

Christmas & Calvary

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[0 : 00] Shall we turn once again to that portion of scripture that we read together in the gospel of Luke chapter 23.

And we shall read once again these blessed words in verse 34.

And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

I wondered and I wrestled for quite a while when your minister asked me to come and preach here many, many weeks ago.

And I was very anxious of what kind of service to do at this time of year. This time of year where we have Christmas and this time of year when we have the year coming to an end.

[1 : 22] And whether I should seek to put together something with regard to the birth of Christ or the second coming of Christ, his first coming or his second coming.

But in the lead up to Christmas, as I thought and as I watched so many people prepare for it, it was Christ on the cross that was coming before me.

It was Christ being crucified. It was Christ uttering these words. More that was coming to me rather than Christ as a helpless child.

And we live in a world, don't we, where so many people are willing to a degree, to a measure, to accept the birth of Christ.

The manger story. And there it ends. Christ is kept in the manger. And there is no more word of him.

[2 : 35] But we want to bring to your attention today that Christ didn't stay as a child. But he grew up to be a man who became our substitute.

And who has provided a way for each and every single one of us. To receive eternal life and glory at the end of life's journey.

So we look at Christ dying today. As opposed to Christ being born. As this year comes to an end.

We look at our Saviour's first words on the cross. In many ways, possibly the most remarkable of all seven sayings he said on the cross. Because it summarizes who he is.

And what he was. So we look at that under three headings. Christ's words to all at Calvary. Which we have in verse 34.

[3 : 41] And then we shall look very briefly towards the end of the service. At the ruler's words to Christ at Calvary. Which we have in this account in verse 35.

And then we shall look briefly at the soldier's words to Christ at Calvary. Which we have in verse 37. You don't need me to tell you that crucifixion was the most brutal form of death.

That there was in the Roman times. It was a form of death where people were either bound by ropes. Or nails were driven through their hands and feet.

As they were crucified. This was a death that was usually reserved for rebels and for slaves. And here we find before us.

This is the experience of our Savior being crucified. And we believe that he was crucified on a T-shaped cross.

[4 : 50] In the form and in the design of what we learned in school. The small letter T. Because we read that in verse 38 there was an inscription over him saying.

This is Jesus the King of the Jews. Where there was a placard above his head. But I didn't know until this year that the Romans also had three other types.

Four other types of crosses. For the torment of execution. And they came in four different shapes. They came in the capital letter T.

They came in the letter Y. Where both your feet were nailed at the bottom. They came in also in an X-shaped cross. And unbelievably they also were made in the shape of the letter I. Where both hands and both feet were pierced at the same time. This was the barbaric nature of the way in which our Savior was put to death.

[5 : 59] And our Savior was put to death in that timeline as we know it from the hours of 9 a.m. Until 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

And the Gospel of Mark tells us. That in the last three hours from noon until 3. That a great darkness descended upon the land.

And the Gospel of Luke that we have read. These few short verses. They record three of the Savior's seven sayings.

His first saying. His second saying to the dying thief. And also his final saying. Into your hands I commit my spirit.

And it's very interesting to note that. This takes place at a place called a skull. The place of a skull.

[6 : 56] And in the Aramaic language. This place that we read of here. Its name is Golgotha. And in the Latin it is Calveria.

From which we get the word Calvary. Here is where our Savior is being put to death. In order that sinners like you and me. Can have eternal hope in this world.

And as part of his execution. As part of his crucifixion. He has been put to death between two thieves. Fulfilling the prophecy that we learnt of in school.

That many of us learnt in Isaiah 53. Where we read. He poured out a soul into death. And he numbered with the transgressors. And yet he bore the sins of many.

As he makes intercession. For the transgressors. In fact even in the previous chapter. Our Savior had told. And had quoted these words to the disciples.

[7 : 58] Where in verse 37. He tells them. For I tell you that the scripture must be fulfilled. For he was numbered with the transgressors. And what is written about me.

Has its fulfillment. And yet we know of course that the disciples. Simply couldn't understand. And believe what he was talking about.

So with that in mind. We come to our first heading. Christ's words to all at Calvary. We read that in verse 34.

Father forgive them. For they know not what they do. They are indeed remarkable words.

They are words which. Inspire us. They are words which. Summarize Christ. In a nutshell. They are words which encourage us.

[9 : 00] As believers. And they are absolutely wonderful words. Father forgive them. For they know not what they do.

The gospel of Luke. Reveals to us. How compassionate Christ was. And his complete and utter desire. To forgive.

Sinners. Throughout his life. Throughout his ministry. And even now. As he nears death. And what we have before us.

