

## WORDS FROM THE CROSS - PART 1

### Forgiven!

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Luke 23:34
Subject:	What request Jesus made to His Father as He was hanging on the cross
Complement:	Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.
Exegetical idea:	When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they were doing."
Preaching idea:	<b>Jesus wants to forgive all your sins!</b>
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to accept the forgiveness that Jesus offers them.

About ten days ago, Pastor Dany Hernandez stood at the bedside of a 24 year old young man who was dying. Standing by Pastor Dany's side was this young man's fiancée and also his parents. As you can imagine, it was a very intense and emotional visit. At the end of their time together, Pastor Dany mentioned that, in a couple of days, he would be speaking to a group of about 400 young adults and asked this young man if he would like to share any words with that group. The young man's spoke in a voice that was barely audible, but the message that he shared brought tears to Pastor Dany's eyes. Two days later, Pastor Dany shared those words with the hundreds of young adults gathered for worship at our Deeper service and many lives were forever changed.

You can learn a great deal about people by listening to their last words. I've heard patients in the hospital cursing God until their dying breath. That tells you a great deal about a person's heart. I learned this past week the last words of the great English preacher, John Wesley. He ended his earthly life with these words: "The best of all is, God is with us!"

Yes, you can learn a great deal about people by listening to their last words. Today, I invite you to stand with me in your imagination beside another young man who is dying. This young man is 33 years old. He isn't lying in a hospital bed in Orlando, Florida. This young man

is hanging on a cross outside of Jerusalem. His name is Jesus. I invite you to listen to the words that Jesus speaks from the cross. His voice may also be barely audible at times, but if you listen carefully, your life will be forever changed.

No one Gospel writer records all of the words of Jesus from the cross. Matthew records one saying. Mark records that same saying. Luke records 3 additional sayings of Jesus from the cross and the apostle John records 4 more sayings. Eight sayings in all, though some commentators link two sayings together in order to speak of the seven last words of Jesus from the cross. I'm thankful that the Holy Spirit inspired each of these Gospel writers to record their testimony because we can learn valuable lessons from all of these words of Jesus from the cross! It is my prayer that as we make this journey together, our lives will be forever changed!

It appears that the first words of Jesus from the cross are recorded in the Gospel of Luke. If you read the Gospel record, you'll discover that Jesus has just been through a mockery of a trial. He has been beaten and abused. False witnesses have testified against Him, even though Pilate has declared "I find no basis for a charge against this man." Jesus has been spat upon and flogged, and now, having stumbled up Golgotha's hill, He is being nailed to a cross. As you may know, Dr. Luke was not present at the cross. According to his own testimony, he gathered information from eyewitnesses as the Holy Spirit guided him in the writing of record of the life and teachings of Jesus. We don't know which eyewitness Luke talked to. Was it Mary, the mother of Jesus, or Mary the wife of Clopas, or Mary Magdalene? Or perhaps it was the Roman centurion who would later declare, "Surely this was a righteous man!" We'll have to ask Dr. Luke when we gather together in the kingdom of heaven! But I'm thankful that Dr. Luke records the first words of Jesus from the cross because those words of Jesus have changed my life!

Those words are recorded in Luke 23:34. “Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’”

The first words that Jesus speaks from the cross are a prayer. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Notice the first word in that prayer of Jesus—Father. This is not the first time that Jesus has prayed to His Father. In Luke 10:21, Jesus prayed, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.” Shortly before His arrest, Jesus had prayed, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” John 17:1 And in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” Luke 22:42

Jesus had also taught His disciples to pray to “Our Father in heaven.” And now, hanging on the cross, Jesus prays to His Father. But Jesus is not praying for Himself. Jesus is praying for others. Let’s listen again to His words. “Father, forgive them.” Who is Jesus referring to when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM”? Well, let’s look at the context in Luke chapter 23. Roman soldiers have just crucified Jesus, pounded huge metal spikes through his hands and his feet and then suspended him naked between heaven and earth. Luke records that those same soldiers stood at the foot of the cross and mocked Jesus. “If you’re the king of the Jews, save yourself!” Cold, callous words from cold, callous hearts. They also gambled for His clothing, totally unconcerned about His suffering and shame. Perhaps Jesus is referring to those Roman soldiers when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.” What do you think?

But there are others gathered at the foot of the cross who can hear the words of Jesus. We read in the second part of Luke 23:35, “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.” These rulers had seen clear evidence that Jesus was no ordinary teacher. They had heard Pilate declare, “I find no basis for a charge against this man” (Luke 23:4). The false witnesses that they had bribed to testify against Jesus couldn’t even agree on their false testimony. And now these rulers are standing at the foot of the cross sneering at Jesus: “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.” Perhaps Jesus is referring to them when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.” What do you think?

Matthew records in Matthew 27:41-43 that the chief priests and teachers of the law are also gathered at the foot of the cross, along with the elders. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.” But even if Jesus had come down from the cross, they would not have believed in Him. That had seen evidence upon evidence that He was the Christ. The sick had been healed. Demoniacs had been set free. The Gospel had been preached. But the hearts of the chief priests and many of the teachers of the law were hardened against the truth. And now they stand at the foot of the cross, mocking Jesus: “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.” Perhaps Jesus is referring to them when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.” What do you think?

