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Ron and Val Berrus

...Laboring for the Laborers Seven Sayings from the Cross - JCI #83 March 15, 2010

Just Checking In #83 Seven Sayings from the Cross March 15, 2010

Pilgrim's Process

Psalm 39:12 "Hear my prayer, O Lord... for I am a 'pilgrim' with You..."

Christ spoke seven times from the cross

Each statement is significant in both content as well as its object. These words, spoken at this focal point of all human history, at this piercing point of all sin-bearing anguish, at this lowest point of all human depravity, at this highest point of all demonic deviation displayed, reveal a divine compassion that pierces the utter darkness with a laser point of grace that satisfies eternal justice and defies all the evil in the universe. Listen, as the Living One who spoke first words bringing a universe to life, now speaks final words before entering death for us all.

Word 1 A Word of Grace "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Luke 23:34

As they nailed the Son of God to the cross, He spoke words of grace. These soldiers had heard screams, shouts of agony, bitter curses, threats and blasphemy. But never had they heard the object of their cruelty intercede for their forgiveness. As Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ watched wicked men inflict such evil on His Son, only the Son's intercession could have stayed His hand of judgment upon them. If that was true for them then, how much more is it true of us today? For we are equally guilty and equally worthy of divine judgment. And equally the object of His intercession yet today!

Word 2 A Word of Love "Woman, behold your son... Behold your mother." John 19:25-27

Though his suffering was beyond description, his concern was for others. First He intercedes for his murderers. Now his attention is turned to his mother. At this point, Mary stood alone in her faith in her Son as Messiah. Her other children did not yet believe. The nation turned against Him. She was as alone as she had ever

been in her life. Jesus said he would not leave His disciples as orphans. And now he sees to it that his mother would be cared for, for the remainder of her earthly journey. As the hymn writer said..."Does Jesus care...O Yes He cares..." A heavenly calling does not ignore earthly responsibilities. As the Son of Man he discharged his earthly duties even as He expects us to do the same.

Word 3 A Word of Hope "Today you will be with Me in paradise" Luke 23:43

Justly condemned to death in a Roman courtroom, two guilty criminals hung dying on crosses on either side of Jesus. Both were guilty. Both deserved to die. Both cursed and mocked the Son of God. But then one changed his mind as God changed his heart. One chose to repent, while the other chose not to. One chose to believe, while the other chose not to. One saw a Savior King who was soon to inherit glory, while the other saw only a dying Jew. One called out in faith, while the other cursed and scorned. One heard a spoken promise filled with more comfort, more hope, more love, and more forgiveness than even a misspent lifetime could undo. One would die that day a broken man, with broken legs and a broken heart. The other would die that day a new man, with a new heart and a new home. Five words that declare forgiveness, fellowship, forever..."Today" (when) "with me" (who) "in paradise" (where.)

Word 4 A Word of Judgment "My God... My God....why have you forsaken me?" Matt 27:46

Forsaken. Abandoned. Rejected. Left. Deserted. Isolated. Cast off. The Son of God, one with the Father for all of eternity, abandoned? Was this a cry of doubt and confusion? No! It was a cry of One who, though sinless, became sin for us. It was the cry of One who, though perfect, took all the sin and shame and guilt of all mankind for all ages upon Himself. This One who always pleased the Father now became the object of the Father's judgment. He took that infinite, righteous, holy wrath poured out for all the sin He carried. The essence of death and hell is separation, isolation and abandonment. We *have* never been abandoned by our God. We *will* never be abandoned by our God. But Jesus *was* abandoned and rejected, forsaken and deserted, cast off and left to die in lonely agony as the ancient scapegoat of Leviticus 16. He, bearing our curse, abandoned to a "place forsaken", was left by His Father to take our sins away.