In these short words. Of 10 or 11 words. Is a model prayer. And it teaches us how to pray. Choses us how to come before the Lord.

And how to address him as father. It teaches us of our need. Of as people. Of asking for forgiveness of our sins. And also it shows us.

[9 : 55] That it is inspired. Even. For love. For his enemies. And you know. We can all pause. And think of people.

That have wronged us in the past. And in many ways. When people wrong. Not just ourselves. But people within our families. It hurts more than actually wronging ourselves.

And how do we react. How different Christ was. When he was crucified on the cross. In verse 34.

As it begins. We'll read at verse 32. Two others who were criminals. Were led away to be put to death with them.

And when they were come to the place of a skull. There they crucified him. And the criminals one on the left hand. And one on the right hand. In these days. The Romans very often.

[10 : 55] Crucified people in three. And the one in the middle. Who was always. Looked upon. As the worst of all three. And here we have our saviour.

Between two criminals. In the ESV version. We read at verse 34. It begins with the word. And. But in the King James version.

It's a different word. And it's a wonderful word. It's the word. Then. Then. Jesus said. And it shows us.

How then. At the time. When man has done his very worst to Christ. When man. Has scourged him. Where man has beaten him.

Where man has blasphemed him. Where man has mocked him. Where man has spat on him. Then. Christ. Utters these words. When the man go as low.

[11 : 58] As humanly possible. It is then. Christ says. Father. Forgive them. For they know not. What they do. And we see here.

In the life of our saviour. As his public ministry. Began in prayer. So we see. That his ministry. Is now coming to an end.

And it begins. The end of the beginning. As it were. Begins with prayer as well. And it's remarkable. That forgiveness. Is our saviour's first thought.

From the moment. That his ministry begins. And forgiveness. Is our saviour's. Dying thought. As he nears death. That was.

Our saviour's desire. In all that he did. And in every place. That he went. To seek. And to save the lost.

[12 : 57] And to provide hope. And to provide salvation. For the chiefest of sinners. To whom is this.

Prayer. That Christ. Utters. Directed. Who is he speaking to. Well we see. The answer to this. In verse. Thirty five.

And the people. Stood by. Christ is here. Speaking to the people. And the people. Are made up of many different. Types of people.

Many different people. Including his enemies. Including his murderers. Look at the people. That are there.

His executioners. Look at his own Jewish people. That are there. Look at the Jewish leaders. Look at all the people. That were there. From part of the Sanhedrin.

[13 : 54] He is praying for them. Look at our Lord. As he uttered these words. And he uttered it. To the Roman politicians. That were there.

To the Roman soldiers. That were there. To all those who gathered. Who were part of the first. Of the trial. He uttered these words. And to the sickest.

Of all people. Those who would just gather. There to take glory. And watching others. Being suffering. And being put to death. In such a way. The Lord is here.

Speaking to every single one of them. And here it's as if the Lord. Is telling us. That even the vilest. Of the vile. That even the worst.

Of the worst. That none of them. Is beyond. The reach of Christ. He is here. Showing us. That it is possible. That even a people.

[14 : 49] Such as that. Can be saved. And does that not give us hope. And encouragement today. When we look at our own lives. Does that not encourage us.

Is that not enough. To make us flee. To go to Christ. At this moment in time. As this year comes to an end. Oh what a saviour we have.

As we look at. His divine intercession at work. Through this remarkable prayer. Of our saviour on the cross.

It really is truly incredible. How he was able to utter these words. These words when he could barely speak. These words when he could barely breathe.

These words where. He would physically have to. Breathe. By lifting his body up.

[15 : 48] From the base of his feet. And then exhale. How difficult it was for him to breathe. How remarkable the words that he spoke.

When he did breathe. And have you ever thought about. How remarkably calm Christ was. As he uttered these words. As he is in total.

Another agony. Here is Christ. And he is uttering these words. In calmness in his voice. There is not a hint of anger. There is not a hint of revenge.

There is not a hint. Of resentment. There is not a hint of. Trying to. Seek to cause some harm.

Here is our saviour. Father. And he could have called upon. At that moment in time. Legions of angels. To come and kill. All these people.

[16:47] He could have called upon. The father to open the ground. To swallow all these people. Whole as had happened before. He could have asked the father.

To have killed them all. There and then. But no. He could have uttered the words. Father consume them. But if he had done any of these things.

None of us in here would have hope. And I don't know how you picture Christ. And how you have pictured Christ over these days.

When we look at our books. And when we look at. Portraits and. Pictures that people think that he looked like. We see. This handsome man.

