

Good Friday
March 30, 2018
*CW-S – “Lamb of God”

Luke 23:46
748*-99-100/114-319

May Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us and grant us His peace. Amen.

“Father, Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit”

- I. A prayer of triumph for Jesus on Good Friday.
- II. A prayer of confidence for us each day.

Dear Christian friends,

In our Lenten worship this year we’ve looked at Jesus’ **seven words** from the cross. Those words cover SUCH A RANGE of emotions. They give us a glimpse into Jesus’ **soul** and **mission**. The amazing love – **“Father, forgive them.”** The priceless promise – **“Today – with Me – in paradise.”** The tender care – **“Your son - your mother.”** The utter hell – **“Why – forsaken Me?”** The simple human need – **“I thirst.”** The bold declaration – **“Finished!”** Now it’s time for Jesus’ LAST word.

Have you ever thought about what **you’d like** YOUR LAST words to be? **Perhaps** telling your spouse/children **one last time**, “I love you.” Maybe reminding them, “JESUS loves you.” Or maybe a quiet confession of faith – an encouragement for them, “SEE you in heaven!” Or how about the SIMPLE WORDS that **really say it all**, “JESUS LIVES!” Any of that **would work** – and I’m sure there are more too.

Jesus’ final word was a PRAYER. **“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”** Those words were 1) a prayer of triumph for Jesus on Good Friday and they are 2) a prayer of confidence for us each day.

I. A prayer of triumph for Jesus on Good Friday.

A prayer of TRIUMPH. Hanging on His cross – dying on His cross – Jesus didn’t look very **triumphant**. In just a few minutes as Jesus’ BATTERED and BLOODIED body hangs limp and **lifeless** on His cross – the eye sees NO triumph. He’s DEAD! **If** there had been TV crews or **newspaper reporters** out at Calvary **HOW** would they have reported their stories? “Jesus – the One some thought was the **Son of God** – the long-promises **Messiah** – is DEAD – dead by crucifixion.” No doubt ANY PICTURES of Jesus – the nails – the **crown of thorns** – His scourged back – the spear gash - those **pictures** would have come with the WARNING – **“not suitable** for all eyes.” The reports – the pictures – from Calvary would not show a TRIUMPHANT Jesus but a now DEAD LOSER. Those who had trusted in Him had been SUCH FOOLS. **How** could Jesus save others when He OBVIOUSLY couldn’t even save Himself?!

SO it looks to the eye. But listen again to Jesus’ LAST words. There’s no defeat in them – only TRIUMPH! **“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”** How Jesus LOVED TO PRAY and talk things over with His heavenly Father. **HOW FITTING** that His **final words** are one last prayer to His Father. Yes, **“Father!”** The world still scorns and **mocks** Jesus but Jesus IS and REMAINS the Father’s **“beloved Son in whom (He) is well-pleased”** – and especially now – especially today.

Do you hear, yes, the relief – but **especially** the SATISFACTION – the triumph – in Jesus’ final word? **“Father”** – “Father, what we had planned already back in eternity **before** We had even created this world – **‘Father’** – what We had promised already **way back** in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve listened to the devil instead of to Us – **‘Father’** – I present our plan to You as an ACCOMPLISHED fact. **‘Father,’** it’s done. My mission is **accomplished** and NOW I triumphantly pray, **‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’”**

That plan was GOD'S ANSWER to the world's sin and **rebellion**. As we heard in the other readings that plan was pictured in **OT worship** with its temple – **priests** – **sacrifices**. The temple had TWO MAIN PARTS – the **“Holy Place”** and the **“Most Holy Place.”** That **“Most Holy Place”** contained the ark of the covenant and symbolized GOD DWELLING among His people. But that **Most Holy Place** was also strictly OFF LIMITS to everybody – **priests** and people – **prophets** and kings. A thick, heavy curtain BLOCKED the **way into** the Most Holy Place. ONLY the **high priest** was allowed in and that ONLY ONCE a year on the **“Day of Atonement”** – and ONLY IF he brought blood to **“make atonement for the uncleanness and rebellion of”** the people.

WHAT was God teaching His people? **Sin** is SERIOUS BUSINESS. Ignoring and **defying** God has its CONSEQUENCES. Sin cuts us off from God – sin wrecks our relationship with God. We can't shrug off our sins as **no big deal** because GOD DOESN'T shrug them off. Unless sin is **“atoned”** for the way to God in heaven is BLOCKED. That leaves only hell WIDE OPEN to **welcome guilty** sinners.

God never took back His commandments – He **never dropped His demand** for a **life absolutely holy** IN EVERY WAY from each one of us. It's STILL ONLY people perfect in God's eyes who will live forever in heaven. But what DID God do? He promised us a SUBSTITUTE – a substitute who is none other than His own Son born our flesh and blood Brother.

