

First Word

We pray in the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Notice what this petition takes for granted: that we forgive those that sin against us. That is what we are to do—it is a good aim, but it is something that many of us fail to do. No, we hold grudges, we get even, we look for ways to get back at the person who wronged us one way or another. That is what our sinful nature wants and what many people in the world try to get us to do. "Make them pay. Teach them a lesson. Show them that they can't take advantage of you." The truth is that we often don't want to be forgiven as we forgive others because we often fail to forgive others.

Then there is the Lord. Mid-morning, clothes stripped away and nails pounded through his hands and his feet. And what does he pray? **Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**

There is no hate, no feeling of revenge, no plotting to get back at his assailants. Just love. Love, and forgiveness. Even to those who wronged him—to those who beat him, mocked him, and shed his blood. Jesus, in love and grace has nothing but forgiveness in his heart. That is why he came to earth; that is why he rode into Jerusalem and allowed himself to be arrested. He did not come to condemn, but he came to forgive.

That same forgiveness that he has for those who killed him; he has for us. All our sins are forgiven by the Lord, even the times that we have failed to forgive others. For he is a gracious and loving God who wipes away our offenses and remembers our sins no more.

Two other men, who were criminals, were led away with him to be executed. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means, "The place of a skull."). They offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. They crucified him there with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Now it was the third hour when they crucified him.

Second Word

Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. This is what the Writer to the Hebrews says in chapter nine. And what exactly is the time of judgment we are to face? **The wages of sin is death**, Paul says in Romans 3—and he's referring not just to a physical death, but also to an eternal one. And we know our sins all too well. We are often like one of the thieves, who criticized the Lord for not doing what is good for him, for not helping him when he was down. He selfishly only cared about himself. He made Christ into nothing other than someone who could help him out of tough situations.

The other criminal got it right, however. He knew that he was without hope on his own; he was helpless to save himself. He understood full well that he was going to die—a just punishment for his crimes. But he also understood that Jesus wasn't like him or the other criminal. He is God, who willingly let himself be numbered with transgressors. He had done nothing wrong, but was receiving the same sentence. So he pleaded for salvation.

And that very day, he passed on from this veil of tears to a perfect life with Jesus forever! That is what Christ has done for us on the cross. He not only took our sins upon himself, but the perfect life that he lived has been credited to us. We are now pure and holy in God's eyes because Christ's righteousness is now ours! We don't have to worry, then, about being condemned, because The Lord has declared us not guilty on account of his son. And so we know that when we die—that very day, we'll be with the Lord in the paradise of heaven!

One of the criminals hanging there was blaspheming him, saying, "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him, "Don't you fear God, since you are under the same condemnation? We are punished justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom." Jesus said to him, "Amen I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.

Third Word

How do you define love? The world likes to think of love as a feeling or emotion—a certain way you feel when you think of or are around someone close to you. The Bible's definition of love differs greatly. Take for example, Paul's well-known words from 1 Corinthians 13, **Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.**

Joseph, Mary's husband, had most likely died years before Jesus started his ministry. Mary had other children; but it doesn't seem as if any of Jesus' brothers and sisters were present at his crucifixion—if they were none of the gospel writers mention them. We also know that before his resurrection none of his siblings believed in him. So there is Jesus on the cross, blood pouring out of his body in extreme pain, the world's sins on his shoulders and who is he concerned about? His mother. Jesus' brothers could certainly care for her—at least physically; but Jesus wasn't concerned about that necessarily. Mary was a virgin when Jesus was born; the angel told Joseph that he would save his people from their sins. She believed in him as God and as the Savior—and now he was nailed to a cross and about to die.

So Jesus called down to John, his closest disciple, the one whom he loved, and gave him to his mother. It's not as if John needed a mother; his own mother, Salome, was with them at the crucifixion. He was to take care of her spiritually. So in love—an action not a feeling or emotion, Jesus took care of what was really important—his mother's spiritual well-being. It is with the same love for us that led Jesus to the cross in the first place that we may join him and all saints forever in heaven.

Standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Fourth Word

There have been many times in the past when there was a fall-out between a father and his son; and there will be many more times in the future. The Father abandons the son and the rest of the family; or the son wants nothing to do with the Father. They don't get together, talk to each other, or communicate in any other way. But here is the thing about whenever something sad like this happens—there is a reason. Someone did something; maybe both parties are to blame. It takes a lot of small things or perhaps one big thing for two family members to completely disown each other.

The relationship between Jesus and God the Father is a bit different. Jesus is the eternal son of God; begotten of the Father from eternity. They are both true God—two persons of the Holy Trinity. They are both perfect and holy, almighty and eternal.

