

42-23-01-Last Word #1, Forgiveness

Cross, forgiveness, understanding, prayer, Lent

Luke 23:34

On the Cross, Jesus not only purchased forgiveness. He proclaimed it.

### INTRODUCTION:

–Those who think Jesus never preached from a wooden pulpit forget His sermon preached from Peter’s boat... *and* they forget Calvary.

–The Cross was Christ’s final pulpit where He preached seven last messages in the last 6 hours of His earthly life. They are called “***The Seven Words of the Cross.***” These will be our focus this Lenten season.

–The 1<sup>st</sup> “last word” is *forgiveness*, from Luke 23:34a, *Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* **HOM.idea.**

–His 1<sup>st</sup> little sermonette from the Cross was actually a prayer:

#### **I. This Prayer Revealed the *Father’s Mercy***

A. It showed His confidence in the Father in the midst of suffering:

1. Quiet-times of solitude are *favorable for prayer* (Jesus enjoyed them, too. BUT He taught us we can pray anytime, anywhere.)
2. Even when tempted to question His Father’s will, He submitted [False examples from *earthly fathers* lead some to doubt *God the Father.*]
3. His faith was stretched to the limit on the Cross, but He already had made His commitment in Gethsemane to “drink this cup”....

B. This prayer showed His confidence that forgiveness was part of the Father’s will (He knew exactly what His suffering was for, so He knew His prayer was *not only heard*, but *would be answered.*)

C. It showed His confidence in Scripture [Abraham’s test of faith (read Gen 22:1-14) – Jesus must have seen parallels from the viewpoint of Isaac, a 25 y/o letting his 100 y/o father-with-a-knife tie him to a sacrificial wood pile!:

1. Abraham had heard, “your only son...whom you love” – Jesus had heard, “a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love...’”
2. Abraham had heard, “Father?...but where is the lamb?” – Jesus had heard, “Behold the Lamb of God who take away the sin of the world.”
3. Isaac carried the wood for the offering – Jesus carried His cross.
4. After a 3-day journey, Abraham told his servants, “We will worship and... come back to you” – Jesus told us He would rise in 3 days – Luke 9:22. And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

5. Isaac and Abraham “went on together” – Jesus *prayed confidently*, because He knew His Father accompanied Him in this task.

**TRANS:** Jesus knew who He was. He was sacrifice the angel told Abraham that God would provide. He knew why He was fastened to a wooden cross, and why the knife that Isaac had missed would soon be piercing His side. He told the Jews (John 8:56), “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” Yes, glad for Isaac to stay alive! Another Son, the Father’s own, would die and rise 3 days later. Jesus knew His Father’s merciful plan to bring *forgiveness* to lost humanity, so He prayed with *confidence*, “*Father, forgive them...*”

## II. This Prayer Revealed the Son’s Ministry

- A. Jesus prayed it as He hung between earth and heaven (a place that symbolized His ministry as the Intercessor for humanity)--
1. We need an Intercessor [StarTrek--Insurrection: Capt. Picard chides a rebel, Golna, for his part in a plan to destroy his own people. He responds, “*Is that the way a Federation officer pleads for his life?*” Picard replies, “*I’m not pleading for my life; I’m pleading for yours. You can still go home, Golna.*”]–  
On the Cross, Jesus was pleading and interceding for us!
  2. Our need for an Intercessor draws us to the Cross– John 12:32, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”
- B. By becoming human, God exemplified intercessory prayer (The Incarnation allowed God to show us that *He practices what He preaches*)
- C. The Cross began a new phase of Christ’s intercessory ministry:
1. He still intercedes in Heaven-- Heb 7:25-26a, Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. **Such a high priest meets our need...**
  2. He still intercedes on Earth--
    - a. The Church is the Body of Christ, the earthly temple where Jesus continues through us to carry His Cross– John 15:18-20a, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first... If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.
    - b. Like our Lord, our response to the Cross is to intercede for our persecutors– Mat 5:44-45a, ...Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

**TRANS:** Human nature tends to hold on to hurts till they turn into the pain of bitterness. Divine nature calls us to forgive, and Jesus showed

us how to do it ***while the hurting is still happening!*** He also added a phrase to this prayer that is both powerful and perplexing: “*for they do not know what they are doing.*” This is so significant, because it shows that...

## III. This Prayer Revealed the Spirit’s Mission (“they do not know”)

- A. Ignorance is dangerous, even lethal– Prov 10:21 (NKJV), The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom.
- B. The lost at the foot of the Cross lacked the knowledge of salvation:
1. The soldiers were utilitarians, pragmatists [The Romans were experts in *know-how*.]: “*What matters is getting the job done.*”
  2. The crowds were hedonists, relativists [“Hosanna!” today, “Crucify!” tomorrow]: “*If it feels right, it is! Truth changes with the times.*”
  3. The priests were power brokers, the elite: “*It’s right, if it fits our agenda, our values. Don’t bother us with the facts.*”
- C. Christ’s prayer created an environment of hope for lost humanity, the pragmatists, the hedonists, the power brokers of every age:
1. He knew their perspectives had been distorted by selfishness...
  2. Only a demonstration of undeserved love could reach the lost [The centurion, who expected cursing, heard a prayer forgiving him, and it changed his heart– Mark 15:39, And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”]

## CONCLUSION:

–[A European singer, Henriette Sontag, was slandered by a rival, who even tried to disrupt her concerts. Years later, when this woman became blind, she befriended her but saw to her needs. When people asked why such kindness for one who had been so cruel, she said, “*She didn’t realize what she was doing.*”] It’s not *easy* to forgive. *Forgiveness* wasn’t *easy* for Jesus to *purchase*. But He showed us how to do it by practicing what He preached, [Poem by an *unknown author*:

“*Father, forgive them,*” Jesus prayed,  
“*They do they know not what,*” he said;  
With heart compassionate he pled  
For foes intent his blood to shed.

O heart of Christ ! O truth divine,  
Was ever love so great as thine?  
Though doomed to crucifixion’s throes;  
Thou didst forgive thy bitter foes.

His back with stinging scourge was torn,  
His head was pierced with crown of thorn,  
A cross his foes prepared for him,  
And yet he pled with God for them!

O Christ, our Advocate in heaven,  
Pray thou our sins may be forgiven;  
Impart to us thy gentleness,  
And give us grace our foes to bless.]