

“Father, Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit”

SEVEN STATEMENTS FROM THE CROSS (#7)

Luke 23:44-49

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Introduction:

Over the past two months, we have been looking together at the seven statements that Jesus made as He was hanging on the cross. We started back on March 7 with a reminder that a person’s last words can be very important. In the courtroom, for example, we know that a person’s last words are often given more weight, in that a confession or testimony given right at the point of death is often considered to be trustworthy. We also know that when officials are investigating a plane crash, they are looking for the black box, and in that black box (among other things) they are looking for the cockpit voice recorder so that they can analyze the pilot’s last words to perhaps discover the cause of the accident. In another sense, some of us have already uttered our last words, in that we have gone to an attorney to prepare what is referred to as our **“Last Will and Testament.”** We know that at the time of our death, that document will be read, and those words will be considered to be our last—our wishes for how we want our estate to be divided. Last words, therefore, can be extremely important.

And so over the past two months, we have been looking together at the seven statements that Jesus made as He was hanging on the cross. We learned, first of all, that as the Lord was being crucified, He continued to say, ***“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”*** And we discovered several weeks ago that that prayer was answered seven weeks later as 3,000 people had a change of heart and were immersed in water for the forgiveness of their sins on the Day of Pentecost.

We then noticed that Jesus was crucified between two thieves, and yet when one of those thieves had a change of heart, the Lord spoke up for the second time that day and said, ***“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”***

We then noticed that the Lord looked at His mother and said, ***“Woman, behold your son.”*** He then turned to the apostle John and said, ***“Son, behold your mother.”*** And with that very simple exchange, the Lord made plans for the care of His mother and set an example for children everywhere.

At noon, we find that darkness covers the land until about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and we discovered that as the darkness was coming to end, the Lord cried out with a loud voice with Statement #4, ***"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*** And we reminded ourselves that Jesus came to this point in His suffering for us. Jesus was feeling the weight of sin. God was allowing His Son to suffer as a sacrifice—taking our place as our substitute on the cross.

The Lord Jesus then cried out with a single four-letter word in the Greek language—in English, ***"I am thirsty."*** And with that statement, we are reminded not only that Jesus really was human, but also that His life was the perfect answer to several prophecies from the Old Testament.

And then two weeks ago, we considered Statement #6—right there at the end of His life, the Lord spoke up with a single Greek word and said, ***"It is finished."*** And, as we learned two weeks ago, the Lord was referring, first of all, to the Old Law. The Law of Moses was nailed to the cross. But then, the Lord was also referring to the once-and-for-all payment for sin. As the perfect sacrifice, Jesus was letting us know that His mission had been accomplished and that the debt of sin had been paid in full.

Perhaps we would assume that the statement, ***"It is finished,"*** would be the last of the seven statements; however, it is not. In fact, as we piece it together by looking at all four gospel accounts, we find that after the Lord cried out with a loud voice, that is, after He cried, "It is finished," He then bowed His head, yielded up His spirit to God, and breathed His last. Luke, however, gives us a tiny bit more detail here. This morning's passage is found in **Luke 23:44-49**. In our pew Bibles, the passage is found on **page 1650**. If you will, please turn with me to **Luke 23**, our last lesson in this series, as we study together the very last words that were spoken by the Lord as He died on the cross. **Luke 23:44-49...**

⁴⁴ It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last. ⁴⁷ Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent." ⁴⁸ And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹ And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

This morning, as we look back over this seventh and final statement that was made by Jesus before dying on the cross, I would invite you to think with me about several aspects of this statement that we can apply to our Christian lives right here in the Madison area.

I. **And one of the first things we notice is that the Lord's very last statement comes in the form of A PRAYER TO HIS FATHER IN HEAVEN.**

And really, here at the end, we are reminded that Jesus is primarily responsible for introducing us to God as our Father. In the Old Testament, God was primarily pictured as this holy Being, the Creator, the Establisher of Laws, God the Almighty. And yes, the God of the Old Testament was full of lovingkindness and mercy, but it is not until the New Testament that we really start to complete the picture and understand that God is truly our Father in Heaven. It starts with the reminder from Jesus at the age of twelve when he was separated from His earthly family. When they finally found Him, the Lord said, ***"Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" (Luke 2:49).*** And we understand that Jesus was in the temple. Jesus was not talking about Joseph's house, but He was referring to God as His Father.

