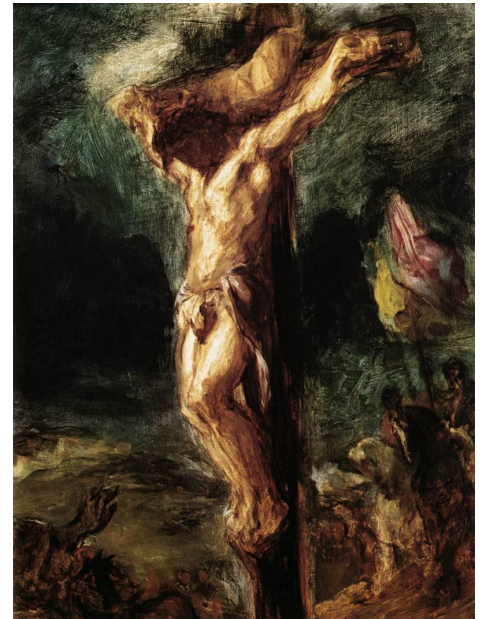


St. Luke Ev. Lutheran
Devotions by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Good Friday March 21, 2008
The Seven Last Words Of Jesus



First Word--Luke 23:26-34

As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then "'They will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" And to the hills, "Cover us!" 'For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Forgiveness! Forgiveness is why a little baby boy was born in Bethlehem some 33 years before a Friday afternoon when three men died on a rocky stony hill that looked like a skull – just outside Jerusalem's city walls. It was for forgiveness that the innocent Son of God was nailed to a cross. It was for forgiveness that Jesus spoke the very first time. Forgiveness – is not something that comes naturally to sinful human beings! You can see how hard it is to forgive in this thing called a victim impact statement. A victim impact statement – is that statement that the victim or the survivors of the victim get to say to the criminal in open court – before the Judge passes sentence. Take for example the victim impact statement that was made in Northern Illinois – where a young man was found guilty of taking the lives of his sister and brother-in-law – then driving to his own home – to take the lives of his own mom and dad! More than two years after the fact – the murderer's only surviving sister read a statement in open court. Sitting just 12 feet away from her brother she never looked up – and he never looked at her. She poured out more than two years worth of anger, frustration and overwhelming grief. She wondered out loud if the people who died suffered first. She wondered out loud *why*? And most certainly most tragic of all – she wondered out loud if the people she loved were in Heaven? How sad is that? What will happen when we die? We know for sure and for certain – we will come home to heaven by grace through faith. We will come home to heaven because Jesus died to wash all our sins away. We will come home to heaven because Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing!"

Second Word--Luke 23:38-43

There was a written notice above him, which read: "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS". One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since

you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

They call them malefactors – from the Latin for *evil doers*! The words of the prophet Isaiah – breathed by the Holy Spirit some 650 years before the fact came true Friday afternoon. Jesus **“poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”** *Isaiah 53:12b* If you look up the FBI Ten Most Wanted Fugitives – you will read about a man named James. James is accused of committing 18 murders, of planning to commit more murders, of extorting money, distributing narcotics, laundering money and more! It says James has a violent temper and is known to carry a knife at all times. He is to be considered armed and extremely dangerous! Who could love a murderous criminal like that? Jesus did. Jesus died on the cross – so that criminals like James and sinners like me – could spend eternity with him in paradise. Together with the Apostle Paul we can say, **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst!”**

Third Word--John 19:25-27

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciples whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,” and to the disciples, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

During Bible Study on Tuesday morning at Heritage Homes we read what Simeon said to Mary in the Temple Courtyard in Jerusalem. Simeon said, **“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”** *Luke 2:34,35* Swords are cold and hard. They are weapons – instruments of war and death. Simeon was being painfully honest when he told Mary – a sword would go through her soul. Not a physical sword doing physical harm – but a pain far more horrible than that! When you are little – you think the worst hurts are physical – a needle in your arm – when the doctor gives you a shot. The nurse says, “This is going to sting” --when they poke a needle into the crook of your arm – looking for a vein to take tubes of blood. The dentist says – this is going to bite a little – when he pokes a needle of Novicane into your cheek – before drilling a cavity or pulling a wisdom tooth! And when you are little you think that’s about as bad as it gets – a headache – or a stomach ache when you get the flu. Then you get a little older and you realize there is the hurt of a heart ache – when you watch someone you love suffer and even die. Mary knew that heart ache. That’s when Jesus – on the cross – was concerned – not for himself but for her – said – behold your son – behold your mother. Even as he was dying Jesus was concerned for Mary and for you and for me. Jesus suffered for all the times we have failed to show love and respect for our mom and dad. Jesus showed extraordinary love for all the times we have failed to love our family!

