

**Words of Trust**  
Part 7 - When Love Speaks  
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Luke 23:44-49

*"It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, praise God and said, 'Surely this was a righteous man.' When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things." —Luke 23:44-49*

Throughout this Season of Lent we have been looking at the last words spoken by Jesus from the cross. Today we come to the very last of his last words.

Throughout history there have been many famous last words recorded for posterity. Some profound, some not. General John Sedgwick, a Civil War commander for the Union army was sitting on his horse, looking out across a battle field. The Confederate troops were lined up on the other side. Arrogantly he said, "They couldn't hit an elephant at that distance!" Next second, he was dead, shot and killed by a enemy bullet. He sure didn't see that coming.

Jesus, on the other hand, knew what was coming when he spoke his last words. They reveal to us where Jesus placed his trust. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Luke's gospel, verse 46 we read these last of the last words, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." And with those words he breathed his last.*

There was a centurion standing by, watching Jesus die. He had observed hundreds if not thousands of crucifixions, and yet this one was different. This one was unlike any he had ever seen. It was unique. In an attempt to explain its uniqueness, he said, *"Surely this was a righteous man."*—Luke 23:47

What did the centurion see in Jesus that he had not seen in hundreds, even thousands of other people he had seen crucified? One thing he saw was Jesus refusing the pain killer offered by the soldiers as they were about nail him to the cross. That was very unusual. Then he noticed how Jesus willingly laid down on the cross. No one had ever done that. Then in the course of the day he heard the seven statements Jesus made as he hung dying on the cross. He was there when Jesus gave the words of forgiveness, "***Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.***"—Luke 23:37. Criminals don't say things like that about their executioners.

Then there were the words of assurance Jesus spoke to the thief hanging on the cross next to him, "***Today you will be with me in paradise.***"—Luke 23:43. Criminals don't say things like that to the people dying with them. Next came words of love spoken by Jesus to his mother and to his closest disciple, caring words in the midst of his own pain and agony, "***Dear woman, here is your son,***" and to the disciple, "***Here is your mother.***"—John 19:26-27. In this Jesus provided for his mother's care and gave support to his closest follower. Criminals don't usually care about others when they are dying. But Jesus did.

Next, he heard words of substitution as Jesus took upon himself the sins of the world, "***Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani?***"—which means, '***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***'"—Matthew 27:46. God had turned away from Jesus at that moment leaving Jesus to suffer for the sins of the world. Then there were words revealing Jesus' humanity as he admitted, "***I am thirsty.***"—John 19:28. The centurion then heard Jesus say, "***It is finished.***"—John 19:30. These were words of victory. Jesus had completed our salvation. He had finished the work he was given. He had satisfied the law of God. He had conquered sin and death. He had defeated the devil.

Now, in a loud voice, Jesus says, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."*—Luke 23:46. At that moment his spirit left him and he died. Jesus had entrusting his spirit to his father's care. The centurion could contain himself no longer. He began to praise God, saying, *"Surely this was a righteous man."* The centurion had put it all together. He realized this was no ordinary man. This was not the natural way people die. This was supernatural. This was the Son of God, the righteous Son of God whose death he had just witnessed. And they beat their breasts in shame.

By his death, Jesus gives us a model of how we are to die. He didn't fight it when it was his time to die. He was not afraid of dying. He wasn't angry or bitter. He didn't complain or lash out at others. He knew where he was going. He was at peace. He had accomplished all that he was given to do and he had no unfinished business. He simply entrusted his spirit into the hands of his Father and died.

#### **JESUS' DEATH CAN BE DESCRIBED IN THREE STATEMENTS:**

**FIRST, HE GAVE HIS LIFE VOLUNTARILY.** Nobody took it from him. Nobody forced him to give his life. He gave it up voluntarily. He laid it down voluntarily.

When the movie, *The Passion*, first came out, there was a huge controversy over who was to blame for Jesus' death. Was it the Jews or was it the Romans? **NEITHER.** Let me tell you who was responsible for Jesus' life. He was. He voluntarily laid down his life so that you and I could be forgiven and have eternal life. Earlier Jesus had said, *"No one can take my life from me. I lay down my life voluntarily, for I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also the power to take it back again."*—John 10:18. And that is exactly what he did. He laid it down on Good Friday only to take it back up again on Easter. He knew exactly what he was doing. He was in complete control. Nobody could do

anything to Jesus without his permission. He literally has the last word. He voluntarily laid down his life for us.