Word 5 A Word of Longing "I thirst" John 19:28

More prophecies must yet be fulfilled. A thousand years before, a prophet said of Him... "My tongue cleaves to my jaws. You have brought me into the dust of death." (Psalm 22) He who walked the paths of paradise had become a man. The One who procured paradise for a thief, now hangs dying in a desert drought. He who lived as man is dehydrated and dying for man. As the blood flowed from His body, the weight of sin crushed his heart. But before He dies He has more to say. And one saying must be shouted. For that shout His voice must be clear. And so He says..."I Thirst." Two scriptures are thus fulfilled: "My tongue clings to my jaws." Psalm 22:15 "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Psalm 69:21. They give Him vinegar. Six hours before they tried to give Him vinegar mixed with gall, a poisonous concoction designed to deaden the pain. This Jesus refused. He would experience the fullness of undulled agony that sin's punishment required. But now He takes the sour vinegar mixed with water to clear his throat. All was sour and bitter upon that cross. His task was bitter. His suffering was bitter. His thirst was bitter. Even his drink was bitter. All for Him was bitter, that all for us might be blessed!

Word 6 A Word of Victory “It is finished!” John 19:30

Calvary was not an accidental tragedy, it was an accomplished task. It was not a misbegotten coincidence, it was a mission completed. It was not a plot frustrated, it was a purpose fulfilled. Hundreds of thousands of lambs, goats, rams, calves, and doves had been offered up in sacrifice over the centuries since Cherubim with flaming swords blocked the entrance to Eden. Blood flowed like water from sacrifices offered from the days of Abel to Annaias, yet the curtain remained, blocking the way into the Presence of God. No sacrifice was ever enough. No offering was ever sufficient. No matter how perfect... how many... or how frequent the sacrifice... IT WAS NEVER FINISHED! Never, until now! The Lamb from heaven, God's perfect Son, not spared like an Isaac, but offered up to spare us...this One finally, fully, forever finished redemption's work. The shout was as strange as it was triumphant. The crowd stood transfixed as the seemingly silent servant now lifts up His voice like a general declaring ultimate victory... "IT IS FINISHED!" The Last Sacrifice is offered. The Last Lamb has died. No more altars. No more blood. No more waiting. The promise in Eden has come to pass. The prophecies are fulfilled to the letter. The Redeemer has finished the eternal plan of the Triune God. It is finished, and man's future has been secured.

Word 7 A Word of Rest “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” Luke 23:46

The suffering is over. The battle is done. The horrors of Gethsemane the night before are gone. The anguish of the morning has passed. All is accomplished. The dying Lamb now looks into His Father's face, secure in the certainty of a prophesied resurrection three days from now. "Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades; neither will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life..." (Psalm 16) Christ commits Himself into the Father's hands as He releases His spirit, laying down His very life in submission to the Father. The Father demanded His life. The Father directed His life. Now the Father takes His life. And in three days, the Father will restore His life forever more. And with His coming resurrection He will guarantee the resurrection and restoration of every rebel in every age who will place their trust in Him.

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" John 1:29

Self Check:

1. Read the four gospel accounts of the last week of Christ's ministry, beginning with the triumphal entry. Start and end each day of Easter week reading in the gospels.
2. Consider a day of fasting to meditate on Christ's great humiliation and sacrifice as you search your own heart and repent of all known sin.
3. Make plans now to attend Good Friday and Easter services with fellow believers to worship Christ in the company of His own.

For further study:

As you read the gospel accounts, make a list of all the fulfilled prophecies you find in these final chapters. Read through the book of Hebrews, especially chapters 9-13, with the phrase "it is finished" in mind. Make a list of all the things that are seen as now "finished" because of Christ's sacrifice for us.

"Blessed Lamb of Calvary, You alone are the Savior of the world. You alone are perfect and holy. You alone are the sacrifice for sins. You alone are Lord of all. You alone are my hope, my joy, my peace, my redemption, my glory. You alone are the Light of the World, the Lamb of God, and the Lord of All. I shall never understand the extent of Your infinite suffering, Your infinite love or Your infinite grace. But I bow and worship You and ask but to know You more with each passing day. Dying Lamb, Living Lord, Coming King, You are my Lord and My God forever, and ever. Even so come! Amen. "

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you continually.

Living with leaving in view.... Jn 9:4 *Ron & Val*

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable, changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows, spending our time on eternity, owning nothing yet possessing everything that matters and lasts. We are Pilgrims in Paradox. Welcome to THE JOURNEY.

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