And from there, the Lord continually spoke of His Father as being our Father also. In the Sermon on the Mount, ***"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).*** In **verse 48**, ***"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*** In **Matthew 6:6**, ***"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."*** In **verse 8**, ***"So do not be like [the Gentiles who use the meaningless repetition in their prayers]; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."*** In **verse 9**, ***"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"*** Over and over again, Jesus introduces us to God as our Father. And so it is no surprise that the Lord's last statement on the cross is directed to God as His Father.

In our own struggles, therefore, let us also take our concerns to God as our Father. Let us follow the example here—even in a time of pain, even at the point of death, let us have the confidence to approach God as our Father. What a blessing it is to be able to refer to God as our Father in heaven!

II. **There is a second basic idea from the Lord's final statement from the cross, and that is, THE LORD BRINGS HIS LIFE TO AN END BY ONCE AGAIN QUOTING FROM THE SCRIPTURES.**

If you have a reference edition of the Bible, I would ask that you look at this seventh statement, and please notice the little footnote. We can get so much more out of the Bible if we know how to use it. In our pew Bibles, for example, the prayer has a little **"a"** in it, and if you look at the end of the verse, you see that the **"a"** refers to a reference, and the reference is **Psalms 31:5**. And so if we were to go back and look at **Psalms 31:5**, we would find that Jesus is quoting a Scripture. In the NASB, the quote from the Old Testament is also set apart with all capital letters. This may be a minor point for some, but it is important to understand how our Bibles are formatted. If you have not done so already, I would encourage you to go home and read the

Forward to your particular translation. All of us should be familiar with how our Bibles are formatted—we should be familiar with what the translators were trying to accomplish. Nevertheless, the footnote reminds us that Jesus was quoting from the Scriptures.

And how appropriate it was that Jesus would end His life with a statement from the Bible. We know that the Lord quoted from the Bible throughout His life. We remember how the Lord started His ministry by quoting **Isaiah 61** (as Al read for us before the lesson). After the Lord was baptized and tempted, He went back to His hometown of Nazareth, He read that passage from **Isaiah 61**, and then He sat down and said, ***“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*** That is how the Lord’s ministry started—He started with a quote from the Bible. Not only that, but many times the Lord would be questioned or challenged by the religious leaders, and the Lord would say, ***“Have you not read?”*** or, ***“How do you read it?”*** He was always bringing people back to the word of God. And so it was appropriate for the Lord to also end His life by quoting from the Scriptures.

When we go back to **Psalm 31:5**, we find an interesting passage. In **Psalm 31**, David was facing a difficult situation and broke out in praise. King David said...

- ¹ ***In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge; Let me never be ashamed;
In Your righteousness deliver me.***
- ² ***Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly;
Be to me a rock of strength, A stronghold to save me.***
- ³ ***For You are my rock and my fortress;
For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me.***
- ⁴ ***You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,
For You are my strength.***
- ⁵ ***Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.***

The Lord, therefore, was quoting from **Psalm 31:5**, but did you notice that Jesus did not quote the second half of that verse? King David said, ***“You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth.”*** But God did not ransom Jesus—Jesus WAS the ransom! As we have learned over the past few weeks, Jesus was the payment for sin. And so we are reminded once again that the death of Jesus on the cross was the fulfillment of prophecy. His death was not an accident, but the Lord’s death had actually been planned since before the foundation of the world. The Lord’s death was a decision. In a sense, the Lord was crucified by the Romans. In a sense, the Lord was crucified by the Jews. In a sense, the Lord was crucified by all of us here this morning. But when it came right down to it, the Lord’s death was also an answer to prophecy. The Lord willingly laid down His life for all of us. His death was a choice He made—AGAPE love, the choice to do what is best for another person, in spite of the cost or the difficulty on our behalf. Matthew’s account seems to make this even clearer, ***“And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit” (Matthew 27:50).*** It is almost as if the Lord said, ***“It is finished,”*** and then He chose to die. His death was not an accident; but rather, it was an appointment. It is significant, therefore, that the Lord ended His life with a Scripture. With His last breath, the Lord was

