

Seven Last Words of Jesus

Today, we gather on Good Friday. It is a quiet day. A heavy day. A sacred day. We come into this space a little more slowly today. We speak a little more softly. We listen a little more deeply. Because today, we stand at the cross. We do not come here to celebrate in the usual way. We come to remember. We come to reflect. We come to listen.

On the cross, Jesus did not speak many words. But the few words he spoke carry deep meaning—not only for that moment, but for every moment of our lives. These are often called the seven last words of Jesus. They are not just words from the past. They are words for today. Words for us. So let us listen carefully, with open hearts. And as we listen... let us also be still.

1. “Father, forgive them...” (Luke 23:34)

Jesus says, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” This is the first word from the cross. And it may be the most surprising. Jesus is in pain. He is being mocked. He is being hurt by people. And yet, he does not respond with anger. He does not call for justice or revenge.

Instead, he speaks forgiveness. This tells us something very important about God. God’s first response to human brokenness is not punishment—it is mercy. Even at the worst moment, God is still reaching out with love. And maybe today, we need to hear this personally. Because many of us carry things inside. Words we wish we had not said. Choices we wish we had not made. Moments we wish we could change. But we cannot go back. And sometimes, we carry quiet regret.

But from the cross, Jesus says: “Father, forgive.” Not just for them—but for us. You are forgiven. Not because you are perfect, but because God is love. And we are also invited to extend that same forgiveness to others. Not because it is easy. But because forgiveness is how love continues to live in us. And still, Jesus speaks.

2. “Today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43)

And from this word of forgiveness, we hear another word from the cross. Next to Jesus are two criminals. One of them turns to Jesus and says, “Remember me.” That is all he says. A simple, honest request. And Jesus responds, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”

What a beautiful moment. A man who has made mistakes... a man at the very end of his life... is not rejected. He is welcomed. There is no long explanation. No conditions. Just grace. And this tells us: It is never too late. No life is too far gone. No past is too broken. God’s grace can reach us even in our final moments.

And maybe some of us feel like that man. We look at our lives and think, “I wish I had done better.” “I wish I had more time.” But Jesus says, “Come. You are still welcome.” God’s love is not limited by time. It meets us where we are. And still, love remains.

3. “Woman, here is your son... Here is your mother.” (John 19:26–27)

As we remain at the cross, Jesus speaks again. He sees his mother, Mary. He also sees the disciple he loves. And even in his suffering, Jesus notices them. He cares. He brings them together and says, “Here is your son.” “Here is your mother.” He creates a new relationship. A new kind of family. This is very important.

Because in that moment, Jesus is not only dying—he is still loving. Still connecting people. Still caring for others. This is what the church is meant to be. Not just a place we come on Sunday. But a place where we belong. A place where we are seen. A place where we are cared for. Especially in times of loss...in times of loneliness...in times of change... We need each other. And Jesus says to us: “Take care of one another.” “Be family to one another.” Because sometimes, family is not only about blood. It is about love. And still, Jesus speaks.

4. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46)

And now we hear perhaps the most painful words. Jesus cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” This is a cry of deep suffering. A cry of loneliness. A cry of feeling abandoned.

And if we are honest, we know this feeling too. There are times in life when God feels distant. When prayers seem unanswered. When silence feels overwhelming. Moments of grief. Moments of confusion. Moments when we ask, “Why?” And here, Jesus enters that experience. He does not avoid it. He does not hide from it. He lives it.

This means something very important for us: When we feel abandoned, we are not alone in that feeling. Jesus has been there. He understands. And even when we cannot feel God, God has not left us. Sometimes, faith is not feeling strong. Sometimes, faith is simply crying out. And even that is heard by God. Jesus cried out—and the Father was still there. The silence was not absence. It was the deepest kind of love, holding on. And still, love remains.

5. “I am thirsty.” (John 19:28)

And alongside that cry of suffering, we hear something quietly human. Jesus says, “I am thirsty.” It is such a simple sentence. But it shows something powerful. Jesus is fully human. He feels pain. He feels weakness. He feels need. He does not pretend to be strong. He does not hide his suffering. He speaks it.

And this gives us permission to be honest too. Sometimes we think we must be strong all the time. We must not show weakness. We must not admit struggle. But Jesus shows us another way. It is okay to say: “I am tired.” “I am hurting.” “I need help.” This is not weakness. This is the courage to be real before God. And when we are honest, we open our hearts to grace. Because God meets us not in our pretending but in our truth. And still, Jesus speaks.

6. “It is finished.” (John 19:30)

And now, we hear these words: “It is finished.”

These are not words of defeat. They are words of completion. Something has been fulfilled.

The work of love. The mission of grace. Jesus has given everything. And this is important for us to understand. Because many of us live as if we must earn God's love. We try to be good enough. We try to prove ourselves.

But Jesus says, "It is finished." God's love is not something we need to earn. It is already given, fully, freely, and completely. You are already loved. Not because of what you do, but because of who God is. And still, love remains.

7. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46)

Finally, Jesus says, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." These are words of trust. Even at the end, Jesus places himself in God's hands. This is not fear. This is surrender.

And this is what faith looks like. Not having all the answers. Not understanding everything. But trusting. Even in uncertainty. Even in endings. Even in death. God is still holding us. And maybe today, we are invited to do the same to place our lives—our worries, our fears, our unknown future—into God's hands.

These seven words are not just about Jesus. They are about us. They show us a God who forgives us, welcomes us, gives us community, understands our pain, meets us in our need, loves us completely, and invites us to trust.

So today, on this Good Friday, we come to the cross, not with perfect lives, but with honest hearts. We bring: our regrets...our pain...our questions...our tiredness...And we place them at the foot of the cross. And there, we hear: "You are forgiven." "You are welcome." "You are not alone." "It is finished." "Trust me."

Good Friday is not the end. But it is the place where we see love most clearly: a love that does not run away, a love that stays, and a love that gives everything. So may we leave today not in despair, but in quiet trust. Because even in the shadow of the cross, God's love is still holding us. The cross is not where love ends. It is where love is revealed, fully, deeply, and forever. Amen.