

## Words from the cross

Reading: Luke 23: 34

Jesus: Father forgive them they know not what they do

Jesus how can you forgive them? They have tortured and condemned an innocent man. They stand by and mock. Surely they deserve your anger and your judgment.

Jesus if you forgive them, even though they have done so much to hurt you then it means I have to forgive too. And there are times I don't want to. There are surely some people who are beyond forgiveness: Those who do such dreadful things, those who abuse children, those who commit acts of terrorism.

Yet I hear you saying father forgive them. And that means I have to find a way to forgive.

Even worse - I suddenly see that when you say father forgive them - I am part of the 'them'. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Prayer:

When we struggle to understand each other

Hear us

**All: And forgive us**

When we allow fear to separate us

Hear us

**All: And forgive us**

When our prejudices overwhelm us

Hear us

**All: And forgive us**

When we push others away

Hear us

**All: And forgive us**

When we hurt others by our actions

Hear us

**All: And forgive us**

When we reject the truth because it is too painful to hear

Hear us

**All: And forgive us**

Reading: Luke 23:43

Jesus: Truly I tell you today you will be with me in paradise

Yes, I have more in common with that criminal than I would like to think. On the whole I am respectable, nice, friendly, but there are sides to me that I need to recognise - parts of me that are not as nice. The part that the self-righteous 'tut tutting' over the state of the world tries to hide. I find it easy to look down at times on those who do various things, and can say with such smugness - I would never do that. But is that really true? Sometimes I'm not really sure. Yes Jesus I too need to hear those words - that one day I will be with you in paradise.

Prayer:

We pray for the outcast, for those on the edges of society, for those who feel rejected, for those who have fallen into hopelessness, for those who have fallen into crime, for those who have resorted to drugs to make life more bearable

To those pushed to the edges of life  
ALL: bring your strength and hope

Reading: John 19:26,27

Jesus: Woman here is your son, here is your mother

When I am suffering, so much of my thinking is about me. Why is this happening to me? I get angry, I get depressed. Yet in the midst of your suffering you look out at the world and see other people's needs.

There on the cross you desire for people to be made whole: to find comfort in each other. Even now in such agony, your thoughts are for those left behind - That they may discover a new family, a new way of relating to each other.

And that is what I have found - wherever I go, Jesus there are always brothers and sisters, ready with a welcome, or in need of comfort. You make us one family.

Prayer:

We pray for those who face loss and grief, for those who feel isolated, for those who desperately seek a sense of belonging, for those whose families have been torn apart

To those seeking comfort  
All: Bring your strength and hope

Reading: Mark 15:34

Jesus: Eli Eli Lama Sabachthani .. My God My God why have you forsaken me?

Jesus you too felt abandoned by God. You too wondered why your father didn't answer. I look at the world and I want to shout out why God, why didn't you do something. Where were you? In the midst of my own loneliness and pain - I want to cry out - why don't you hear me. Why don't you come to me. Where are you?

But I see now - God is there. Because you also know the frustration I feel - you too know the sense of being alone, the despair of not being able to see where God is, in that moment.

There is silence in heaven because there you are on the cross. This is your answer. I don't understand it. I find it hard to accept. I continue to shout and cry out, but I know you are there.

Prayer:

We pray for those who feel abandoned, for those whose life is full of doubt and fear, for those who are searching for answers, for those who are caught in difficult situations, for those struggling to make sense of their lives.

To those who cry in despair  
All: bring your strength and hope

Reading: John 19:28

Jesus: I thirst

You suffer so much. Today we have washed the world of pain as much as we can. We try to deny pain, we try to protect our children from it, we try to make the world a painless place. Even the cross we make plain and simple, we make decorative, anything that seems to deny the reality and the ugliness of what you went through.

And yet you still thirst. We often try to block out the cries - but when we listen we still hear you crying out in anguish 'I thirst': In the voice of the poor and the oppressed, in the voice of those dying for lack of clean water. Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me.

Jesus you still thirst and I can't ignore your cries in this world any longer.

Prayer:

We pray for all those in need. For those trapped by poverty, for those struggling against debt, for those who have been denied food and fresh water, for those left homeless, for those oppressed by injustice

To those who cry out in need

ALL: bring your strength and hope

Reading: John 19:30

Jesus: It is finished

Such words of accomplishment not defeat. You knew you had achieved all that you had been called to do. Jesus I just wish I could feel the same sense of satisfaction - the same sense of

having accomplished something. Today success is such a big thing. We have to be successful, have the signs of success, the trappings of success - the car, the house, the income, the holidays, all those things that say to the world - I am successful.

And yet for you success came in apparent defeat. For you, success is in the indignity and humiliation of dying as a common criminal. For you success is not about how well people think of you, or even if we responded to your message, but how faithfully you lived out God's word.

I find that difficult Jesus. I want to be popular, I want to be respected, I want to be liked, and I want to be successful even in proclaiming the gospel. I find it hard just to be faithful - no matter what.

Prayer:

We pray for those who feel life has left them behind, for those who feel they have been labelled 'failures', for those whose lives have been defined by material things, for those who have given up trying to change their lives for the better, for those who think popularity and fame will bring them happiness.

To those trying to find who they are  
ALL: bring your strength and hope

Reading: Luke 23:46

Jesus: Father into your hands I commend my spirit.

Despite all the suffering, despite all the doubts that even you had, despite the desire to take a different path - to find an

easier way, you cling to faith. You show me what true faith is all about. Even when I hear no answer, even when I find it hard to understand even when I don't want to be where I am - I can still trust you with the very essence of who I am.

Like you Jesus despite everything - I too want to commend my spirit into the hands of the loving father.

Prayer:

We pray for those who face their own mortality, for those who wait and watch as a loved one faces a terminal illness, for those who risk their lives for the sake of bringing peace and justice for others.

To those facing death

ALL: bring your strength and hope

Revd Linda Day