Fourth Word--Matthew 27:45-49

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani?” – which means, “My God,

my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

Abandoned! By the grace of God alone – most of us have never really known how that feels – to be abandoned. Oh, it happened the other day in Toronto, Canada. A little baby girl was abandoned! About 10:30 in the morning – a little green car drove all alone by the stair well of the mall parking ramp. A person got out – checked the stair well – then went back to the car and got this little bundle and put it into the stair well. Two hours later – a little baby girl was found abandoned – face down on the cold cement of the steps! A little girl who showed marks of being hurt – on her tiny little body – in her pink cotton sleeper – her little blue socks and her little green hat! Abandoned! But not as abandoned as Jesus was. Some 35 people called up – willing to adopt this little baby – named Leslie – after the street the mall parking ramp is on – where she was abandoned. Jesus was abandoned more than anyone was ever abandoned – in the history of the world. Jesus was abandoned by his heavenly Father – because Jesus claimed responsibility – even for parents who batter then abandon their helpless little babies. Jesus was abandoned for all the unspeakable crimes people have ever done. So Jesus was alone – *all* alone – so we will *never* be alone!

Fifth Word--John 19:28,29

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

So that the Scripture would be fulfilled! Jesus knew Old Testament Scripture. Do we? What if the first person you met in Heaven was the prophet Hosea – would you know what to say? Would you say, "What an amazing life you must have lived – having children the LORD – the Great I AM – the Holy One of Israel told you to name. To call one child "Not Loved" – and another "Not My People" and the third one "Jezreel" – after a terrible bloody battle! What an amazing life you must have led – married to Gomer – a woman who sold "hugs and kisses"! To lose her – then to buy her back! What a wonderful picture of my spiritual adultery and unfaithfulness – and the LORD's unconditional love!" If Hosea introduced you to the prophet Joel would you know what to say? Would you say, "Grasshoppers!"? Would you know to say an *army* of locusts – the fierce judgment from the LORD – a painful call to repentance! Would you know to say our whole congregation needs to repent! We need to tear our hearts in sadness because of all our sins. We need to put on spiritual sackcloth – spiritual scratchy burlap and sit in the ash heap – in sadness because of all our sins! You cannot imagine the thirst – the painful thirst that Jesus must have known – parched – hanging on the cross. I think the thirstiest I ever was – was when I was in grade school – and we would play outside – and we would run and run. And then we would come inside – and drink from the water cooler in the hall – as fast as we could--as long as we could – until the teacher would make us let the next person drink. That thirst was nothing – compared to the thirst Jesus must have felt. And then – to fulfill the Scriptures – to finish doing everything the Old Testament prophets like Hosea, Joel, Amos and Obadiah and promised. Jesus said, "I am thirsty!" Jesus took a drink – and that was it! Jesus

took a drink – that we might drink from God’s Word – living water – so our soul will never be thirsty again!

Sixth Word--John 19:30

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Finished? I can’t begin to tell you all the things I have that are half finished! I have this stitching then I am doing. It’s a little chickadee on the branch of a pussy willow. I even have the special angora yarn kind of thread so the little pussy willow will be soft and fuzzy. But it isn’t close to being finished. I have pictures I want to frame. I have special wood – cut with the groove for the glass and the mat and the picture and the backing. But they aren’t fastened together – not sanded – not varnished – not finished. I have crosses that are cut out. But they aren’t sanded and varnished either. I have started to clean and organize our garage – hanging up tools and stacking lumber. That isn’t finished either! I have started reading more books than I can count – and haven’t finished them. I have taken lots of pictures but haven’t finished organizing them and putting them in scrap books. I have started getting in physical shape – but I haven’t finished that. I can’t imagine all the things that I will have left unfinished when I die. The wonderful thing about Jesus is – everything he came to do was finished – utterly and completely. When the job was done – all our sins paid for – Jesus said, **“It is finished!”** And it was!

Seventh Word--Luke 23:33-46

When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.” The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him, “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

It happened a year and a half ago--a 217 foot crane suddenly collapsed in Bellevue, Washington. It crashed into an apartment next door to the construction site and a young man named Matthew died. Matthew’s mother said – it wasn’t right. That her son was completely innocent and yet he died. He died – because the people who set up the crane didn’t build the base right. And when the base wasn’t right – the whole thing came crashing down! One company was

finned \$9,200 and one company was finned \$5,600. Neither of these fines can begin to pay for the single life that was lost. But the fact is – one life was sacrificed on a Friday afternoon almost 2,000 years ago. The truly and completely innocent Son of God gave up his life to save Matthew and the crane company and the construction company and you and me! Jesus didn't lose his life in an accident. Jesus gave up his life – at just the right time – in just the right way to save us from all our sins. Jesus the Good Shepherd said, **“No one takes my life from me. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again.”** Jesus gave up his life for you and for me. When he had done everything to save us – Jesus gave his soul to his Heavenly Father. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz