



WORDS

FROM THE

CROSS

How Jesus' final words
paint an intimate portrait
of our Saviour

8-day Holy Week devotional



*This devotional should be suitable for tweens and up,
but we encourage parents to read through each day's
Scriptures and reflections before you share them to
make sure they're appropriate for your family.*

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DAY 1 (PALM SUNDAY):
THE WORD OF FORGIVENESS

**“FATHER, FORGIVE THEM,
FOR THEY KNOW NOT
WHAT THEY DO.”**

Forgiveness is beautiful in theory but far more difficult to put into practice. Rather than forgive, we can be tempted to entertain angry, vindictive thoughts, even in response to the smallest slight against us, whether real or perceived.

Yet Jesus taught his followers that we are to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us, and to forgive those who sin against us, no matter how often or how many times they do so. After he had been beaten, whipped, spat upon, mocked, and nailed to the cross by the Roman soldiers, Jesus asked his Father to forgive these men, because they had no idea what they were doing.

In one sense, of course, they did know. They were carrying out a brutal form of capital punishment at the command of the Roman governor. However, they didn't understand that they were killing the Son of God, their Creator and Sovereign Lord over their lives. Nor did they have the slightest inkling of the implications that their actions entailed. Nevertheless, even from the cross, Jesus modelled the radical nature of the forgiveness he taught, not just as an example but also as an encouragement to us when we're conscious of our sin.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

Why is forgiveness so difficult for us to put into practice?

How does accepting Jesus' forgiveness of our sins help us forgive those who hurt us?

In moments where it feels impossible to forgive, what can we remember to help us take that step?



PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, in your perfect goodness, you forgave at your lowest point. Likewise, when we confess our sins to you, you are faithful to forgive us even though we don't deserve it. Help us to overflow with this love and grace and to not hold on to bitterness and revenge. In your precious name, **Amen.***





DAY 2 (HOLY MONDAY):
THE WORD OF SALVATION

**“TRULY, I SAY TO YOU,
TODAY YOU WILL BE
WITH ME IN PARADISE.”**



All four of the Gospels mention that Jesus was crucified between a pair of criminals. Only Luke adds the detail that one of the two men turned to Jesus in faith during his final moments, and that in response, Jesus promised him they'd be together in paradise that same day.



The Greek word Luke uses to describe these men is *kakourgoi*, which literally means evildoers. Matthew and Mark refer to them as robbers, a term the Romans used for revolutionaries or rebels who were creating social chaos and trying to bring down the government. These men weren't petty crooks but hardened felons who, unlike Jesus, would've been considered worthy of crucifixion under Roman law.

Even so, God worked in the heart of one of these criminals to call out to Jesus for salvation during his last moments, which the Lord granted. This monumental act of grace is a comforting reminder that the door of salvation remains open, even for the worst offenders in their final hours. It also demonstrates the deity of Jesus. Even on the cross, he knew what was going on, what he was accomplishing, and he had the authority to grant salvation to anyone who came to him for it.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What do you think of the fact that the door of salvation is open to everyone, even the worst offenders?

In your own life, where are there dark corners that need the light of God's grace?

How does this radical grace change the way we see our Saviour and our fellow image-bearers?



PRAYER

*Loving Jesus, the limitless nature of your grace is difficult for us to understand. In you we see a perfect balance between love and justice. Give us the courage and strength each day to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you so others may know of your saving grace. In your righteous name, **Amen.***





DAY 3 (HOLY TUESDAY):
THE WORD OF RELATIONSHIP

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



According to each of the Gospel accounts, there was a group of faithful women who stayed with Jesus as he was dying on the cross. This group included the well-to-do women who had financially supported Jesus’ ministry from Galilee to Jerusalem, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, along with several others, as well as the mother of James and John, plus Mary, the mother of Jesus. Meanwhile, all of Jesus’ male disciples had fled and abandoned him, except for John.



It’s hard to imagine what Mary must have felt, watching her son die in this manner, but there’s a hint of it in Simeon’s prophecy to her when the infant Jesus was brought to the temple: “a sword will pierce through your own soul also” (Luke 2:34-35).

In the midst of this grim scene, Jesus turned to his mother and said, “Here is your son” and told John, “Here is your mother.” Mary was a widow by this time, and Jesus was telling her and John that they were now family. It’s a heart-melting moment in which Jesus cares for his mother and also shows his concern, even to the end, to provide loving family relationships and community for those who follow him.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What do these words to Mary and John show us about the heart of Jesus?

Why do you think John included this exchange in his Gospel?

How can you live out this sense of family love and relationships in the community in which you live?



PRAYER

*Triune God, from the beginning, you lived in community – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As your children made in your image, you wired us the same so that through our love for one another, the world will know we are yours. Fill us with your love so we love those around us. In your name we pray, **Amen.***





SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 27:45-46; MARK 15:33-34; PSALM 22:1

DAY 4 (HOLY WEDNESDAY): THE WORD OF ABANDONMENT

“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”



This is the only one of Jesus' words from the cross recorded by Matthew or Mark, and the only one in Jesus' native Aramaic. Matthew renders it *"Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?"* and Mark *"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?"* They both translate it "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"



Jesus, already abandoned by his closest friends, had been on the cross for hours when he uttered this heartbreaking cry. It's a quote from Psalm 22, in which David prophesied about the sufferings of the Messiah. On the cross, Jesus bore the awful punishment for all the sins ever committed by his people, and for the only time in all eternity, he experienced his Father's righteous wrath and abandonment.

Even though he knew he would soon rise and regain his loving relationship with his Father, the horror and anguish of the moment overwhelmed him. It's no wonder that just a few hours earlier, he had prayed in agony, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). It was both a human and a divine cry, an astounding mystery that drives us to repentance and worship of our Saviour.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What do you think of this cry of abandonment from Jesus, our Saviour and Lord?

How does this moment of humanity affect how you see Jesus?

Why was it so important for Matthew and Mark to record these final words?



PRAYER

*Lord God, you are the great rescuer and deliverer. Throughout Scripture, you saved your children when they called out to you, and yet in this moment, as Jesus took the punishment meant for us, you did not intervene. Forgive us when we take this ultimate atoning sacrifice for granted. In your holy name, **Amen.***





DAY 5 (HOLY THURSDAY): **THE WORD OF DISTRESS**

"I THIRST."

During crucifixions carried out under Roman law, it was customary to offer the condemned a mixture of wine and myrrh as a means to dull their suffering to a small degree. On his way to the cross, Jesus had been offered this mixture but had refused it, committed as he was to drink down the full cup of God's wrath against sin on behalf of his people. However, once he knew that his work of atonement on the cross was finished, he called out, "I thirst."

After so much horrific trauma, Jesus would have been severely dehydrated and in acute physical distress. In response to his request, a bystander filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and held it to his mouth. This time, Jesus accepted and drank it.

Unlike the earlier mixture of wine and myrrh, this was simply vinegar, with no pain-dulling properties, and it was offered to Jesus out of mockery. Nevertheless, as John points out in his Gospel, Jesus called for it in order to fulfill another of David's messianic prophecies, this time from Psalm 69. In his real human distress and near death, Jesus was still aware of his prophetic role as the Messiah.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

How can we see God's sovereignty even in this seemingly small moment?

How does it feel knowing Jesus willingly took on the full weight of God's wrath?

When we experience times of suffering, how can remembering this moment encourage us?



PRAYER

*Jesus, Lamb of God, you took on a punishment you did not deserve to give us salvation we did not earn. Through you and you alone, we have the gift of eternal life. We know you are with us in our current suffering, but we also trust your ultimate plan of redemption. In your mighty name we pray, **Amen.***





DAY 6 (GOOD FRIDAY):
THE WORD OF TRIUMPH

“IT IS FINISHED.”

This brief word from Jesus follows hard on the heels of the previous one, which was just as brief. Knowing that his atoning work on the cross was complete and his ordeal almost over, Jesus drank the sour wine out of the sponge that had been offered to him and exclaimed in triumph, “It is finished.”

