

Easter Friday ~ Jesus' Last Seven Words and What They Mean For Us Today (Featuring "Freedom Battle" by Michael W. Smith)



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Today is Good Friday – the day Adam and Eve looked forward to since the Garden of Eden.

From the moment God gave them the promise of a Savior and clothed them in the skin of an innocent animal who died to

cover their shame, they looked for this day.

Before we look at Christ on the cross and His last seven words, though, I want us to focus our hearts by listening to Michael W. Smith's brilliant song "Freedom Battle." I think he may have had Good Friday in mind when he wrote this song.

Click the play button and listen as Jesus' Last Seven Words speak to us today.

1. Forgiveness

***"Father, forgive them;
for they do not know what they are doing."
(Luke 23:34 NASB)***

Christ's first words on the cross were a prayer to God.

I've said it before. God is first and last in everything.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' prayer was not for Himself but for others. "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing."

Really? They don't know what they're doing?

How could they drive nails through His hands and feet and not know what they were doing?

But, of course, Jesus knew what He was talking about.

Sin had so blinded the people that they couldn't see the horrific crime they were committing.

I'm not just talking about the crime of crucifying an innocent man. I'm talking about crucifying Jesus Christ, the Lord of All.

Their blinding sin kept them from the truth of what they were doing. Sin blinded all of them from the Jewish leaders and the crowd who cried out for His crucifixion to Pilate and the Roman guards who carried out their evil desires.

What this means for us today:

Jesus' prayer was for us as well.

We deny, excuse, and wink at sin just like those who crucified Christ.

And just like them, we're blind to the depths of the depravity of our sin – our sin that nailed Jesus to the cross as surely as theirs did.

If we saw our sin as it truly is – as God sees it – we'd be so horrified by its repulsiveness, we'd stay far from it.

But sin blinds us to sin as well.

We must ask God to open our eyes to see sin as He sees it.

And when others *know* what they're doing to us, we should pray as Christ did, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." Because they truly don't.

2. *Salvation*

*"And He said to him,
"Truly I say to you,
today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

~ Luke 23:43

Christ promised the guilty criminal, who hung on the cross next to Him, that on that day he'd be with Him in paradise.

This condemned man, who'd admitted his clear guilt while hanging on the cross next to Jesus, received salvation that day.

He received it simply because he believed.

He knew in his heart that Jesus was innocent. He believed that Jesus was exactly who He'd said He was. And he looked to Christ to save him.

The criminal on the other side of Jesus refused to see or accept the truth.

Salvation only came to one of them that day – the one who chose to believe.

What this means for us today:

As long as there is breath in our lungs, it's not too late for us to choose to believe. But we won't have forever to make that choice.

Time ran out for the other criminal. Don't let time run out on you. Choose today while there's still today.

**3.
Compassion**

"Dear woman, here is your son."

~ John 19:26

Jesus' first three *last* words were for other people.

His concern, as He hung in agony, was for the forgiveness, salvation, and the needs of others.

Even with a monumental moment as atoning for the sin of the world bearing down upon His shoulders, Jesus focused on the

needs of His mother.

We don't know what happened to Joseph by this point. Most believe he must have died as he is not mentioned in the Bible after Jesus grows up.

Being a widow is difficult, but even more so for women in those days. Mary had other children, but Jesus passed on the responsibility of caring for his mother to one of His beloved disciples – most likely John.

What this means for us today:

Jesus give us a powerful demonstration that there's never a time when we shouldn't be looking out for the needs of others.

In at the midst of Jesus' agony on the cross, He'd already met three needs in His first three *last* words.

When I have a headache, I expect a free pass on thinking of anyone but myself.

We love to remind each other that we can't take care of others until we first take care of ourselves. Put your oxygen mask on first.

Granted, if we don't put on our own oxygen mask, we'll keel over and be completely unable to speak, much less help others get their mask on. But Jesus has shown us, while suffering on the cross, that much can be accomplished at any time through great, selfless love for God and others.

Plus He showed us that you must always show love to your mother! Always.

4. Anguish

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

~ Mark 15:34

Did Jesus not understand why God was turning His face away from Him?

Was He simply confused and crying out in human anguish?

I don't believe so.

In all His humanity, Christ never lost any of His deity.

He suffered and died as fully man, but He fulfilled every divine purpose through it all.

Christ's Words of anguish gave everyone, including us, a glimpse of the extreme cost of His sacrifice and the supernatural work He was performing on the cruel cross.

Christ had already hung there for three long hours, from 9:00 am – noon.

At noon, the sky became dark in the middle of the day.

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.”

(Matthew 27:45; Luke 24:44)

During these three hours of darkness, the sin of the world was poured out upon Christ.

His Father, our holy God, turned His face away as Christ paid the full penalty for our sin. (Romans 6:23)

This was the agonizing moment Christ had been looking towards when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Yet not My will, but Yours be done.” His sweat had become like drop of blood as He prayed. (Luke 22:42-44)

But Jesus wasn't only crying out of His anguish at being

separated from God by our sin.

He was also quoting the first verse in Psalm 22, and every Jewish leader within earshot knew it.

If they had any lingering question as to whether or not Jesus believed He was the Messiah, Jesus answered that doubt with that one definitive statement.

By quoting the first verse in Psalm 22, Jesus boldly declared that the prophecies contained in this psalm all point to Him.

Earlier in His ministries, Jesus had told the Jewish leaders that Moses wrote about Him. (John 5:46) In this one phrase, He revealed that King David did as well.

What this means for us today:

This is a moment we must sear into our minds. In these last words, Christ settles forever the question, “Does God really love me? Do I really matter?”