telling us to go back to the Bible. The Lord was basically saying, **“Pay attention to this book! Look up this footnote! Chase it down! Figure out what this means!”** And so we remind ourselves this morning to pay attention to the word of God. It was important to Jesus, and it should be important to us as well.

III. There is a third basic idea here, and it comes in the fact that JESUS PLACED HIS SPIRIT IN GOD’S HANDS.

Most of us have heard the promise that we are in good hands with Allstate. And we know what they are trying to communicate. But we are talking here this morning about the hands of God. We are not talking about hands made up of bones, and muscles, and tendons, and nerves, and veins. But we are talking about the hands referred to in **Psalm 95:4-5**, ***“For the LORD is a great God and a great King above all gods, in whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land.”***

Jesus, therefore, was placing His spirit in those hands, in the hands of God. He was entrusting Himself to God’s care. Most of us have had the experience of going out of town and giving someone the key to our house, and we trust them with that key. Maybe we ask them to shovel the driveway or water the plants. We ask them to feed the pets. We make a decision that we can trust certain people with certain responsibilities. In perhaps a slightly similar way, Jesus trusted the Father with His spirit. Jesus committed His spirit to His Father in heaven.

As I understand it, the word Jesus uses here, the word **“commit,”** was a word that was sometimes used in banking, a word that referred to making a deposit. Several months ago, our family rented a safe deposit box at a local bank, and as we toured the vault, we asked what would happen in a tornado. Here we were in a windowless room surrounded by steel and brick, secured by an 18” thick steel door, and they assured us that what we were depositing would be much more secure there than it would be in our house. At that point, I asked them whether we could come to the bank during the next tornado warning! They were not amused, but they assured us that our deposit would be safe. Again, in perhaps a slightly similar way, Jesus knew that His spirit would be safe in the hands of His Father in heaven.

As parents, we know what it means to hold our children by the hand as we walk across the street or as we walk through a parking lot. We get out of the car, and their hand almost instinctively reaches out for ours. They are putting themselves in our care. Jesus had that kind of trust in His own Father. And thankfully, the hand of God remains available to all of us, even today. God is waiting with His hands extended, and the decision concerning what to do next is up to us. God reminds us of that offer in **Isaiah 65:1-2**, where He says that, ***“I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, ‘Here am I, here am I,’ to a nation which did not call on My name. I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in the way which is not good, following their***

own thoughts.” In other words, the offer is always open. God is always there with His hands outstretched, waiting for an answer. In the end, Jesus took Him up on that offer, and He invites us to do the same.

Conclusion:

As we take a step back and look at the death of Christ on the cross, it may be hard for us to ever fully understand the depth of everything that was going on as our Lord died. However, these seven statements do give us a much better understanding of the sacrifice that was made. My prayer is that as a result of these seven lessons, all of us now have a deeper appreciation of what the Lord has done for us.

The Lord has now finished His work, but His death on the cross forces us to make a decision. Did you notice what happened right after the Lord’s death? In **verse 47**, Luke tells us that, *“...when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent.”* In **Matthew 27:54**, Matthew tells us that, *“...the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’”* This morning, if you agree with the centurion, if you are ready to put your spirit in God’s hands, we would invite you to turn away from sin and to allow yourself to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins.

When we started this series two months ago, we looked at the last words of John McCaffary, the first and last person to ever be executed in the State of Wisconsin, in Kenosha, in 1851, *“...I hope my fate will be a warning to you all.”* We look at that, and we look at the last words of Christ, and there is no comparison! No other dying person ever died like this. *“Truly this was the Son of God!”* If you are struggling with your Christian faith and would like for us to pray on your behalf, or if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let’s stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org