But there are others listening to the words of Jesus from the cross. Luke records in Luke 23:39, “One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: ‘Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!’” Matthew records, in Matthew 27:44 that both criminals who were crucified on either side of Jesus heaped insults on him. They were being executed for crimes that they had

committed, but Jesus was without fault. Yet still they hurled insults at Jesus! Perhaps Jesus is referring to them when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.” What do you think?

But there are others passing by the cross. Matthew records that these passers by had something to say. We read in Matthew 27:39, “Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!’” Perhaps Jesus is referring to them when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.” What do you think?

And then there are those, according to Luke, who stood watching. (Luke 23:35). They said nothing, but just stood there in silence. They could have said something. Many had witnessed the wonderful works of Jesus. Many had listened to His powerful teachings about the kingdom of heaven and had testified that Jesus spoke with authority unlike their teachers of the law. They could have spoken up in defense of Jesus. They could have given their testimony, but they just stood watching, in silence. Perhaps Jesus is referring to them when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.”

So which of these groups is Jesus referring to when He says, “Father forgive them”? Well, the answer is found in the text! We passed quickly over the verb at the beginning of Luke 23:34. That verb helps us to answer our question. To which of these groups is Jesus referring when He says, “Father, forgive them”? What does it say in your Bible? “Jesus said.” In the Greek text, that verb is in the imperfect tense (iterative imperfect). The imperfect tense implies repetition or continued action. In English, we might say, “Jesus kept on saying, ‘Father, forgive them.’” As Jesus was nailed to the cross by the calloused Roman soldiers, Jesus breathed a prayer to His Father in Heaven: “Father, forgive them.” As He was mocked and scorned by the rulers, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them.” As

criminals crucified on either side of Him heaped insults on Him, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them.” As passers by ridiculed Him, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them.” As He looked down at the people stood silent at the foot of the cross, some of whom may even have experienced blessings from His hand, and yet they stood silent rather than speaking up, when Jesus saw them standing at the foot of the cross in silence, He prayed, “Father, forgive them.”

So who is included in this prayer of Jesus from the cross? The soldiers, the rulers, the chief priests and teachers of the law, the criminals crucified on either side of Jesus, the passers by who mocked Him and those who just stood there, silent—they’re all included in the prayer of Jesus, aren’t they? “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

But you say, “Pastor, they knew what they were doing!” Didn’t they? Did they really believe that Jesus was a criminal, worthy of death? They knew that what they were doing was wrong. It was evil. They knew what they were doing, didn’t they? Or did they really understand the immensity of their guilt? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Did they comprehend that they were brazenly mocking the One before whom angels bow and cry “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty”? Did they comprehend that they were killing the Author of life? Did they really understand what they were doing? Did they understand any more than our first parents understood the torrent of sadness, sin and death that would be unleashed on the human family?

“Father,” Jesus prays from the cross, “forgive them for they know not what they do.”

“Father, forgive the soldiers, the rulers, the chief priests and teachers of the law, the criminals crucified on either side of Jesus, the passers by who mocked Him and those who just stood there, silent. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

But are they the only ones included in the prayer of Jesus on the cross? “Father, forgive them.” What about us? What about you? What about me? Are we not included in the prayer of Jesus? “Father, forgive them.” Seven hundred years before Jesus hung on that cross, the Holy Spirit inspired the prophet Isaiah to write these words, recorded in Isaiah 53:4-6. “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The prayer of Jesus from the cross is also for us! “Father, forgive THEM.” We are included in that prayer, aren’t we? Yes! Praise God, we are included in that prayer! Father, forgive them. Father, forgive Derek. Father, forgive Susan. Father, forgive Daniel. Father, forgive Gene. Father, forgive the members of the Forest Lake Church family. We are all included in that prayer of Jesus from the cross! “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!

The prophet Isaiah testified in Isaiah 53:12, “Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he 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.” Forgiveness is extended. Forgiveness is provided—for all of us. Will

you choose to accept that forgiveness for your sins? The apostle John who also stood with the mother of Jesus at the foot of the cross and heard that prayer of Jesus, the apostle John testified, as recorded in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Someone ought to say, “Hallelujah!” Someone ought to say, “Thank you, Jesus!” “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Jesus prayed for you on the cross. And for you, and for you, and for me. Jesus prayed for us on the cross. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Will you accept that forgiveness? Will you confess your sins to Jesus your Savior today and rejoice that He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.? And He will do more than forgive us. He will do more than purify us. He will save us by His grace to spend an eternity with Him. But that is another topic in our series on Words from the Cross. And I hope that you’ll join us for part 2 in this series.

But today, I pray that this truth will sink deep into your mind and heart. **Jesus wants to forgive all your sins.** Did you hear me? **Jesus wants to forgive all your sins.** He does not want to hold your sins against you. He wants to forgive you and purify you. He wants to make you clean.

Jesus suffered all of the agony of crucifixion, the public humiliation and shame of the cross. He endured the cross, despising the shame, all because of love. And while hanging naked on that cross, bleeding and bruised, He prayed for you and He prayed for me: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. You will bring great joy to the heart of Jesus if you

accept His gracious offer of forgiveness. You will bring joy to the heart of Jesus if you let Him purify you from all unrighteousness. **Jesus wants to forgive all your sins.**