

Last Words: Sayings from the Cross and from Beyond the Grave (The Word of Forgiveness) Luke 23:26-38

INTRODUCTION

Last words are always important. **Last words are the "period" at the end of the sentence that was a life.** Whenever a loved one dies, quiet often the family will gather around the bedside and they will listen intently to the last words of their loved ones, no matter how faint the cry may be, no matter how stumbling the words may sound. They will get down close to the loved one's mouth and listen to every last word the loved one will say.

The last words of a dying person are normally never forgotten. A person's closing comments often reveal their pain and agony. **Some enter eternity without saying anything**, while others utter sentiments that disclose their values, priorities, and innermost thoughts. Some are sobering while others are humorous. But of all the last words ever spoken, none compare to the last words of the dying Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. Many books have been written, and sermons preached, on the seven sayings of Christ from the cross.

But Jesus' last words were not spoken from the cross. Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples during the ensuing 40-day period. He spoke with Mary Magdalene and several other women. He spoke with Peter, James, and with the eleven. He spoke with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He spoke with over 500 disciples at once on one occasion (**1 Cor 15:6**), and He spoke with Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road. And those sayings are just as instructive and worthy of our study as the seven sayings from the cross.

This morning we begin a study of the Seven Sayings from the Cross as well as study Jesus' post-resurrection appearances under the title "**Last Words.**" We will benefit from His dying words as well as from His living words...words spoken after He defeated death and walked among His own, alive forevermore.

With this in mind, please turn in your Bibles to the gospel according to **Luke 23:26-38.**

Let's begin with...

I. The first word: The word of _____ (Luke 23:34)

It was not abnormal to hear from someone who was being crucified. No doubt speaking from the cross was common. No doubt crying out in pain or screaming hatred at one's executioners occurred regularly. But the words they heard now from the lips of Jesus, were different than anything they had heard before. *Father forgive them.* When man had done his worst, Jesus prayed, not for justice, but for mercy. His request was not for Himself but for "*them*" – and us. His first thought is to plead in prayer for those who are in desperate need of forgiveness.

The public ministry of Jesus began with prayer at his baptism in **Luke 3:21**: "*When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying, heaven was opened.*" He flooded heaven with His prayers during His three-year teaching time, urging His followers to do the same. His time on earth ended with prayer as He continuously repeated this prayer of forgiveness. And, as **Hebrews 7:25** says, He "*always lives to make intercession for us.*" Prayer permeated everything He did, and still does.

Let's look a little more closely at this first word from the Savior.

Please note...

A. The _____ of Bible prophecy

Please turn in your Bibles to **Isaiah 53**. When Jesus prayed, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they're doing,*" He was fulfilling a precise prophecy from **Isaiah 53:12**: "*For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*" By the way, the fulfillment of prophecy helps us not only understand that Jesus is the promised Messiah; it also removes any doubt about the truthfulness of the Bible.

As Jesus utters this prayer for forgiveness, what emerges is the reliability of Scripture and we're witnesses to the fulfillment of Scripture.

Secondly, please note...

B. The _____ of the human heart

The blindness of the human heart. What then did our Lord mean when he said, "*They know not what they do*"? This does not mean that the enemies of Christ were ignorant of the fact of his crucifixion. They did know full well that they had cried out "*Crucify him*". They did know full well that their vile request had been granted them by Pilate. They did know full well that he had been nailed to the tree for they were eyewitnesses of the crime. He meant they were ignorant of the **enormity** of their crime. They "*knew not*" that it was the Lord of glory they were crucifying. The emphasis is not on "They *know not*" but on "*they know not WHAT they do*". While they didn't know, they should have known. The prophecies were numerous and very clear. His teachings were profound and filled with wisdom and authority. His miracles should have convinced them. His perfect life and love should have removed all doubt about His identity. **There was no excuse for their ignorance.** Even in the Old Testament, God required that sacrifice be made for sins of ignorance - **Lev 4-5; Num 15**. David even prayed: **Ps 19:12** - "*... cleanse ... me from secret faults.*" **Sin is no less sin because it is committed in ignorance. Ignorance may mitigate the criminality of sin, but it never exonerates it.**

The magnitude of our need. Because our hearts are blind and hard, our need is great. We're sinners in need of forgiveness. It's not just those who were involved in the crucifixion of Jesus. In a very real sense, we were all there when He was executed. Most of us have no problem castigating others for their sins while excusing our own behavior. Sin isn't just out **there**; it's in **here**. **Jeremiah 17:9**: "*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*" We're all guilty and need to repent in order for our sins to be wiped out.

C. The _____ of Jesus Christ with sinners

Forgiveness of sin is a **divine** prerogative. The Jewish scribes were right when they reasoned "*Who can forgive sins but God only?*" (**Mark 2:7**). Notice that Jesus cries out this to the Father. Up until this point, He was able to forgive the sins of others without asking the Father to do so. **Matthew 9:2**: "*Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.*" Why now does He ask to have sins forgiven, instead of directly pronouncing forgiveness Himself? **It's because Jesus has identified with His people and is about to give His life as the sin substitute.** His death is full payment for the penalty of sin. He pleads with the Father to accept the sacrifice of His blood on our behalf. He is our representative.

While hanging on that cross as our representative, He was **no longer in the place of authority** where He might exercise His own divine prerogatives, therefore takes He takes the position of a **petitioner** before the Father.

Lastly, please note...

D. The _____ of divine love

When man had done his worst, when the vileness of the human heart was displayed in all its ugliness, when the creature executed the creator, divine love triumphed and said, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*"

CONCLUSION

Remember...even in His dying Jesus teaches us how to live. What lessons can you and I draw from this first word?

- _____ out to others
- _____ forgiveness
- Jesus _____ has the authority to save.
- No one is _____ His reach.
- _____ is not by good works.
- It is never _____ _____ to turn to Christ.