

LAST WORDS



WEEK OF 02/22/26

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM!

LUKE 23:32-38

Silence (1-2 minutes)

Sit silently for a minute as a way to center your heart and invite the Holy Spirit to help you listen to and receive God's Word.

Opening Prayer (2-3 minutes)

Read: Luke 23:32-38

Devotional (30-45 minutes)

This week is the first in a series for Lent, entitled **Last Words**, that will study the last seven statements of Christ as He hung on the cross. Because these words came from the Savior's heart during a time of deep agony and were the last words He spoke publicly, they speak to our hearts today because they were precisely the words He wanted us to hear. These final seven statements are:

- "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."
- "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."
- "Woman, behold your son Behold, your mother."
- "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- "I thirst."
- "It is finished."
- "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

1. Please spend a few minutes thinking about how abhorrent to the human (natural) mind is the idea of God becoming a man and, worse yet, dying. Most offensive of all to human thinking is the thought that God would (in the person of His Son) submit to such an ignominious death. What does this say about God? What does it say about the Scriptures?

Luke 23: 32-33 | These verses in Luke set the scene at the cross that day, two thousand years ago. Crucifixion is the most horrifying and agonizing means of execution devised by mankind and the Romans perfected it. For the Jewish people, crucifixion had a special meaning because of God's words in Deut. 22:23 that a person hung on a tree "is under the curse of God".

Christ was mocked by Pilate, the crowds, the rulers and, of course, the Romans. Those responsible for Jesus' death seemed to think they knew what they were doing. C.S. Lewis once said that the gospel cannot be a fable because no human would conceive of such a story – it is unthinkable, but this is precisely what God did!

2. In what ways was Christ mocked and humiliated by the Romans, religious rulers, the crowd, and Pilate Himself?

3. Why was Pilate doing what He did? Why did the rulers do what they did?

Luke 23: 34-38 | Even in His most difficult hour, Jesus is pleading, not for Himself, but for humanity: *"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."* Christ's words are not only a beautiful illustration of His love that reaches far beyond human understanding, but they are also a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: *"Because He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."* (Isaiah 53:12)

Our BIG IDEA for this week is: Because Jesus prayed for the ones who nailed Him to the cross, we can live forgiven – and we can forgive! Because Jesus prayed, I am free. When Jesus prays, mercy flows. Jesus prayed it so I could live it!

4. In His prayer to the Father, who was Christ praying for? Consider whether Christ was only praying for the few believers around the cross that day or for every person yet to enter into the world.

5. Please spend a few moments considering the impact of Christ's words: "Father, forgive them". What do these words mean to you personally?

6. What are a few of the other "mind-blowing" implications of Christ's mercy and grace for us as His sons and daughters in a deeply flawed and hurting world?

Closing Prayer

Dear Father, we cannot adequately express our gratitude to you for sending your dear Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to give His life for us so that we might live. We confess that it is impossible for us to comprehend the magnitude of what He accomplished at Calvary but, through the power of the Spirit who lives within us, please teach us to see ourselves as you see us – as forgiven! Amen.

Prayer Requests (10-15 minutes)