With a beard. And a crown of thorns. And a small trickle of blood. Coming down his head. But that's not Christ. That's not your saviour.

[17:48] That's not my saviour. Because our saviour. My friends. Barely resembled a human being. As he uttered these words on the cross.

He was one who was battered and bruised. He was one who was scourged. He was one whose body was whipped. One who had wounds on every part of his body.

One who was covered in blood. One whose face you could barely make out. That is your saviour. That is the length you endured.

And that is how we think of Christ. As he utters these words. If ever you need encouragement. To become a Christian.

This is it. What more can Jesus Christ do. For sinners than this. There is nothing else he can do.

[18:54] As he endures hell. And as. The venom of the people round about him. Apart from four women.

And John. Spew mockery. And insults. And spit on them. From the very pit of hell itself. That is your saviour.

That is the depths that he went to. That is what he endured. So that we can have. A place in his kingdom.

At the end of life's journey. And like Christ my friends. We have to learn. And it's not easy. And. The pride of our heart.

Will not allow us. Very often at the best of times. To forgive those who hurt us. And to forgive our enemies. But Christ's teaching.

[19:51] In the word of God. Is full of it. It was part of a sermon. That we read of in. Matthew chapter 5. He taught this so clearly.

Where on the sermon. On the mount. Christ says. You have heard it said. You love your neighbour. And you hate your enemy. But I say unto you. Love your enemies. And pray.

For them who persecute you. What Christ said. Christ did. How unlike.

Me and you. At the best. At best of times. How easy it is for us to snap. And say the wrong thing. At the wrong time. When we have been hurt.

And when we have been wronged. But not Christ. And we read of something similar. In the book of Acts.

[20:47] When. Stephen was being put to death. In the book of Acts. In verse 7. Chapter 7. In verse 60. We read. And falling on his knees. He cried with a loud voice.

Lord do not hold this sin against him. And he said this. And he fell asleep. Stephen learned from Christ. And who knows what we must yet have to endure.

And who knows what we. I have no idea what some of you are enduring. But how we respond. To people who wrong us. We learn from scripture.

How Christ did it. And that's what he seeks of us. What does it mean.

When Christ says. For they know not what they did. Because when we read this. We can almost understand. Christ saying.

[21:49] Father forgive them. We can almost expect. Our saviour to say words like this. But for they know not what they do.

That's a bit more puzzling. That almost shows us in a way. That the Lord is in some way. Making an excuse for their actions. That the Lord is in some way.

Taking a form of pity for them. That the Lord in one way or another. Is making an excuse for those. Who have pierced. His hands and feet. Because they know exactly what they were doing.

Because they were all in unison. And they were all crying crucify him. Crucify him. And they were all in unison. When they were wanting Barnabas to be. The murderer to be free.

Who raised the dead. Is he not the one. Who gave the sight. To the blind. Is he not the one. Who could cure people. Of illnesses. Of course he was. But there.

[29 : 02] At that moment. In time. There is Christ. And he is our substitute. He is there. On the cross. The just. For the unjust. And he is there.

As one. Who is interceding now. For all those people. And yet. He brings them. To the father's attention. In order that they come.

To faith in Christ. The worst. Of the worst. I wonder what. At what point. I was thinking. Did Christ. Out of these words. It's only of course.

Recorded once. In scripture. But I might be wrong. In saying this. But I can't help. But think. That my saviour.

Said this. Over and over again. Hard as it was for him. As the nails. Went through his hands. Father.

[29 : 56] Forgive them. As the nails. Went through his feet. Father. Forgive them. As they spat on him. Father. Forgive them. As they mocked him.

Father. Forgive them. And then they parted. As garment. And we read this.

In this portion. Of scripture too. Each condemned prisoner. That was going to be put to death. Was accompanied. To the cross. By four.

Roman soldiers. Two on the front. And two on the back. While he carried the cross. As if there was any form of escape. And then.

These soldiers. What they did. The Jews in particular. Had five items of clothing. That they wore. They wore. The turban.

[30 : 55] The girdle. The inner. Tunic. The outer robe. And the sandals. And all this clothing. Was taken off. These prisoners. Before they were placed.

On the cross. And as it was then. This clothing. Became the property. Of the Roman soldiers. And they could do. As they wished with it. And no doubt.

They would go on. To make a profit. Out of it. But the outer jacket. The outer robe. Or the cloak. This was something. That was the best.

Of clothing. And five items. Of clothing. Divided by four soldiers. Does not go. And so we read. That rather than. Ripping it into four places.

There at the foot. Of the cross. These men. They gather. And. They gamble. For the cloak. Of the Lord. It is without.