There’s a palpable sense of joy and release in this cry. As Isaiah had prophesied 700 years earlier, “Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11).

As a man, Jesus rejoiced that his awful suffering was nearly over. But as the divine Son of God, he rejoiced even more than any human being could imagine. Jesus had accomplished the mission given to him by his Father, for which he had been sent into the world. It was a mission that had been planned before the creation of the universe, a mission to redeem a people from their sin, as well as the entire fallen creation, through the death of God the Son, to the glory of God the Father.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

How have you felt when something you worked hard for and struggled through was finally resolved?

How does it feel knowing God had a plan from the beginning to restore a broken world?

What does this moment mean for us when we feel stuck with loose ends and uncertainty?



PRAYER

*Holy Jesus, from before Adam and Eve existed, you already knew what you'd have to do. In these three words, we see the culmination of your beautiful plan of restoration for a broken humanity. Help us not forget your sovereign power, even in difficult times. In your great name we pray, **Amen.***





DAY 7 (HOLY SATURDAY):
THE WORD OF REUNION

“FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT!”

Jesus’ final word before his death expressed his full commitment to the will of his Father. It’s a quote from Psalm 31, another of David’s prophecies that foreshadowed the Messiah. Throughout his time on Earth, Jesus demonstrated his dependence on God the Father, both in words and actions.

As members of the Trinity, the Father and the Son have enjoyed a glorious relationship for all eternity. But at the right time, the Son laid aside his glory and humbled himself, becoming a man dependent on God. This dependence extended to his final breath when he commended his spirit into his Father’s hands.

It’s a sublime moment in which Jesus voluntarily relinquished his life, and a model for how we should entrust our lives to God, even when facing death. More than that, it’s an ecstatic moment in which Jesus anticipated his reunion with his Father. It’s the fulfillment of his desire from his earlier prayer: “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (John 17:5). Having died for our sins, Jesus would soon be raised and ascend to the Father, from where he rules and continues to intercede for us.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What do these final words show us about the Trinity?

How can this moment be an encouragement when we are walking through challenging seasons?

What is the impact of knowing our Saviour, our intercessor, took our punishment on his shoulders?



PRAYER

*Saviour Jesus, even in the darkest moment of your life, you surrendered your spirit to our Heavenly Father. When we are afraid and uncertain, and when the world around us feels terrifying, give us courage to follow your example and put our trust in God. In your powerful name we pray, **Amen.***





DAY 8 (EASTER SUNDAY):
THE WORD OF RESURRECTION

“MARY.”

Jesus’ final word as he hung on the cross had been to his Father in Heaven. His first word after emerging from the tomb was to one of his most prominent disciples and dearest friends. This was neither Peter nor John, but Mary Magdalene. Together with a group of women, Mary had returned to the tomb on Easter morning to anoint Jesus’ body for a proper burial according to Jewish custom.

On finding the tomb empty, the women encountered a pair of angels who told them Jesus had risen and to tell his disciples. Mary lingered by the tomb, overcome with grief, when Jesus came to meet her. At first, she didn’t recognize him, until he simply said her name, “Mary.” Through this warm, personal moment, Mary realized the truth. Her *rabboni* – her beloved teacher – had risen indeed.

In a culture that dismissed women’s testimony as worthless, Jesus gave Mary Magdalene and her circle of female friends the privilege and responsibility of being the first witnesses to his resurrection. In fact, Mary was the first person ever to see and speak with the risen Lord, and to tell of it to his apostles. As a result, she became known as “the apostle to the apostles.”



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

Why is it important that Jesus first appeared to a woman?

How do you think Mary felt when her eyes were opened to who stood in front of her?

What does this intimate moment between Jesus and Mary show us about his nature?



PRAYER

*Risen Saviour, when the world feels overwhelming and grief overshadows our joy, remind us of this simple moment when you spoke Mary's name, knowing you speak each of our names as well. Thank you for the unbelievable gift of your salvation through a personal relationship with you. **Amen.***





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YOUR FAMILY A

Blessed Easter!



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