

10 April 2020
Holy and Good Friday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“Three Not-so-little Words”

Text: John 18-19 (Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16)

The Gospel writers, the Holy Evangelists, record seven words, seven things, that Jesus said from the cross. Matthew and Mark both have the same one, the cry of Jesus’ forsakenness. Luke has three precious ones: Jesus’ word of forgiveness, of Paradise, and committing Himself into His Father’s hands. And John, as we will hear tonight, has three - all three different than the others. Which isn’t much of a surprise, since John is a Gospel different than the others. His is the *theological* Gospel, focusing not primarily on Jesus’ life and deeds (though he has some of that), but moreso on Jesus’ teaching. So it would seem that with the words John includes from the lips of the crucified Jesus, we should consider them in the same light - to think not just of their physical dimension and meaning, but also look for the theological truth John is providing. Or in other words, *he who has ears to hear, let him hear. Deeply* hear. These three words. Let us so consider them now.

Hymn #447 (vs. 7-9)

The first word John records for us from Jesus is when he speaks to His mother: ***Woman, behold your son!*** And when He says to His disciple John: ***Behold, your mother!*** (John 19:26-27)

Mothers suffer with their children in ways fathers do not. Nine months in the womb creates a different kind of bond. And Mary is suffering. *A sword will pierce your own soul also*, Simeon had told Mary a mere 40 days after Jesus was born (Luke 2:35). And it was. Being the mother of God, it seems, wouldn’t have many perks. Some would look on her as an adultress. She would spend three days in anguish, looking for her 12-year-old son when Jesus decided to stay behind in Jerusalem instead of coming home from the feast. And now this. Mocking, flogging, and crucifixion. And for what? Being who she knew He was.

So she who suffers like no other, gets care like no other. Even here, even now. Jesus, as perfect man, keeps the Fourth Commandment perfectly. He honors, serves, obeys, loves, and cherishes His mother - the one who gave birth to Him and from whom He received His human flesh. He gives her a son in His place, to care for her. And at the same time, He gives a way for this disciple whom Jesus loved to love Jesus from this point forward, caring for his mother.

But Jesus is not just perfect man but perfect God. And so while we see and hear the physical dimension of this Word, we can hear as well the *spiritual* dimension. That here is the Son of God holding fast not to His earthly family - He is letting them go. Rather, He is holding fast to His Bride, the Church. For as *a man will leave his father and mother and hold fast to his bride, and the two will become one flesh*, so it is with Jesus. He left His Father in heaven and became one flesh with us in His incarnation, and now leaving His mother, He will hold fast to us even to death. He lays down His life that we, His Bride, may live.

That is the good news of the cross for us - that though our earthly families break, though death separates us, though sin divides us, though strife may even turn us against one another - and though this be true even of the Church on earth, the Church Militant, there is another reality where this is not so. The Church that is triumphant in her Bridegroom. The Church joined to Him forever. As His family. And that's you. Jesus will *never* give you to another to be taken care of. You are His and He is yours. He dies for you that you may live with Him, who is one flesh with you. Forever.

Hymn #447 (vs. 13-15)

The second word John records for us from Jesus is the shortest one: ***I thirst*** (John 19:28). And make no mistake about it, this is no little thirst, but a real, physical thirst, from real and deep suffering (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). A burning, parching, painful thirst. A lips, tongue, and throat as dry as the desert, thirst. But there is no oasis for Jesus. No relief, no mitigation. Just a little sour wine to burn His throat and add to His agony.

Think of what is going on here. When His people were in the desert, in the dry and arid wilderness, sentenced to wander for forty years, suffering thirst, with nothing to drink, they were given water from a rock to drink. And, St. Paul tells us, *that rock was Christ* (1 Corinthians 10:4). Yet He who provides water **gets no water**. The Good Shepherd who leads His sheep *beside still waters* (Psalm 23:2), **gets no water**. The Messiah who gives living water to the thirsting Samaritan woman at the well, **gets no water**. And the one who has provided a home for those coming out of the great tribulation, where *they hunger no more, neither thirst anymore* (Revelation 7:16), **gets no water**.

Yet there is an even greater thirst Jesus has: *His thirst for you*. So He will do without water so that He will not be without you.

That is the good news of the cross for you - that the loving thirst of your Saviour is not for anything in this world, but **for you**. So when you are in pain, when you are thirsting for mercy and aid, remember the one who thirsted for you above all else, to provide you with all that you need. So that while you may thirst now, for a while, you will not thirst forever. You will drink from that rock that is Christ. He leads you beside quiet waters. And He gives you living water. And one day, you will be in that great throng in heaven,

around His throne, never to thirst again.

Hymn #447 (vs. 16-18)

Finally, John tell us, Jesus says, ***It is finished*** (John 19:30). The crucifixion is finished. His life is finished. The pain is finished. *He bows His head and gives up His spirit.*

But even more than that, the work of redemption is finished. The atonement is finished. The *Old* Testament is finished. Now there is a *New* Testament, in *His* blood. His blood that gives life. His blood that marks the door of our hearts, that we live and not die.

It is finished. But He is not. For He will rise, and rising He will continue as High Priest forever (Hebrews 4:14-16). So still He is praying for you, forgiving you, feeding you, serving you. He bowed His head and handed over His Spirit . . . **to you**, to live in you.

On the sixth day, Friday, creation was finished. And on the seventh day, God rested. So now, on the sixth day, Friday, the work of re-creation is finished. And on the seventh day, Jesus will rest in the tomb. And on the seventh day plus one, the eighth day, Jesus will rise in that new day that will never end.

It is finished, yet it is just beginning. Eternity. That is the good news of the cross for you. ***It is finished***, but He is not finished, and you are not finished. In Him, you have a future beyond the 70 or 80 years of this life. In Him, you have a life beyond death. In Him, you have the promise of perfect life, perfect joy. Where there is no finished; just forever.

These things are written, John says, *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name* (John 20:31). Let us now hear what John has written, believe, and live.