

# **The Seven Last Sayings of Jesus**

Good Friday reflections  
St. John's-St. Margaret's Church  
April 2023

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# FOREWORD

Welcome to this set of reflections on the seven last sayings of Jesus, uttered as He hung on the cross.

These reflections were written by members of St. John's-St. Margaret's Church, and read at the Good Friday service on 7 April 2023. Our hope is that by compiling them for circulation, they can be a blessing to more people, and that in each reflection, you will hear something of God's heart for you.

Don't read these in a hurry. Ask God to speak to you, and if a particular reflection resonates with you, ask God to show you why.

At the service, a visual recorder also illustrated these readings 'live'. The completed piece is included in this compilation, and we trust that it will be yet another way the Lord may speak to you.

Be blessed!

The editorial team  
April 2023

## **Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23.34)**

“Father”. Why would Jesus call out “Father” when His Father seemed to have forsaken Him?

Because Jesus knew that His Father was good. He knew like no other, that “no one is good except God alone”. He knew the Father could be counted on, even in what felt like a hopeless situation.

Jesus knew that His Father’s will was both good and perfect. At the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing the fate awaiting Him at the cross, He prayed, “Nevertheless, not My will but Yours - the Father’s - be done.”

On that cross, Jesus was forsaken, the sin of the world upon Him. Yet He called “Father”, because He trusted in His good and perfect Father.

“Forgive them.” Why would Jesus plead forgiveness for His tormentors? For those who wrongfully accused Him, tortured Him and condemned Him to a horrendous death?

Because Jesus knew that He was the only Mediator standing between righteous God and sinful man. Even men such as these. He knew what men would do to Him, yet He taught “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.” This is exactly what He did.

Even when it cost Him His life, His love for humanity did not diminish one single bit.

“They know not what they do.” How could Jesus say they did not know?



Because He knew what was in the heart of men. Evil that comes from pride. Greed for power. Blind religiosity. Envy. Yet, He pleaded, "forgive".

Because Jesus knew that the people who agitated for His death were deceived. Deceived by the father of lies, by the one who has no truth in him. Deceived into thinking they were doing the right thing. How wrong they were! They were putting to death the Only Son of the living God!

What about me?

In my darkest moments, when I cannot hear God, when I cannot feel His presence, do I call "Father", like Jesus? Or do I turn away, weighed down by my circumstance, not trusting the goodness of God?

And how do I regard those who harm me or wrong me? Do I curse their name and ask God to heap brimstone and fire on them? Or do I, like Jesus, regard enemies no less than friends and love them all the same?

And how do I see those who are of the world, those who do not know or even reject Jesus as their God and Saviour? Do I have compassion, like Jesus, do I see they are sadly deceived and desperately in need of His salvation?

Lord, may we be more like Jesus. May these words always ring in our ears and weigh on our hearts - Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.



## **Today you will be with Me in paradise (Luke 23.43)**

The thief hung on a cross as punishment for his crime, his whole body racked with unbearable pain.

How did he end up like this – dying in one of the most gruesome and humiliating ways possible?

In the face of death, his conscience reminded him of his sinfulness. Parts of the Ten Commandments he had recited as a child suddenly came to mind: “You shall not murder.... You shall not steal.... You shall not covet your neighbour’s house....”

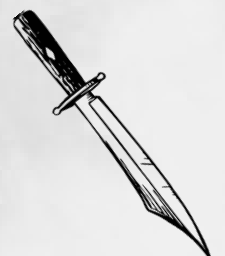
But he was not alone. Between him and his partner in crime, hung the man they called Jesus. Suddenly Jesus cried out, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Was he mad? How could he say that when the soldiers and the crowd had hurled nothing but abuse at him? He had been taunted mercilessly, flogged, and a crown of thorns was pressed down on his head. There was so much bleeding that his face was almost unrecognisable.

And why was Jesus even crucified? He had not killed, robbed nor harmed anyone.

An inscription above him read – “This is the King of the Jews”. There was something about Jesus that stirred the thief’s heart. He was like no other. Could he...could he be the Messiah?

Hearing Jesus, his partner in crime spat out sarcastically, “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”



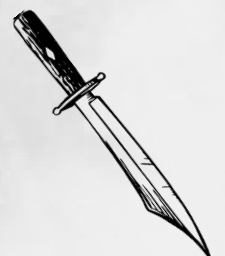
Despite his pain, something compelled him to shout, "Stop it! Don't you fear God? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man - he has done nothing wrong!"

Pain seared through him as he continued, haltingly, pleadingly, "Jesus, remember me...when You come into Your kingdom."

