

## **Listening at Golgotha Good Friday Meditations Jesus' Words from the Cross**

### **Introduction:**

In many churches all around the world on Good Friday, people listen to Jesus' seven last sentences from the cross. Often these are really long services – from noon till three o'clock – with a small sermon on each of the seven words.

We will not do this today, but will have a reading on each of the seven words, a short meditation on it, and then some music to help us let the text and meditation sink in.

The words of a dying person are always significant but never more so than when that person is Jesus... They are full of mystery, and they leave no one untouched.

Let us hear in them the saving word of a God whose loving invitation to life in all its fullness wants to make us new.

### **Luke 23: 34**

**Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.**

We know what they are doing. They were busy with things only too familiar to our world: violence, war and brutality... we know about such things only too well. Jesus did too. But he was different.

Jesus taught as he believed, lived as he taught, and died as he lived: with total integrity. He forgave then, and he forgives now.

With those words, "Father forgive them," a new way of life, patterned by Jesus, has been passed on to us from his cross. Difficult though it may be, the practice of loving your enemy lies at the centre of our salvation story.

Remember when Martin Luther King and his followers in the civil rights movement staked their lives on the power of enemy love? Because of Jesus, King knew there was something more important than defeating people. He believed that forgiving love would change them instead.

In South Africa, the millions of black people who suffered horrific pain and injustice under the awful policy of apartheid, have made forgiving their enemies the key to rebuilding their nation.

And so must we: Forgive.

### **Music**

### **Luke 23: 43**

**Today you will be with me in Paradise.**

Jesus hangs there on the cross with the least and the lowest, with those whom society has cast out. Two criminals - in a last conversation with Jesus.

Some tell us that following Jesus is a simple matter of inviting him into our heart. But when we do that, Jesus always asks: "May I bring my friends?"

And when we look at them, we see that they are not the kind of company we like to keep.

The friends of Jesus are the outcasts, the marginalized, the poor, the homeless, the rejected – the lepers of life.

We hesitate and ask: “Jesus, must we really have them?” And Jesus replies: “Love me, love my friends!”

What changes in our loving and living does the idea about letting in the “lepers of life” evoke?

## **Music**

### **John 19: 26**

**Woman, here is your son... Here is your mother.**

This passage might come as a shock to those of us who consider close family life more important than anything else.

But we shall see that these unusual words are actually the hope of a new world.

These words are Jesus’ last will and testament to his mother. He has owned nothing but the clothes on his back, but he leaves his mother a new son. And he gives his friend a new mother.

Jesus’ last gift to them is a new community, a community with space for all...

From his cross Jesus created a community that was to become family to the widow, the orphan, the outcast, and the stranger.

Only when we have learned to offer welcome to the modern equivalent of people such as these, do we come close to Christ’s intention.

At his cross a new community, with the widest embrace in all the world, was being born.

## **Music**

### **Matthew 27: 46**

**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**

Here the pain of the world’s sin hurts more than nails in flesh.

Here is suffering deeper than any seen before or since.

Here is desolation so terrible that heaven itself draws a veil over the scene.

Darkness came over the whole land.

Jesus’ cry tears all thoughts away that he could have coped easily with all the suffering and pain there on the cross.

Here we hear a cry of abandonment and total despair.

It is the cry of a deserted child of God.

No one has ever been this much alone.

There comes the deep loneliness of wondering if all his life had been in vain...

Is the darkness that came in that moment, a sign that not even God could bear to witness?

How desolate, how utterly abandoned must Jesus have felt...

## **Music**

**John 19: 28**  
**I am thirsty.**

If there is any doubt of the humanity of Jesus, here is the proof of it. When Jesus cries “I am thirsty”, he binds himself to the hurting of every generation and the sufferers of every century.

Cries for water resound on every battle field, on every death bed...

To thirst is to be one of us, and in the very human life of Jesus, God, of all the universe, knew thirst.

As Jesus cried out in thirst, maybe some out there in the crowd recalled that it hadn't always been like this.

Perhaps a young couple, family friends, recall their wedding day just three years before, when the wine ran dry. No one had gone thirsty that day. The one who'd helped them all is now pleading desperately for a drink.

Jesus aches with compassion for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked ones, the sick and the prisoners, so much that he joins them to himself.

Jesus' thirst is God's thirst. God thirsts to see all people discover his love for them through forgiveness and new life.

May we respond to God's thirst with our love for him and his world.

**Music**

**John 19: 30**  
**It is finished!**

Jesus had spent six hours on the cross.

It is a strange and bitter irony that the instruments used to bring this agony should be those with which Jesus was most familiar. Wood and nails were once the tools of his trade. The sound of hammer blows were part of his life. He was accustomed to the feel of nails in his hands.

He was a shaper of wood... and he knew what it felt like to step back from a piece which had just been made, viewing it a last time and saying “It's finished!”

Jesus the carpenter is still at work and would even turn this wood of the cross into something good.

The power of love changed the world forever.

**Music**

**Luke 23: 46**  
**Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.**

On Good Friday, in Jesus' breaking heart, the world is completed.

Love wrestles to the death with evil and still remains love.

Evil is overcome. God's second work of creation is accomplished.

When God sees what Jesus has done, he weeps. It is very good.

Evil's last reserves have been used up, and only love remains.

And Jesus rests forever...

“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

We see intimate trust and a total oneness of God and his child.  
To them we can commit our spirit.  
In the end there is love and the promise of something new.  
This is my hope today and my hope for the world.

**Silence**

**Hymn: Where you there...**