

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”
Luke 23:34

The very first recorded words of our Lord, spoken from His cross in the midst of all that pain and agony and suffering. These are words of prayer. Think on that. Even as He suffers, not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually, suffering all the Father’s just and righteous wrath against all sin for all time, the very first words out of His mouth is a prayer asking His heavenly Father ***to forgive the very people putting Him to death***, although Jesus wasn’t ***just*** praying for the Roman executioners or the crooked kangaroo court of corrupt religious officials who put Him on that cross. These words of Christ are spoken on behalf of all sinners, and that includes you and me. ***Sin—our sin—put Christ on that cross.*** You and I are ***every bit as guilty*** in the death of Jesus. ***“Father, forgive them.”*** These words of our Lord assure us of the miracle—His miracle—of complete forgiveness and eternal redemption. These first words speak of ***divine restoration***. Because of Christ’s all-atoning sacrifice, we have been reconciled to God. We have peace. We are forgiven. Folks: Jesus’ whole purpose for coming to earth and taking on our flesh, bone, and blood is ***embodied right here in these first words*** He speaks from His cross—that purpose being **our forgiveness**.

The first words of Christ...AMEN

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”
Luke 23:43

As you well-know, this second sentence of our Lord was spoken directly and specifically to the criminal who was dying beside Him on his own cross. Scripture never tells us who he was, other than the fact that he was ***a thief who had been sentenced to death***. This guy knew that he had earned his cross. He also knew that in terms of salvation, he didn’t stand a chance before God. The **ONLY** way he had any hope for God to show him some mercy was if Jesus interceded for him. ***“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”*** He didn’t want to be remembered by God because of what he had done or not done. He wanted to be remembered by God because of what Christ had done. And take careful note: ***Jesus didn’t leave this man with any sort of doubt.*** ***“Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”*** No limbo. No holding pattern. No “wait and see how things balance up in the books.” **“Today you will be with Me in paradise.”**
The second words of Christ...AMEN

“Woman, behold your son...son, behold your mother.”
John 19:26-27

Searching the crowd gathered around His cross, Jesus lays eyes on His mother, Mary, and also on John, the disciple whom Jesus loved and who was now standing with Mary, providing care and support during this ***unbelievably tragic time*** in their lives. And in this moment the perfect Son of God is also recognized as the **perfect Son of Man**. In the midst of His own slow and painful death, Jesus is deeply concerned about His mother’s welfare. ***He loves mom more than Himself***. Because of this great compassion and love, He commits her to John’s trusted care with the words, *“Woman, behold your son...son, behold your mother.”* And, as Scripture tells us, from that very hour, John took Mary into his own household to care for her.

The third words of Christ...AMEN

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
Matthew 27:46

Here on His cross, surrounded by people at the foot of His cross, Jesus experienced the true hell that is true aloneness as He was forsaken and forgotten by God, His heavenly Father. God the Father, being ***fully holy and sinless***, **turned away**, momentarily, from His own Son. In that moment of turning away, Jesus was truly **all alone**, completely forsaken and forgotten. And out of that ***incomprehensible loneliness and abandonment***, Jesus still cries out in faith to His God and Father, *“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? (My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?)”* The Father may have forsaken the Son, but the Son did not forsake the Father. In perfect and unwavering faith, God was still His God.

The fourth words of Christ...AMEN

“I thirst.”
John 19:28

While Christ’s fourth words from the cross spoke of *anguish of soul*, this fifth statement bespeaks His *physical anguish*. Jesus raised His head and said, “*I thirst.*” **This simple cry reflects His humanity.** It says, without a doubt, that He is fully man and fully “*one of us.*” It gives us the assurance that, as Scripture says, “*we do not have high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who understands us and identifies with us....*” Jesus hungered, *just like us*. He thirsted, *just like us*. He became tired, *just like us*. He knew sorrow. He wept at the tomb of a departed loved one, just like we do. He felt pain and exhaustion, *just like us*. Jesus Christ knew *every depth of human suffering*, certainly more than you’ll ever know in your life! **He was and is God’s true man—this promise made flesh, who died for us in order to quench our sinful, deadly thirsts and give to us His living water of life.**

The fifth words of Christ...AMEN

“It is finished.”
John 19:30

This is it. This is what it’s all about. This is what all of sinful humanity has been waiting for since that fateful day in the Garden of Eden. ***This is the cry of final, complete, and eternal victory. God has won!*** Given the world we live in, you may be tempted to look around and remark, “*What’s finished? Nothing is finished.*” ***The world still hates and fears and fights and lives in open defiance of God and His Word. What is finished?*** As we look at all the sin in our midst, it seems like the death of Jesus Christ has made *no appreciable difference* at all in this world. And yet, despite what our eyes tell us; despite what the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh may tell us, Christ’s words here **are absolutely true.** God’s work of our redemption **is finished.** He’s done *everything necessary* for your salvation. No caveats. No terms and conditions. No “*I’ve done my part, but now you need to do your part.*” Nope. It is finished—in Christ and because of Christ.

The sixth words of Christ...AMEN

“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”
Luke 23:46

With the work of redemption finished and over, Jesus now ***entrusts and commits*** Himself into His Father’s hands. It is finished, so all that’s left now is to faithfully fall asleep in God’s divine care and go home to heaven. But this isn’t the end of the story, is it? In fact, this is only the **beginning**. Jesus Christ is the ***first-fruits*** of all who live and die in the faith. Just as He was resurrected by the glory of the Father, never to die again, ***so, too, will we be resurrected unto eternal life, never to die again.*** For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. Because Jesus perfectly and completely entrusted and committed His spirit to His Father, you and I, ***through Him***, can **confidently** do the same. We have ***NOTHING*** to fear in this life. ***“Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit...my body, my soul, and all my things.”*** May God grant us the faith to actually believe this and show forth this faith in our life when we pray these seventh words of Christ... AMEN.