Jesus lifted His head. His eyes were swollen shut, yet His voice was gentle and sure - "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise."

He could not believe his ears! What was this promise? Jesus had given him the promise of salvation! A place in paradise? For him? A condemned sinner who had nothing to offer in return? He didn't deserve it.

Tears started flowing and he began to sob, for the first and last time in his life.



## **Woman, behold, your son! / Behold, your mother! (John 19.26, 27)**

"I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to Your word." (Luke 1:38) With these words, Mary had said her first 'yes' to God. Yes, to being His vessel, yes, to the wonder of carrying "the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:32). That obedience brought shame. And suspicion. But Mary was not forsaken, not abandoned through "a quiet divorce" (Matt 1:19). Because our God does not forsake.

Today Mary stands at the foot of the cross. Her cherished Son, the "blessed fruit of her womb" (Luke 1:42) shamefully crucified. Standing there at the cross, did she remember the words of Simeon – "A sword will pierce through your own soul also"? (Luke 2:35)

Was it for this that she bore her Son?

Oh, where is Your promise, God? Did You not say, "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever"? (Luke 1:33) Did You not promise of this Son that "of His kingdom there will be no end"? (Luke 1:33) Did You not say to Mary, "O favored one, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28)

He is indeed with us. Our God does not forsake.

Bloodied, broken, ridiculed, Jesus was still Mary's son. Even dying, Jesus had compassion. He did not forsake. He fulfilled the law and honoured His mother (Exodus 20:12). He looked at the weeping woman and said, "Woman, behold your son" and lovingly gave Mary into the care of His disciple, John.





Our God did not abandon. Joseph took Mary to be his wife. Jesus gave care of her to John. John took her into his home. God was faithful to the end and honoured Mary's obedience.

Brothers and sisters, when Jesus said to John, "Behold, your mother," He pointed us to how He wants us to live. To be a family in Christ. Jesus says to us, "Behold your mother, your father, your brother, your sister." Look around you. For all those who trust in Christ, this is your family—a family that is created by shared faith in the crucified Christ.

Our God does not forsake. God was with Mary even as He hung on the cross. He was with her. And He will be with us. In our pain, in our shame, in our bewildered waiting. He is with us.



## **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? (Matt 27.46; Mark 15.34)**

“Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani”

Matthew and Mark record Jesus’ original language of Aramaic. It emphasizes how deeply personal this cry was to Jesus. They mean “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me.”

Here, in the center of the seven sayings, there is a shift. From ministering to others, Jesus turns to what He is experiencing Himself. Here, Jesus cries to His Abba, His father, Eloi, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

His cry comes from Psalm 22. Though it is written a thousand years earlier, in this moment, Jesus has no words for Himself but cries from Scripture because He lives by its every word.

Psalm 22 reveals these thoughts: Why is God so far from saving me, so far from my screams and my groans? My heart is like wax, melted within me. You have placed me in the dust of death.

Here in this moment, within the love of the Trinity – a love that is the reason for creation, the reason for you and me, the source of all power and all life – the Father turned His face away.

There is no presence, no life, but coming death.

Jesus is alone. He is abandoned, torn from a love and presence He has always known, left behind. Ignored. He has plunged into the deepest grief and sorrow. Jesus is weeping, He is in darkness, in fire, in hell on earth. Jesus is broken – His body, His heart, His soul. His blood, His life is poured out.



Here, in this moment, Jesus cries from Scripture.  
Here, in this moment, Jesus cries to God: "Eloi, eloi."  
Jesus does not turn His face away from God.  
Jesus is surrendered to "Eloi", even to "Eloi" turning away.

So that His face is always turned to you.

Will you walk this way and sit with this Jesus, at the foot of the cross?  
Will you be with Jesus, here, even here?  
And in your darkest nights -  
what struggles, groans, and despair,  
what pain, hurts and brokenness,  
what shame, loneliness, and emptiness,  
what loss, sorrow, and grief - will you be with Jesus?  
Jesus does not turn His face away.  
He calls on "Eloi" and He is turned to you.  
He lived and died to be with you.  
Will you be with Jesus?  
Here, even here.



## **I thirst**

### **(John 19.28)**

Just two words. But I will never forget the moment I heard them.

It may have been years ago, but I remember the day so clearly. It was the afternoon, but the sky had gone dark, suddenly and strangely. Jesus had been hanging there for a few hours already. And the pain, oh the pain must have been excruciating. We could all see the life ebbing out of Him. The disciples, Mary His mother, some of us women, all standing there, numb, and trying to make sense of what was happening in front of our eyes.