But Jesus came down from heaven and took on human flesh. And on the cross, as our substitute, he took our sins upon himself—becoming guilty of everything we have done wrong. Earlier this evening we read the prophecy about this in Isaiah, **he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities...the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.** Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians, **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.**

As Jesus took our sins upon himself, he became a sinner for us. And so he was rejected by his heavenly Father, forsaken by him—not for something he had done wrong, but for our sins, for our offenses. And in doing so, he suffered through an eternity of damnation, suffering through the pain and agony of hell as our substitute. As Isaiah prophesied, **by his wounds we are healed.**

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. The sun was darkened. At the ninth hour Jesus shouted with 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, "Listen, he is calling Elijah!"

Fifth Word

For most of the seven sayings of Jesus on the cross we can understand rather easily why he said them. This one is a bit different. This saying doesn't really seem all that important on the surface.

It is really just one word in the Greek, three in English, **I am Thirsty**. The fact that Jesus is thirsty does show us that Jesus is fully human with very real human needs like the rest of us. But we don't really need a reminder of Jesus' humanity here—the fact that he is dying shows us without a shadow of a doubt that he truly is man.

The Holy Spirit knew that we might have some of these questions so he led John to inform us that Jesus said this in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. And what Scriptures might that be? Two different Psalms. In Psalm 22, a psalm which clearly describes Christ's death on the cross, we read in verse 15, **My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.** In Psalm 69, another Psalm about Christ, David even mentions the vinegar given to Jesus to drink, **They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.** Jesus didn't end up on cross as some sort of accident. This was prophesied about in Scripture—the events of Good Friday didn't start on Palm Sunday, or even a few months before. This was

ordained from the beginning of time, first Promised to Adam and Eve shortly after the first sin. Jesus is the long-promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. He worked everything out in history to accomplish his will and fulfill his prophecies, even ones that seem small—Jesus fulfilled them all!

After this, knowing that everything had now been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst.” A jar full of wine vinegar was sitting there. Immediately one of them ran, took a sponge, and soaked it with vinegar. Then he put it on a stick and gave him a drink.

Sixth Word

Nowadays if you buy something at a store you are going to be given a receipt. A receipt indicates that you truly did pay for the item or items that you are taking out of the store. 2000 years ago receipts weren't really a thing, let alone paper as we have it today. And yet if you bought goods at the marketplace it was common to write one word down to indicate that the items were, in fact, purchased.

Like the previous saying of Jesus, this saying, is also just one word in the Greek—*tetelestai*. This was the word often written down the marketplace, it means that the transaction is complete—paid in full.

When Jesus cried out this word it meant that the price for our sins was paid in full. His work as our Savior was now complete—everything he needed to do to save us was finished! He had come down from heaven; for over 30 years he fought off the temptations of the devil not once sinning against the Lord; He suffered our eternal damnation as he took our sins upon himself; his perfect life was credited to us. Nothing was left for him to accomplish, it was all done, complete. With this Greek word is the idea of completing a goal or reaching an end; Christ has reached the goal of our salvation; the end is near because his work of our Savior is finished.

Christ's work of saving us is finished—already, we don't and can't do anything to add to our salvation. The ransom price for our sins has been paid; not by our good works, not by any amount of gold or silver, but the holy, precious blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, shed on the cross for us. We are now reconciled, or brought back to God. Because of Christ, we are now at-one with him.

When Jesus had taken the wine vinegar, he said, “It is finished.”

Seventh Word

Throughout the history of the world mankind has come up with some gruesome, painful, and tortuous ways to put someone to death. Crucifixion was one such method. It most likely started with the Persians and was picked up by other countries. It was such a horrible way to die that the Greeks would only allow slaves to be crucified—only barbarians would crucify a free man. It was much more common for the Romans to crucify someone. It was done to prove a point—it was meant to dissuade anyone else from committing a similar crime.

Death by crucifixion often lasted several days. After being beaten and possibly nailed to a cross blood would start to fill the lungs. But the outstretched position of the arms made it hard to support yourself enough to cough up any blood. Eventually, over the course of many days, with

the body close to dehydration, strength gave out and exhaustion overwhelmed; no longer able to push himself out and up in order to cough up blood and eventually the criminal would suffocate to death on his own blood.

Jesus, however didn't die in such a way. He was only on the cross for six hours; not days. He cried out in a loud voice right before he died. And he didn't just die; he gave up his spirit. This wasn't a normal crucifixion death. Jesus willingly gave up his spirit, commending it up to his heavenly Father. Now that his work as our Savior was complete, everything he needed to do was finished, the only thing left for him was to die!

Normally the death of someone, especially God isn't a good thing. Yet we call today, Good Friday for a reason. It is good because it's not the end of the story. No, the end, which we'll celebrate on the Sunday, is the reason Jesus gave up spirit and died—so that he could rise again and give us his victory!

Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” When he had said this, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.