



On the Crucifixion:

You are a Christian. You carry the cross of Christ on your forehead. The mark stamped on you teaches you what you should profess. He was hanging on the cross, which you carry on your forehead. Do not delight in the sign of the wood but in the sign of the one hanging on it. When he was hanging on the cross, he was looking around at the people raving against him, putting up with their insults and praying for his enemies. While they were killing him, the doctor was curing the sick with his blood. He said, "Father forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." These words were not futile or without effect. Later, thousands of those people believed in the one they murdered, so that they learned how to suffer for him who had suffered for them and at their hands.

—St. Augustine

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Around the Word Bible Study

Lent, 2017

The Seven Words of the Cross The First Word

Forgiveness. That's the focus of Jesus' first word on the cross. It's also the focus of his work on the cross for us. Jesus goes to the cross to pay for our sins, suffer punishment in our place, die the death we deserved, and rise again so that we might be forgiven. In the Gospel of Luke the word forgiveness often has the emphasis of a release from captivity. Think of the Exodus and God's rescue of Israel from their bondage to slavery in Egypt. In a similar, though infinitely greater way, Jesus is going to Jerusalem on an Exodus to free us from bondage to slavery, the slavery of sin, death, and the devil. The forgiveness he accomplishes for us on the cross releases us from death and the devil's power.

For Jesus, forgiveness is quickly and readily spoken. For us, however, forgiveness can often be difficult. C.S. Lewis once commented that forgiveness is a lovely word until you have something to forgive in someone else. We want to place limits, conditions, quotas, and stipulations on our forgiveness. But Jesus came to give outrageous forgiveness to undeserving sinners. And so Jesus forgives us in these words from the cross, not as we would forgive others, but as only he can, by his grace and mercy. Therefore, we forgive others, as God in Christ has forgiven us.

Opening: Psalm 6

¹O LORD, rebuke me not in your | anger,*
nor discipline me | in your wrath.

²Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am |
languishing;*
heal me, O LORD, for my bones are |
troubled.

³My soul also is greatly | troubled.*
But you, O LORD— | how long?

⁴Turn, O LORD, deliv- | er my life;*
save me for the sake of your | stead
fast love.

⁵For in death there is no remem- | brance of
you;*
in Sheol who will | give you praise?

⁶I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my | bed with tears;*
I drench my couch with my | weeping.

⁷My eye wastes away be- | cause of grief,*
it grows weak because of | all my foes.

⁸Depart from me, all you workers of |
evil,*
for the LORD has heard the sound of
my | weeping.

⁹The LORD has | heard my plea;*
the LORD ac- | cepts my prayer.

¹⁰All my enemies shall be ashamed and
greatly | troubled;*
they shall turn back and be put to
shame in a | moment.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Read Luke 23:26-34

v. 26: And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. Why do you think Luke takes time to mention Simon of Cyrene by name? What is significant about this event as Jesus is on the way to his crucifixion?

v. 27: And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him.

Where else in the ministry of Jesus did he, or others following him, weep over current

events?

Read also Luke 19:41-44. Why does Jesus weep over Jerusalem? What is significant about the bookend of weeping at Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem and the weeping at his passion?

v. 28: But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Why does Jesus tell the women to weep for themselves instead of him? What is God's promise to us in the midst of our weeping? Read Revelation 21:1-7.

v. 29: For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'

When Jesus says "the days are coming", to what days is he referring? Read Matthew 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21:5-24.

Throughout the Old Testament, barrenness was not seen as a sign of blessing, but rather caused much pain and heartache for women who were unable to bear children (i.e. Hannah); why then does Jesus say "blessed are the barren..."?

v. 30: Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'

Jesus quotes the prophet Hosea (10:8) when he says that people will cry out for the mountains to cover them; what similar message and theme does Jesus have in common with Hosea? How is Jesus' passion an answer to this kind of lament?

Read Isaiah 40:1-8. What comfort does God's word give us when we lament our sin and the chaos of sin in this world?

v. 31: For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Who is Jesus talking about in the context of this verse? What is he referring to by saying "when the wood is green"? How does this describe his innocent suffering and

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death? What is Jesus predicting in his statement about the wood being dry?

v. 32 Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.

Read Isaiah 53:1-12 and Luke 22:37. How are these prophecies fulfilled in the specific events of Jesus' passion?

Read Galatians 3:10-14. What is significant about Jesus being crucified as a criminal?



Father, forgive them,
they know not
what they do.
Luke 23:34

33 And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

Why was the place of Jesus' crucifixion called the place of the Skull? How is this fitting for Jesus' passion?

Many works of Christian art and iconography feature a skull beneath Jesus' crucifixion. Read Romans 5:12-21. Why would an artist include this feature? What does this communicate about the work of Jesus on the cross for us?

34 And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

What is remarkable about Jesus' words here on the cross? How is Jesus' forgiveness different from our typical ways of forgiveness?

What does the word "forgiveness" mean? How do Jesus' words here on the cross fulfill the words of Psalm 6 that was read earlier in the lesson?

Closing Prayer: Jesus, in Your Dying Woes (LSB, 447:1-3)

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