No more preaching, no more spiritual wisdom, no more miracles, just my great good Lord, bleeding and dying. And then, almost in a whisper, "I thirst."

When we walked with Him, I remember He often spoke about thirst. Up on the hill, preaching to thousands, He declared to all of us that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness would be filled.

Later, He spoke to that woman in Samaria, by the well. Imagine that, speaking to a Samaritan, and a woman! And not only that, He told her that whoever drank His water would never thirst again. Never.

Those words came back to me when I heard Him say "I thirst." Looking at Him there on the cross, I wondered — was Jesus speaking of spiritual thirst? We know now — He had the weight of the sin of the whole world on His shoulders. And He was separated, forsaken by His own Father. Was He thirsting and longing for the reunion with God that was to come? Was He thirsting for us, His disciples, to understand what He was trying to do on the cross?

Maybe.



But I think that His thirst was also physical. Just the same kind you and I experience. After all, I journeyed with Him for three years and I can tell you – my Jesus was fully human. He ate, He slept, He laughed, He wept. And when it came to suffering, I know He had the power to end it, but He chose instead to stay thirsty, weak, crucified. To suffer, for me and for you.

Jesus, my Lord, fully understands weakness, struggle, pain, because He has experienced all of it. And so I, we, never have to pretend to be strong or invincible, or that all is well when it is not. I too can acknowledge when I hurt, when I thirst.

Once, Jesus told us – that when we feed those who are hungry, or give a drink to those who are thirsty, we are doing it for Him. So when I think back to the thirst of Jesus, I am also to think of those around me who thirst, and whom I must serve.

And now I understand – that at the cross, Jesus suffered thirst so that we don't have to. Our prophet Isaiah's words have been fulfilled – our Messiah suffered anguish for our sin, and was wounded so we may be healed.

Do you thirst? Come to Jesus, and never thirst again.



## **It is finished** **(John 19.30)**

The gospel of Mark tells us that just before He died, Jesus uttered a loud cry. Mark didn't say what the loud cry was. But John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was close enough to the cross to hear Jesus say, "It is finished."

"It is finished" means Jesus' suffering was over. The end of being treated unjustly and cruelly, being flogged, spat upon, reviled and nailed to the cross.

It means the crucial part that Jesus played in the Father's plan of redemption for the sins of the world has been completed.

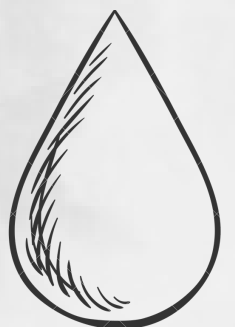
It is finished means the saving power of His death is valid even today, more than 2,000 years later.

You and I are here, gathered as brothers and sisters in Christ, only because Jesus stayed on the cross.

I cannot understand how Jesus resisted the temptation to get off the cross. Or to call on His Father to send His angels to rescue Him. When His disciple attacked the High Priest's servant, Jesus reprimanded him, saying "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" Just a few words from Jesus and the angels would have descended.

Jesus went on to say – "But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"

Let's think about that for a while – "But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"



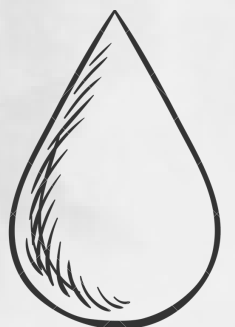
It means there was a plan for Jesus' life. All that Jesus suffered, the injustice, the scourging, the crucifixion, these were part of God's plan for Jesus. Why would the Father ordain such a plan for His Son? For the One whom the Father said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased?"

The truth is, there is so much behind these three short words, "It is finished."

There is Jesus' mind-boggling obedience to the Father. The obedience that you and I can never fully follow, which is why we need Jesus. That is why being a Christian is not about doing; it's about what has been done through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Everything we do —our worship, our works — are responses to what Jesus has done once for all on the cross.

At the same time, there is a Father who had to send His beloved Son to die on the cross. The Father whose love for You and me is as incomprehensible as His Son's obedience. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

The Father's love; the Son's obedience. May we contemplate the Father's immeasurable love. And may that love become for us the motivation to follow the Son's absolute obedience. Amen.



## **Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit (Luke 23.46)**

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!" And having said this He breathed His last.

Jesus preached and fed the thousands. He healed the sick. The blind could see, and the lame could walk. He raised the dead! But now ... He is dead? He saved others. Could He not save Himself?

Yet, Jesus trusted His Father. He did not concern Himself with the things of the world. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head," Jesus said.

But how is it possible for us to live like this? Should we live like this? We have bills to pay, and mouths to feed. We have responsibilities - work and studies to be finished.

