesus came into the world to **save sinners.**” (1 Timothy 1:15). “But you know that he appeared so that he might **take away our sins.**” (1 John 3:5) “Look, the Lamb of God, who **takes away the sin** of the world!” (John 1:29) “For the Son of Man came to seek and to **save** what was lost.” (Luke 19:10) “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to **give his life as a ransom** for many.” Humankind will not be required to assist, as Jesus declares once and for all. Only Jesus can bring us back to God!

- **Jesus Fulfilled Prophecy.**

Messiah would be born of a woman (Genesis 3:15). Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:23). Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). Messiah would be rejected by his own people (Isaiah 53:3). Messiah would be betrayed (Psalm 41:9). Messiah would be crucified with criminals (Isaiah 53:12). Messiah would be given vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21). Messiah would be pierced (Psalm 22:16). Messiah would be forsaken by God (Psalm 22:1). Messiah would pray for his enemies (Psalm 109:4). Messiah would be a sacrifice for sin (Isaiah 53:5-12). Messiah had arrived, just as God had promised and brought the salvation that had been promised.

- **Jesus Achieved Victory Over The Devil**

One of the reasons of Jesus' coming, according to Scripture, was to demolish the devil's handiwork (1 John 3:8). Other bible verses that speak of this are: Hebrews 2:14-15, 1 John 3:8, Revelation 12:10, Colossians 2:13-15, 1 Corinthians 15:55, Romans 16:20, Luke 10:17, Isaiah 14:12, Revelation 1:18, Colossians 1:13. The dominion over the earth that man had given to the devil because of his sin was now reclaimed. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, He made the fulfilment of John 3:16 possible in our lives.

Think

When we meditate on this Sixth Word, what should we learn for our lives?

1. We Are to Live Lives of Purpose. The ability to discern our spiritual skills and abilities, and then organise our life to maximise what God has given us, is one of the markers of maturity in our lives. Jesus told the Parables of the Talent (Matthew 25:14-30) and the Pounds (Luke 19:11-27). Given each servant's individual talents, time, and circumstances, the servant was to "trade with" what the master had given him to obtain the largest possible outcome. The reward was to hear the master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant... enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:21).

2. We Are to Live Lives of Focus. When our lives are over, we want to be able to say with St. Paul, "The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:6-8). This requires focus and discipline. It means saying "No" to some choices so that we can say "Yes" to opportunities that are even better.

3. We Are to Live Lives of Obedience. Although Jesus is God, he deliberately obeyed the Father during his earthly life. "He humbled himself and became obedient to death" (Philippians 2:8).

Apply

- What are a few of your "bucket list" items? What would you feel was "unfinished" if your life ended this week?
- As Christians, we recognise that Jesus' life and death served a unique purpose. What would you say your life's purpose is? How might you find who God is calling you to be?
- Who in your life could benefit from hearing about Jesus' finished work? Are you currently investing in someone who doesn't know Jesus? If not, how might you begin this week?

Pray

Heavenly Father, I am grateful that Jesus fulfilled the work for which you sent him in its entirety. We rejoice in the fact that death's power has been overthrown and sin's burden has been broken. Teach me to enter more fully into this victory on a daily basis. 'Dying and living you declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the Gate of Glory. Keep us firm in this hope you have set before us so that we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your Name, through Christ our Lord.' Amen.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF LENT

***“Jesus cried out in a loud voice,
"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."***

Luke 23:46

Connect

The seventh Word of Jesus comes from Luke's Gospel and is addressed to God the Father immediately before He dies. Jesus recalls Psalm 31:5, “Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth.” On a basic level, Jesus was entrusting his post-mortem destiny to his Heavenly Father. “Whatever happens to me after I die is your duty, Father,” he seemed to be saying.

This is Jesus' final statement before His death, which we have. Everything had been completed, and it was now time for His spirit to be released. Jesus has stated previously that He would willingly lay down His life for His sheep. “Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from my Father” (John 10:17,18).

Study

It's worth noting Jesus' booming voice, which isn't what you would expect from a man about to die. However, Jesus seemed to be adamant that his dying words be heard. His words are firm and confident. Let's examine three aspects of this Seventh Word.

