



Seven Last Words Weekly Prayer Guide

My God, my God why have you forsaken me?

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Scripture Focus: Mark 15: 21-34: Psalm 22

The Seven Last Words and Us

"Seven last words ... they begin with words addressed to the Father, find their centre in a cry at the absence of that Father, and return to address Him again at the end. The words that Jesus addresses to us are held within that relationship with his Father, just as it is there that we shall find our home, within the life of the Trinity. We nestle within that divine conversation."
~ Timothy Radcliffe

Because somehow the true identity, passion and purpose of God's kingdom is displayed through the dying man Jesus, who claimed to be the focus of God's messaging for the world, is found at the cross, these final words uttered by him during his crucifixion are so crucial to us. And so we slow down in these words, quieting ourselves and straining our ears in order to get an even further sense of who God is and how he loves and saves the world through Jesus.

This becomes an even more important exercise when we realize that not only is God's identity revealed at the cross, but that our own identity as disciples of Jesus is revealed there. And so quite a lot is at stake here.

This daily guide is designed to encourage you to slowly contemplate and respond personally to the meaning and implications of Jesus' sayings from the cross. Resources of scripture, reflective writing, a daily prayer and questions for deeper personal application and conversation are provided in order to support and guide your mediations.

Daily Readings/ Reflections:

Monday: Psalm 22:1-5

"Here, at the turning point of our reflections, are these words of pure desolation. Here we just have a cry of pain and loneliness. Is it a question without an answer? Is there anything to be said at all?"
~ Timothy Radcliffe

"This is more than doubting God's existence, as one might doubt whether some historical character ever lived. It is more than the absence of someone whom one loves. It is the collapse of all meaning, as if the pith and centre of one's life has been sucked out and one was left hovering over a void." ~ Timothy Radcliffe

"These terrible words of Jesus are a quotation from Psalm 22 ... He embraces the experience of desolation and shares it. Even the experience of the absence of God is somehow brought within God's own life."
~ Timothy Radcliffe

Tuesday: Psalm 22:6-10

"The English word 'dereliction' catches the desperateness of the scene. Like a derelict boat cast up on the shore, like a dog carcass lying by the roadside, here is something no longer of any account, it is forsaken, abandoned, thrown aside. Roadkill."
~ Richard John Neuhaus

"The cross shocks and scandalizes and reastonishes, and never more so than in the cry of dereliction, 'My, God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" ~ Richard John Neuhaus

Wednesday: Psalm 22:11-21

"He is abandoned by God and abandons himself to God ... it was not the agony of the conflicted self resisting the will of God but the agony of the abandoned self seeking to discern the will of God."
~ Richard John Neuhaus

"HE left the judgment with God; his abandonment of self was uncompromised even under the ultimate test of being abandoned by the One to whom he appealed." ~Richard John Neuhaus

Thursday: Psalm 22:22-24

"God is present in the forsaken so that nobody - nobody ever, nobody anywhere at any time under any circumstance - is forsaken." ~Richard John Neuhaus

Friday: Psalm 22: 25-31

"If, as St. Paul says, Christ who knew no sin was made sin for us, can there be any sin he did not bear there on the cross? If the answer is no, as I believe it must be, then even the utterly forsaken are not bereft of the company of the utterly forsaken one, the Son of God, and therefore not bereft of hope." ~ Richard John Neuhaus

"What ever it was that was going on that day two thousand years ago, it was as intimately connected to the state of your soul as if it were happening now." ~ Fleming Rutledge

"God is the Creator, in the person of his Son, has put himself into our place and made himself to be his own sacrifice. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." ~ Fleming Rutledge

Saturday: Psalm 22:1-31

"There is no statement to rival this one from Jesus in all the Gospels. This one is spoken, not to us, but for us. Not to his friends, but for them. Not to anyone but to his own silent Father in heaven. A dark and silent heaven for an hour long eternity." ~ Christopher R. Seitz

"The words that Jesus speaks in the far country were used words, not new ones. They had rattled through the centuries, through the years of Israel's walk with God. Jesus knew these words. ... For in this one moment that would end all cries of dereliction, he lifted us to freedom on the back of his loss and abandonment into God's silence and judgment... making Psalm 22 Jesus' majestic song of love unknown. A love unknown until now, and now shining from him from every pore." - Christopher R. Seitz

"These words from the cross, and the cross itself, mean that the Father is to be found when all traces of power, at least as we understand power, are absent; ... and that our God's power and authority is to be found exemplified in this captive under the sentence of death." ~ Stanley Hauerwas

Daily Prayer

Lord Jesus, as I gaze upon your cross, help me to understand why you were abandoned; what it meant to you and what it means for me?

Teach me, Lord

Help me, to recognize the ways that I continue to ignore you and neglect you in my life.

Forgive me, Lord

In those times when I am feeling alone and far from God's presence, bring me to back to you and your cross.

Help me not to forget you, Lord.

I pray that you would be with those people who I know and love, who are feeling neglected, ignored and abandoned.

Draw near to them, Lord.

May, no one in our church community or those connected to our community wherever they may , be feel that they do not belong.

Make us one in the Spirit, Lord

Bring to my attention and to the attention of our church, the needs of those people in our city and around the world who continue to go unnoticed and unmentioned.

Lord Jesus, unite us in your suffering and unite with abandoned people everywhere in their suffering, so that everyone will know that you were forsaken for us all.

Amen.

Questions for Personal Reflection and Group Reflection:

- 1. What is your initial reaction to these words of Jesus from the cross?**
- 2. What unique things does this word reveal to you about who God is?**
- 3. What challenge to your thinking does this fourth word of Jesus from the cross pose?**
- 4. Why do you think that Jesus was forsaken? How does forsakenness touch your life?**
- 5. How do you feel called to respond to or live out this word today?**
- 6. How might this conversation from the cross shape your prayers?**