[31 : 52] Seam. And they cast lots. To see who would get it. And we read. Of. We sang that together. In Psalm. 22.

Every single saying. Of the Lord. Is one. That has. Fulfillment. From scripture. It is something. That has been prophesied. And Psalm.

22. We will read it. And they divide. My garments. Among them. And for my clothing. They cast lots. What was uttered. And recorded. Hundreds of years.

Before Christ died. It is remarkable. And there. As we think of that. For just a moment. It would appear.

That our Savior. Was naked. Or near naked. As he was crucified. On the cross. What a picture. For his own.

[32 : 48] Believing people. And then. Just in a word. Very quickly. A word. On the other two. Sayings. The second. Heading. The remark.

And what. What the other people. There thought. The ruler's words. To Christ. At Calvary. We find that. In verse 35. And the people.

Stood by. Watching. But the ruler. Scoffed at him. Saying. He saved himself. If he is the Christ. Let him save. He saved others. Let him save himself.

If he is the Christ. His chosen one. Look at. What they are saying. As they mock the Savior. In three different ways. They mock him.

First of all. By saying. He saved others. Yet he cannot save himself. Then they go on. And they mock him further still. Where they say. If he is the Christ. And then they mock him still.

[33 : 42] If he is the chosen one. It is remarkable. That his very mercy. Has become a mockery. To these people. It is very remarkable.

That these Jewish people. Don't begin to realize. Who they are being put to death. It did not enter their minds. For one moment.

That the true meaning. Of being the Messiah. The true Messiah of God. Was not for the saving of himself. But for the saving of others.

That is why he could not. Come down from the cross. Because had he done so. There would be no hope. For you and I. And they would have looked at him.

And they would have said. Well whoever Christ is. He is not the Messiah. And they were his own people. And they were part of the Sanhedrin.

[34 : 45] And yet they were spiritually ignorant. Of the truths of scripture. And the Roman soldiers were no better. We read in a word about what they said to Christ.

In our final heading. The soldiers words to Christ at Calvary. In verse 37. We read that. The soldiers mocked him. And they said. If you are king of the Jews.

Save yourself. They continued to mock the Lord too. They continued to. Offer him cheap wine. They did this in order.

In the hope that. Those who were being crucified. Would drink something extra. So that it would provide extra life. For them on the cross. To inflict further.

Torment upon them. Those criminals who were put to death. Unknowingly they would be taken.

With every sip of wine. That they would drink. It would make their lives.

[35 : 48] Last that bit longer. And that's why they offered it. They did not mock him as the Messiah. Like the Jewish people did. Because they didn't know him as the Messiah.

No. They mock him in a different way. They mock him as a helpless king. They mock him as a king without a crown. A king without an army.

A king without a kingdom. That's how they attack. And look at the attack. At the attack of everybody. Bar five people. Around the cross there.

The Jews mocked him for his claim to be the Messiah. The Romans for his claim to be regarded as the king. And they are all in unison. That this is not the son of God.

The Romans didn't see. That the true function of a king. Was not to take care of himself. But to take care of his kingdom.

[36 : 49] And all those who were part of it. But there is one thing for sure. The Roman soldiers might not have accepted Christ as the king of kings.

But in the eyes of the Lord. He was without doubt God's king. And he was God's anointed. And he was God's appointed king. For such a time as this.

Well one final question. Did our heavenly father. Did the Lord above answer. His prayer. Most certainly he did.

For we know that. In the days which passed. Many came to faith. We read about it in the book of Acts. We read about it.

Especially the Roman soldiers. Who beat Centurion. Centurion. Who put his hand on his chest. And said. This was the Christ. The thief on the cross.

[37 : 52] On the dying moments of his life. At Pentecost. Over 3,000 souls came to faith. And many of them. We can be sure.

Were there that day. And even we read. In the book of Acts. And in chapter 7. We read this from scripture. And the word of God.

And continued to increase. And the number of disciples. Multiplied. Greatly in Jerusalem. And a great many of the priests. Became obedient to the faith.

And we can be sure. That even some of these very priests. That were there and mocking Christ. That God. Answered the Lord's prayer.

It was not the eloquence of Peter's preaching. That brought upon an answer to the Lord in prayer.

[38 : 48] This is what J.C. Ryle says in conclusion. The fruits of this wonderful prayer. Will never fully be known. Until the day when the books are opened. And the secrets of all the hearts are revealed.

This we know. That the Father heareth the Son always. And we can be sure. That this wondrous prayer was heard. And now it is time for us.