1. A Word of Intimacy.

First, Jesus speaks to God in a personal way. His despair, as described in the 'Fourth Word,' is over. As he has done throughout his ministry, Jesus prays to the Father. For Jesus, death is no out-of-control enemy, “Where, O death, is your victory?” Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:55). He knows his Father is with him - and ready to receive his spirit - no matter how bad things are.

2. A Word of Trust.

In Psalm 31:5 the word “commit” is the Hebrew verb *pāqad*. It's meaning is ‘to entrust to someone for safekeeping, give over commend,’ particularly, “to entrust someone to the care and protection of someone.” Jesus entrusts his eternal fate to the Father's everlasting arms as he lets go of this existence.

3. A Word of Surrender.

Finally, Jesus says something about submission. He surrenders his human life to his Father, who gave it to him 33 years ago. The word “spirit” is the common word *pneuma*, “breathing, breath of life.” It can refer to the Holy Spirit, but here refers to the personal spirit of Jesus, part of the human personality (Hebrews 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Think

- Every year on Good Friday, we commemorate the Saviour's death. Imagine yourself standing at the foot of the cross this year, gazing up at Jesus as he cries out to his heavenly Father.
- What would you have felt if you had watched Jesus' crucifixion and didn't know the next chapter in the story?
- Why is faith so vital in our life while we are going through difficult times? What does it take to reclaim your faith after a period of numbness and depression?

Apply

- Have you entrusted your life, as well as your life beyond this life, to God? In what ways do you currently experience God's salvation through Christ in your life?
- How do you imagine heaven to be like? To you, what does it mean to be united with God? Do you consider death to be a beginning, an end, or both?
- Ephesians 2:1-10 describes what Jesus has done for us in a beautiful way. Take some time to read and think about this passage. Memorize any sections that are particularly meaningful to you.

Pray

Gracious Lord, just as you once gave your spirit into the Father's hands, I now entrust my life to you. When the time comes for me to let go of this life, give me the same faith and assurance that I see in Jesus. I put my faith in you, and only you, to be my Saviour. I surrender to your authority over my life and strive to live solely for your honour. Here I am, Lord, always ready to help you with your task. You gave your Spirit to the Father with love and the expectation of your resurrection. Give me the grace to live in the hope that I will be able to leave the sadness of Good Friday behind and look for the Easter joy. Amen.

***“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
So that everyone who believes in him may not perish
but have eternal life.”***

John 3:16

We have discussed the seven words of Jesus from the cross, and we have derived comfort and strength from them as we continue our pilgrimage through this life. If it weren't for an 'eighth word,' given in this case by a celestial angel, "He is not here: for he has risen, as he said," (Matthew 28:6), it would all be for nothing and we would be deceived.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

In death, Jesus was an example for us, teaching us how to pray in our darkest hours and reminding us that God is always listening. Fortified by the knowledge of God's unfailing mercy, we have the strength we need to go forward as God's Easter people.

Rev. Can. Kesh Rico Govan.

Closing Prayer:

The Word of the Cross by Saint Paulinus of Nola (c 354-431)

Look on thy God, Christ hidden in our flesh.
A bitter word, the cross and bitter sight:
Hard rind without, to hold the heart of heaven.
Yet sweet it is, for God upon that tree
Did offer up His life upon that rood
My Life hung, that my life might stand in God.
Christ, what am I to give Thee for my life?
Unless take from Thy hands the cup they hold,
To cleanse me with the precious draught of death.
What shall I do? My body to be burned?
Make myself vile? The debts not paid out yet.
Whate'er I do, it is but I and Thou,
And still do I come short, still must Thou pay
My debts, O Christ, for debts Thyself hadst none.
What love may balance Thine? My Lord was found
In fashion like a slave, that so His slave
Might find himself in fashion like his Lord.
Think you the bargain's hard, to have exchanged
The transient for the eternal, to have sold
Earth to buy Heaven? More dearly God bought me.

Notes



ALL SAINTS ANGLICAN

NELSON BAY

ONE CHURCH ONE COMMUNITY