Yes! and Yes!

God loves us with a love we can't begin to imagine.

Which of us could hand over our own beloved son to be tortured, and then turn our face away from him as the sin of the world was heaped upon Him – all for people who mocked and despised him?

And which of us would be willing to endure such torment for those who don't deserve it?

Yes, God really loves us!

And yes, we really matter!

Suffering

"I am thirsty."

~ John 19:28

Darkness still covered the land as Jesus accomplished and endured what no simple man ever could.

Not only would none of us have ever qualified to be the perfect sacrifice, but none of us could have survived the physical torture He endured, much less the full weight of our sin.

In Christ's humanity, His body was ready to give out, but His Spirit held on.

Ages before, through King David, God pointed to this very moment upon the cross.

"...for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink."

~ Psalm 69:21

When I think of Jesus thirsting, I can't help but think of the Samaritan woman that Jesus met at the well. He said to her, "Give Me a drink." (John 4:7)

She was understandably surprised by this for many reasons and was drawn into a conversation with Christ. In a way that only Jesus can do, He told her about Himself.

"Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

John 4:13-14

What this means for us today:

Man can live a long time without food, although it's not fun.

But man cannot live long without water.

Without the Living Water, who is Christ, we can't truly live at all. All those without Christ are merely surviving, not living, until they die eternally.

Jesus was literally thirsty when He said, "I am thirsty," but He was also drawing our attention to our great spiritual need and His ability alone to fulfill it – just as He fulfilled every prophecy concerning Him.

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty.'"
John 19:28

6. Victory

"It is finished!"
~ John 19:30

What God begins, He finishes. Period.

Christ accomplished our salvation. The terrible price had been paid.

From the moment in the Garden of Eden when the *crunch* was heard 'round the world, all of heaven and earth longed to hear these three words spoken. "It is finished!"

In these three words on the cross, Christ had said the other three words we all long to hear. "I love you!"

What this means for us today:

If your heart has been drawn to Christ at all, that is God's work beginning in you. Whatever God begins, He finishes.

He's already paid for your salvation. Accept it. Receive it. Enjoy it.

There's much that can be, has been, and should be, said about these three words, but I won't say more about them now.

I want us to let the impact of these three simple, yet powerful, words do the talking, not me.

"It is finished!"

7. Joy

***"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!"
~ Luke 23:46***

Just like Christ's first words on the cross, His last words were a prayer to God.

Once again, I say, God is first and last in everything.

It's only fitting that Christ's final words on the cross were His 7th words. Seven, the number that stands for spiritual perfection.

In His final words we see the beauty of the perfect relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

We also see the proof that Jesus truly gave His life. No one took it.

His disciple Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus to the Jewish leaders.

The leaders demanded Pilate crucify Him.

Pilate handed Jesus over to the Roman guards.

The Roman guards nailed Jesus to the cross.

But no one took His life.

Jesus chose the exact moment when He would die.

After declaring, "It is finished," Jesus prayed, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."

Then He bowed His head and gave up His life.

Scripture doesn't say He passed away so His head fell forward.

It says, "He bowed His head and gave up His spirit." ~ John 19:30

What a powerful display of Christ's divinity. Even as He suffered the deepest agony possible, He remained sovereign over all, perfect in all His ways.

The agony was behind Him; the joy before Him. Jesus said His last words and then entered into His joy.

What this means for us today:

The Bible says it best.

***"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
Hebrews 12:1-2***

***These were Jesus' Last Seven Words before He gave His life.
But this is not the end of the story.***

Today is Friday, but Sunday's coming!

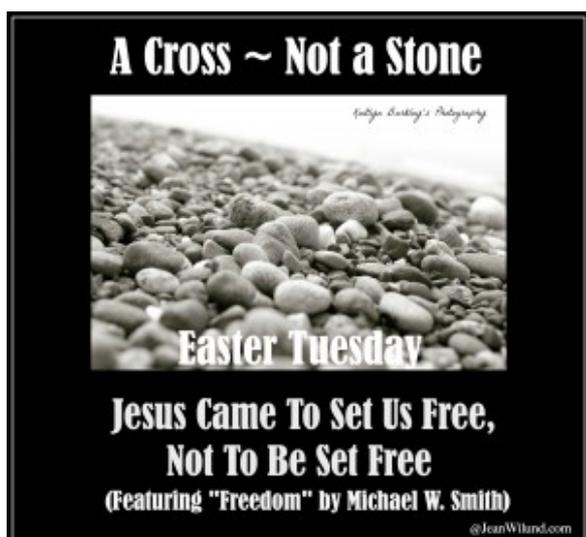
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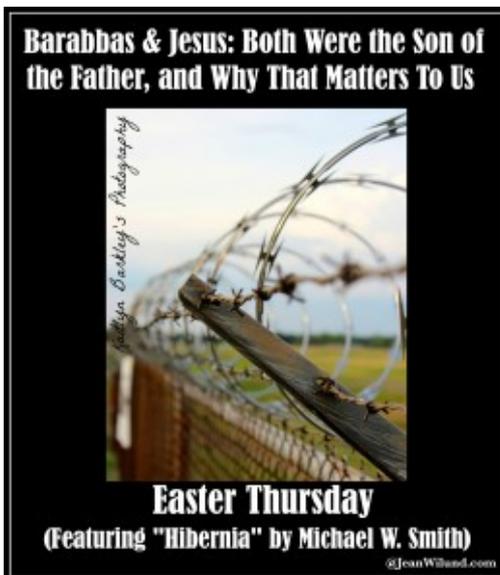


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(Featuring "Freedom" by Michael W. Smith)



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To Us