Yet, Jesus trusted His Father. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." And He has shown us what that means on the cross!

But what conflict we feel in denying ourselves! Our possessions and pleasures - aren't they a blessing from God? A reward for our hard work? But maybe sometimes, just sometimes, do our possessions have possession over us?

Jesus had nothing. Yet, Jesus trusted his Father. And how humiliating to die on a cross! Perhaps, we are too proud to be humiliated like Jesus? But if we are too proud to be like Jesus, who do we want to be like instead?





In what or whom do we seek our identity? What are we clinging to in our life? Our position? Our power? Our profit? Our pride? Though He was in the form of God, Jesus emptied Himself. He took on the form of a servant and was born in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself. He was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Yet, Jesus trusted His Father.

\*From the fear that trusting You will leave us more destitute,  
Jesus, deliver us.

From all suspicion of Your words and promises,  
Jesus, deliver us.

From anxiety about the future,  
Jesus, deliver us.

From restless self-seeking,  
Jesus, deliver us.

From the fear of being asked to give more than we have,  
Jesus, deliver us.

From the belief that our lives have no meaning or worth,  
Jesus, deliver us.

From the fear of what love demands, Jesus, deliver us.

That You are with us in our suffering,  
Jesus, we trust in You.

That our suffering, united to Your own, will bear fruit in this life and  
the next, Jesus, we trust in You.

That You will not leave us orphaned,  
Jesus, we trust in You.

That You give us the grace to accept forgiveness and to forgive  
others, Jesus, we trust in You.

That You give us all the strength we need for what is asked,  
Jesus, we trust in You.

That You will teach us to trust You,  
Jesus, we trust in You.

That we are Your beloved ones,  
Jesus, we trust in You.



Father, into Your hands we commit our spirit.



# VISUAL RECORDING

## THE SEVEN LAST SAYINGS OF JESUS

**FATHER FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO**



Jesus trusted His good and perfect Father. Jesus, the only Mediator. He did, as He had taught. They were deceived. **may we be more like Jesus.**

"This is the King of the Jews"  
Jesus remember me when You come into Your Kingdom

**WITH ME IN PARADISE**

Forgive them? Was Jesus mad? Could He be the Messiah?

Truly I tell you

**WOMAN, BEHOLD, YOUR SON...  
BEHOLD, YOUR MOTHER!**

Our God does not forsake He is indeed with us. With compassion Jesus honoured His mother. He was with her. And He will be with us.



**MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?**

Jesus alone, abandoned.

The Father turned His face away!  
His face is turned to you. Will you be with Jesus? Here, even here.

**IT IS FINISHED.**

Jesus' suffering was over. His part in the Father's redemption plan, completed. Jesus stayed on the cross. **Jesus has done, once for all. The Father's immeasurable love, the Son's absolute obedience.**

**I THIRST**

Excruciating pain. Life ebbing out of Him. Bleeding, dying, needing water. Jesus - thirsting for reunion with God; for us to understand; a fully human thirst. When we hurt and thirst, we can come to Him and never thirst again. And help others come to Him.



**FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT**

Now... He is dead? Yet, Jesus trusted His Father.

How humiliating a death! But if we are too proud to be like Jesus, who do we want to be like instead?

What are we clinging to?...



Jesus, deliver us!  
Jesus, we trust in You!

# AFTERWORD

You have just read meditations on the seven last sayings of Jesus on the cross.

No one uses the final moments of their lives to talk about the weather or food - these would be trivial and irrelevant. Jesus' last words are full of meaning and purpose. He assured His mother that someone would care for her, and the thief that he was not unwanted or useless but would be with Jesus in paradise. In His last moments, Jesus showed love and shared the gospel.

He also expressed His own suffering - thirst, and disappointment with His Father leaving Him. In His last breath, He entrusted His spirit to Father God - an act of faith that He would be received, since He had felt the rejection of the Father.

What do we learn?

That life is short and will come to an end. Our spirit will then either go up to God or down into hell. That is a fact. It all depends on our relationship with God. Imagine a boy by the side of the swimming pool, asking his father to receive him when he jumps in. When he jumps, he immediately lands into the arms of the father. Will you land into God's arms when your life comes to an end and you jump from this life to the next? Will God be there to receive you? Or are you not sure?

God will be there to receive you, if you first accept Him into your life. Make Him your Saviour and Lord. He will be there for you when your time is up.

If this is something you would like to do, this is a prayer you can use — Lord Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for my sin. I now receive You into my heart as my Lord and Saviour, never to depart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# **NOTES AND CREDITS**

All Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version.

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