**SECOND, HE GAVE HIS LIFE REVERENTLY.** When Jesus said, "*Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit*," he was quoting Psalm 31:5. This Psalm was a prayer that every Jew prayed every night before they went to bed. Every night before they would shut their eyes to go to sleep, they would pray, "*Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit*." Every Jew knew this prayer and they would pass it down from one generation to the next.

When I was a child, my mother would kneel with me at my bed every night and she would pray for me: "*Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take*." As I got older I learned to say it with my mother. Eventually I was able to say it on my own and my mother would kneel with me and listen to me pray. I was learning to put my trust in God who alone can save us. I was learning to reverently put my trust in God. Whether I lived or died, I was entrusting my spirit to God for safe keeping. When Jesus said, "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit*," he was reverently entrusting his spirit to his heavenly Father for safe keeping.

Not only did Jesus give his life voluntarily and reverently but **HE ALSO GAVE HIS LIFE CONFIDENTLY**. He had complete confidence in his father's ability to raise him up to new life. I've been around a lot of dying people over the years. I've witnessed for people dying than probably any one here today. One thing I've noticed is that when people die, they don't shout. In all my time with people taking their last breath, I've never once heard anybody shout. They whisper. They mouth words. They moan something quietly, and sometime inaudibly. But they certainly do not shout. But Jesus called out in a loud voice. That's really unusually, especially when you understand what it was like to die a slow, agonizing,

gruesome death by crucifixion. Normally a person being crucified would whimper or groan or mumble something before they breathed their last, but Jesus shouted out in confidence for all those witnessing his death to hear. He modeled for us complete confidence in the God who is there, who will never leave us or forsake us.

What did Jesus know that enabled him to die voluntarily, reverently and confidently?

**FIRST, JESUS KNEW HIS HEAVENLY FATHER LOVED HIM.** When Jesus called out to his heavenly Father, "*Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit,*" he knew his Father loved him. He knew he could count on that love no matter what. In his darkest moments, Jesus knew his father loved him.

When Jesus was being our substitute, when he was taking our sins upon his body on the cross, he cried out "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" In that moment, he was separated from the Father. That is why he cried, "My God, my God...", rather than "*My father, my Father...*" Now the judgment is over, the penalty has been paid, the substitution has been made, and our salvation had been accomplished. Reconciliation has been completed. Now Jesus goes back to using the loving, intimate term of Father. "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*" The Bible tells us, "*As a father has compassion on his children, the Lord has compassion on those who honor him.*"—Psalm 103:13. Jesus died voluntarily, reverently and confidently because he knew his heavenly Father loved him no matter what. Jesus teaches us to trust in the love and compassion of our heavenly Father no matter what we are going through.

**SECOND, JESUS KNEW HIS HEAVENLY FATHER COULD BE TRUSTED.** He knew his heavenly Father didn't just love him, but he could be trusted. "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,*" is an expression of complete and total trust. All throughout Jesus' earthly life he witnessed his

heavenly Father taking care of him. Through his narrow escape to Egypt as an infant, through being lost in Jerusalem as a adolescent, through his mysterious getaway when the crowds tried to stone him, through his brush with dangerous demoniacs, through his close encounters with lepers, through his storms at sea, through his multiple beatings, through his it all, his heavenly Father watched over him.

If you are going to completely entrust your life and your future to someone, it better be someone who (a) has your best interest at heart, (b) knows everything, (c) is perfect, and (d) will never lie to you. That kind of limits your options...to God. No one else is completely trustworthy. People may love you, but they are only human. Only God is completely trustworthy. The Bible says, *"For the word of the Lord holds true, and everything he does is worthy of our trust."*—Psalm 33:4.

When Jesus said, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,"* he was using a Greek word that means "to entrust", or "to yield." This word is most often used it means "to deposit." Jesus deposited his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father for safe keeping. His knew his heavenly Father could be trusted to see him through to the other side of death, to the realm of glory.

So here is the question: what do you need to entrust to the Lord today? What do you need to deposit into the hands of your heavenly Father today? I'll give you a little hint - it's whatever you're worrying about that you need to entrust into God's care. Whatever you worry about—that's what you need to deposit into God's safe keeping. God has a track record of being faithful. He loves you and he can be trusted. And if you have never yielded your life to the Lord, if you have never given your heart to the Lord, if you have never deposited your soul in the hands of the Lord for safe keeping, now is the time. Today is the day to *"seek the*

*Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.*—Isaiah 55:6.

Entrust your soul to the safe keeping of your heavenly Father.