



Seven Last Words Weekly Prayer Guide

"It is finished."

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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 meditations.

Daily Readings/ Reflections:

Monday: Colossians 1:19-22; Psalm 22:29-31; John 19:30

"What is finished is a life whose only purpose was and is to give us new life and new hope, a living hope, and peace with our Father in Heaven. when Jesus says, 'it is accomplished,' he has this in mind and nothing less." ~ *Christopher R. Seitz*

"What wonderful news " 'It is finished.' But it is not over." It is not over because God made us, the church, the 'not over.' We are made witnesses so the world– a world with no time for a crucified God– may know we have all the time of God's kingdom to live in peace with one another." ~ *Stanley Hauerwas*

Tuesday: Hebrews 1:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

"What is over is our vain attempts to be our own creators. What happened is our overwhelming... we are overwhelmed by God's love through which we are able to see the beauty of God's care for all that is. Now it is possible for us to live at peace, to be God's agents of reconciliation, in a violent world. We are able so to live not because we have answers all the world's troubles, but because God has given us a way to live without answers." ~ *Stanley Hauerwas*

"...On this day, the day of crucifixion, God brings all things alive, creating ex nihilo, making a home in our sin-scarred world." ~ *Stanley Hauerwas*

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 4:9-12; Hebrews 2:9-12

"[Jesus] is, moreover, as Pilate insisted, the King of the Jews. That kingship is not delayed by crucifixion; rather, crucifixion is the way this king rules. Crucifixion is kingdom come." ~ *Stanley Hauerwas*

"[This] does not mean we will be free of suffering, it means that we can now live knowing it is through suffering that God's kingdom is manifest." ~ *Stanley Hauerwas*

Thursday: Luke 23:44-46; Psalm 31:21-24

"'Into your hands' is a statement of trust, of entrusting, of trusting in another. The 'other' for Jesus was always the Father..." ~ *Richard John Neuhaus*

Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:54-58; John 10:27-30

"We have no need for fear. Jesus has entrusted us into the hands of the Father." - *Timothy Radcliffe*
"To let ourselves be commended to the Father by the Son, that is the secret." ~ *Richard John Neuhaus*

Saturday: 1 Peter 3:18-22; Romans 6:3-6

"By giving himself up and commending his spirit to the Father, Jesus invites and enables us to give ourselves up and become 'united with him in a death like his' (Rom.6:5)" ~ *Stanley Hauerwas*

A Daily Prayer: (Richard Foster: Prayers form the Heart)

Today, O Lord, I yield myself to you,
May your will be my delight today,
May your way have perfect sway in me,
May your love be the pattern of my living.

* * *

I surrender to you
my hopes,
my dreams,
my ambitions.
Do with them what you will, when you will, as you will.

* * *

I place in your loving care
my family,
my friends,
my future.
Care for them with a care that I could never give.

* * *

I release into your hands,
my need to control,
my craving for status,
my fear of obscurity.

Eradicate the evil, purify the good, and establish your kingdom on earth.

I pray in the name of Jesus, who accomplished your will by trusting you with his life completely, even in death. Amen.

Questions for Personal & Group Reflection:

1. What is your initial reaction to these words of Jesus from the cross?
2. What unique things do these words reveal to you about who God and what Jesus is doing on the cross?
3. What is the connection between “It is Finished” and “Father, in to your hands I commend my spirit”? Why do you think the church has traditionally placed “It is Finished” before the commitment of Jesus’ spirit to his father?
4. Discuss Fleming Rutledge’s suggestion that “The Christian life is lived in between – in between My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? and “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”
5. Along with the daily scripture readings, discuss the first Hauerwas’ quote from this Tuesday’s reading. What is he getting at?
6. Jesus entrusts to his Father the very last ounce of who he was as he completed his work on the cross; discuss struggles you have had with entrusting parts of your life to the Father.
7. Share about ways where you have seen God work blessing through your trust.
8. How do these words from the cross encourage you to follow Jesus in the coming weeks?
9. End your conversation by reflecting on the challenge of this week’s Daily Prayer of Relinquishment. Pray the prayer together.
10. Which of Jesus’ words from the cross, has spoken to you the most this Lenten season?