To leave church once again. Now it is time for us. To walk out the door. On the last Sabbath. Of 2019. Just one more opportunity.

To hear the word of God preached this year. And God is speaking to us all once again. And God is asking us again this day.

What shall we do. With this Jesus. Called Christ. What are we going to do. With this Christ. What is going to be our response.

[39 : 51] What is going to be our reply. Will you despise him. And reject him.

Like the mockers of Calvary. My friends. I don't want to offend anybody. And you may be here. And you may be saying.

Well I am not a mocker. And I am not a despiser. But the harsh reality.

Of the truth. Is that if you are here today. And Christ is not important to you. And Christ. Does. You do not have a personal relationship.

With Christ. Then this is the camp that you are in. And surely. You are not in here today.

[40 : 49] Telling me. That you want to spend eternity. In hell. With many. Who spat on Christ. And mocked him.

On that day. Surely. Surely that is not what you are saying to me. On Christ. Has gone to this depth. In order to provide a way for you to be saved.

There are many of us in here today. And we give thanks. That Christ is the saviour of our soul. And we rejoice because we know that.

He is the missing piece in our lives. But my friends. If I long. For you all to come. To faith in Christ. How much more does your minister long for that. And I don't even know. The names or faces of people here. How.

[41 : 59] How. Can you possibly. Refuse. This saviour. This man. This Christ.

Who was crucified at Calvary. And who died. And rose again. Three days later. And ascended. And. Is coming back again.

And is today offering you a place in this kingdom. How can you refuse that? Our lives journeys are coming to an end.

If we haven't learnt that this week. We'll never ever learn it. And as we walk out that door today. We will be walking out of here.

Making a decision. As once again. The Lord has taken us into the valley of decision this day. And we will decide. And we will decide. As we walk out that door.

[43 : 00] Whether we are accepting Christ. Or whether we are rejecting him. And if Christ is willing to save those. Who were.

Hated him. And were responsible for crucifying him. And mocking him. And spitting on him. Don't think for one moment.

That he's not. Willing. To save the life and soul. Of a man. Or a woman. Or a boy or a girl. From Barba's community. May it be that.

Of each and every single one of us. That as we leave here today. That we leave here with our hands over our breast. Breast. Over our heart and saying.

For me to live as Christ. And our death. Will be gain. Amen. May the Lord bless to us. These. Precious thoughts from his own holy word.

[44 : 06] Shall we turn now. To conclude with our final singing today. Psalm 32. Psalm 22 rather. Psalm 32.

Psalm 32. And as we are.

Searching for it. And for the final. Part of this psalm. From verse 27. To 31. can I just take this opportunity once again of thanking both your minister and your Kirk session for allowing me to preach here and I hope and pray that we would all have a blessed new year if we spare to see it and that whatever the year has for us we hope and pray that every single one of us before the end of the year our prayer is that we would all come to faith in Jesus Christ as our saviour Psalm 22 at verse 27 all ends the earth remember shall and turn unto the Lord all kindreds of the nations to whom shall homage do down to the end of verse mark 31 they shall come and they shall declare his truth and righteousness unto a people yet unborn and that he hath done this shall we sing these words in conclusion all ends of the earth remember shall all ends of the earth remember shall and turn the Lord unto all O all

O all Of the nations to him shall come true.

Because the kingdom to the Lord deliver in us is.

[46 : 38] Likewise, I love the nations that govern all he is.

Ours, fat ones he that worships shall all who to dust his hand.

Shall bow to him, none of them can his soul from death defend.

As he shall service due to him.

Unto the Lord it shall be for a generation.

[48 : 01] Reconvenience all. They shall command.

They shall declare his truth and righteousness.

And to a people yet are born.

And thou he hath done this. Shall we pray in conclusion?

Heavenly Father, we pray that as our time of parting comes, that your spirit would not part from us.

But that your spirit would remain with us throughout the course of this day.

[49 : 08] Lord, for those of us who are your people, make us thankful that Jesus Christ is our Savior. And for those of us, Lord, who have not yet fully committed our lives to you, help us, Lord, we pray that we would yet before this day as though declare his truth and his righteousness.

O Lord, don't let us even eat our food. Don't let us even go to sleep this day until we make things right with the Lord.

And may it be, Lord, that in our gathering this day, that as we gather here to worship you, that every single one of us, that every single one of us in the fullness of time will be found gathered in glory, and that none of us would be lost.

Please, Lord, we plead, save our souls, and make Jesus Christ altogether precious to every single one of us, from the youngest here to the oldest.

In Jesus' name we ask these things. Amen. Yes. Amen.