IN OUR PLACE Jesus actually lived that holy life. Jesus perfectly obeyed every commandment. Even His enemies had to admit that they could **“find no fault”** with Him. Then CAME TODAY – the punishment of the **world's** sin – the ALL-SUFFICIENT **“atoning sacrifice”** offered up for **“the sins of the whole world.”** The INNOCENT Jesus was punished for all sins of all people. The **innocent** Jesus suffered the hell and died the death that PAYS for **all** our sins **in full**. Jesus is forsaken – WE are **forgiven**. Those innocent lambs slaughtered and **sacrificed** in the temple PICTURED this day. The innocent lamb died – the guilty sinners LIVED. Jesus – the Son of God in the flesh – dies – WE LIVE. The way to God and heaven is open again. God emphasized that point with a **seemingly insignificant** miracle. **“The curtain in the temple”** – the one that blocked the way into the Most Holy Place – **“was torn in two.”** Jesus didn't die AS A VICTIM to be pitied but as our TRIUMPHANT SAVIOR to be trusted and **adored**.

“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” was a prayer of triumph for Jesus on Good Friday. That makes it...

II. A prayer of confidence for us each day.

Now WE can pray, **“Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit”** – confident of God's FORGIVENESS. Standing at Jesus' **blood-stained** cross – seeing His **tortured** and now **lifeless** body – we see the REAL PRICE of our sin. Those TIMES when we pushed God off to the side in our lives – when we DIDN'T HAVE time for God and His Word – those **times** we drank too much – we worried and complained instead of **trusting** God – those **times** we didn't do our BEST at school or work – ALL our sins were there at Calvary – there ON Jesus' **body** and **soul**.

Our sins – EVERY one of them – have been paid in full. They've all been washed away in Jesus' shed blood. God's forgiveness is **not** a POSSIBILITY (maybe) – **not** CONDITIONAL (if we whatever) – **not** PARTIAL (only some of them). **God's forgiveness** is an accomplished, historical FACT. Jesus has taken care of **everything**. Trusting in Jesus we ARE forgiven. NO MATTER what or how often or how great our sins EVERY DAY we can be confident of **God's forgiveness** BECAUSE of Jesus and His cross.

Every day we can now pray, **“Father”** – confident of God's LOVE – **confident** in our relationship with God. We don't need to live each day FEARFUL of God – wondering what kind of MOOD God is in – **wondering** if God is OUT TO GET us – **wondering** if God REALLY does care about us. **Whenever** we're tempted to doubt or **question** God's love all we need do is go stand at Jesus' cross. **“God**

demonstrated His own love for us in this,” Paul wrote, **“while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”**

Every day we can now pray, **“Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit”** – confident of God’s FAITHFULNESS. God always keeps His promises. God never forgets – never GOES BACK on His Word. God may TAKE HIS TIME as we see it. God may use some STRANGE WAYS – lead us on some **strange paths** – but God ALWAYS comes through on His Word. Look again at **Jesus’ life** and His **cross** – God’s promise of a Savior fulfilled.

“Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit,” we can now confidently pray EVERY DAY. We have no real idea what each day will all bring us – GOOD or bad – JOY or **sorrow** – RELIEF or **suffering**. So much of life is OUT OF our hands – **out of** our control. Will you have a job next week? Will the crops you plant this spring produce a good harvest this fall? Will the NEWS from the doctor be good or bad? What a JOY – what RELIEF – to put ourselves into the loving hands of our **heavenly Father** – to know we ARE SAFE in the hands of our **almighty God**.

Actually does this sound familiar? Do you remember learning Luther’s Morning and Evening Prayers in the catechism? When we get up in the morning and go to bed at night we pray, “INTO THY HANDS I commend my body and soul and all things.” (I like to add “my family” to that – “**Into Thy hands I commend** my body and soul, my family, and all things.”) AWAKE or **asleep** we are safe in the hands of our heavenly Father.

One day it will be OUR TURN to **depart** this life. WHAT BETTER WAY than as Jesus here prays, **“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit”**? Clinging to Jesus what happened to Jesus when He died – **what happened** to that repentant criminal when he died – will ALSO HAPPEN to us when we die. We will **“breathe (our) last.”** At that VERY MOMENT our soul will leave our body and it will immediately be with our Father in heaven – **immediately be with Jesus** **“in paradise.”** JUST AS we call the day of **Jesus’** death GOOD Friday – so the day we day will also be a GOOD day. Make that a GREAT – a FANTASTIC day. We’re going to heaven!

“When He had said this, He breathed His last.” We’ve heard Jesus speak from His cross – now we hear NOTHING MORE. Jesus is dead. His **lifeless body** is quickly buried in the **borrowed grave** of Joseph of Arimathea. SOMEDAY when we’ve gone to heaven and our dead body is buried it will **be buried** “IN THE SURE HOPE of the resurrection to eternal life.” That’s true for us because it was SO TRUE for Jesus. Today ends not with “THE END” but with a “TO BE CONTINUED.” Jesus repeatedly promised, **“On the third day I will rise again”** – so see you on Easter morning! Amen.