

Famous Last Words #1 – “Father, Forgive them...”

Today, and for the next 4 weeks we are going to be looking at the words of Jesus on the cross and I pray that the Spirit of God, through His Word, will speak into your life today.

Some of the things that we'll do as men are crazy, all in the name of fun or adventure or fixing things, and sometimes we get really hurt and say some unusual famous last words.

I knew a fellow that had a bad back and when I asked him what happened, this is what he told me: “I was on the roof of my house and I told my wife, ‘Hey, Watch this’ and did a back flip off the roof.” “Hey, watch this” has been the last words of a lot of guys.

If you've ever known a guy who said, “Yeah, Honey, those pants do make you look fat.” They are not with us anymore, may they rest in peace.

What we are going to do in the next few weeks is look at some **serious** famous last words of a dying Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. As He was suffering on the cross, He uttered seven phrases that should be the most famous last words of all time.

We pick up the story when **Jesus is already on the cross**. He has faced a mock trial, was falsely accused, and even though innocent, was found guilty. They beat Him, slapped a crown of thorns on His head and mocked Him.

They blindfolded Him and then hit Him in the face and mockingly said, “Prophesy. Tell us who hit You.” And they spit on Him

Then they forced Him to carry the cross they were going to execute Him on, and they drove spikes through His hands and feet, and crucified Him.

Hanging there on the cross, suffering for our sins, Jesus' lips started to move. **What is He going to say?** Is He going to curse those who were abusing Him? Is He going to pray to God for relief from His pain? Jesus did nothing like that.

Here is a video of what happened.

Jesus uttered the **first** of His famous last words, Luke 23:34, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing ...” Absolutely amazing that in the middle of His pain, He looked up to Heaven and prayed, “Father, forgive these people, for they don't know what they're doing.” Famous last words.

1. One of the first things we note is that in doing this He **fulfilled prophecy**. 700 years before the prophet Isaiah prophesied that this would happen.

Isaiah 53:12, referring to Jesus, says, *“he poured out his life unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, For he bore the sin of many, and he made intercession.”* **“Made intercession” what does that mean?** Among other things it means He prayed for us.

He prayed for us and He prayed for those who had tortured and crucified Him. *“Father, forgive them.”* With this prayer, Jesus fulfilled a seven hundred year old prophecy. Utterly amazing.

2. Second significant thought is this. **Jesus modeled the importance of prayer.** Jesus was a person of prayer. In fact, He taught us how to pray in Matthew 6:9. He prayed for the most unlikely people, His enemies.

He was praying for man’s most important need. **Forgiveness of sin**. That’s why He came. He came so that we could have life. Fulfilling prophecy and modeling prayer for us is important but that’s not what I want to talk about this Easter morning.

Jesus revealed our greatest need. *“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”* This implies that **ignorance does not equal innocence**. They didn’t know they needed forgiveness, and yet, they did. Jesus revealed man’s greatest need.

The relationships that should be the best are often the ones that are the worst. In fact, in a group this size, the chances are very high that there are people who are wounded deeply. The pain in marriages today is absolutely incredible.

There are **women** that hate men because of the abusive men that have been in their lives. There are **men** who don’t trust women, because they’ve been betrayed. Maybe one of these is you.

Maybe someone made a vow to you, a promise, and they broke it, and you feel like your life has been shattered. And what about the pain that many children experience with their parents’ marriages breaking up, abusive fathers, neglectful fathers, abusive mothers.

You throw a little alcohol or drugs into a home, you throw some sexual addiction into a home, and you have horrible, ungodly things happening to innocent people.

Maybe someone here today is being molested, being abused, being yelled at. *“I wish I never had you.”* Maybe there are brothers or sisters that you haven’t spoken to in years.

There are people who are angry at churches, or angry at Christians, **“Oh, yeah, I’m all for this God thing, but I hate His followers.”** There are people who call themselves ministers that do incredibly ungodly things, and there are tons of people, who call themselves followers of Christ, walking around with huge wounds. Broken relationships. Grudges.

There are marriages where husband & wife are living like roommates, there’s no real intimacy. It’s all *about staying together for the kids.*”

What do you do when you’ve been hurt like that? What do you do when you’ve been wronged? What do you do when one of the most important relationships is not where it’s supposed to be? **You do what Jesus did.**

When you’ve been hurt, you do what Jesus did. What did Jesus do? He prayed these famous last words, *“Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they’re doing.”* We are going to look at how Jesus wants us to live this in our own life.

1. When you’ve been hurt, the **first thing** He teaches us to do is to **forgive and pray** for those who hurt you. *(And a side note, we pray good things, not bad things. Okay? Just want to make sure that you’re paying attention here.)*

In Luke 6:28, Jesus taught, *“Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you.”* Who was mistreating Jesus? Well, the Roman soldiers certainly were, and what did He do? He prayed for them.

Now, **if you are anything like me**, someone’s mistreating me, I’m thinking, *“Oh, yeah, I’ll pray for them all right. I’ll pray, God, git ‘em. Sic ‘em. Do justice. Get them back, God,”*

And I think, *“Oh, now I have the right to be bitter,”* and *“Oh, yeah, I may do the spiritual thing, and forgive, but I’ll never forget and I’ll hold this against them forever. I will write you off. I will push you out. I’ll close you out of my circle.”*

A guy got bit by a rabid dog and he waited too long to see the doctor, and the doctor said, *“Man, I’m sorry. If you’d been here earlier, you’d been fine, but you’re not going to be fine. It’s way too late. You’re going to die.”*

He was devastated, but after a while, he worked through the emotion and he started to make a list of people, writing names down on a piece of paper and the doctor said, “*Are these loved ones you want to give your possessions to?*”

He said, “*No, no, no. These are people I hate. I have rabies. This a list of the people I am going to bite.*” And that’s the way a lot of people live today. Wounded, angry, bitter, full of unforgiveness and our heart grows harder and harder.

There are those here today that had relationships that were important to you. And then, someone did something that was wrong to you. Sure, they deserve punishment, but God calls us to a higher standard. “*Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing.*”

Now think about this. **When you pray for others, your prayer may or may not change them, but it always changes you.** You can’t, I can’t pray God’s blessings on someone else’s life without God doing a significant work in my heart.

Matthew 5:43-44. Jesus said, “*You’ve heard that it was said to, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.’*” Are you kidding me! Pray for those who persecute you. Who hurt you? Who wronged you? Yes, that is what Jesus said.

Pray like Jesus prayed. Pray for those who hurt you.

2. Second thing that we learn from scripture is this. Jesus’ prayer teaches us that we should **pray for restoration**. “*Father, forgive them. I want them to be right with You.*” Pray for healing if there’s a broken relationship.

The Romans had a god their worshipped known as the god of **revenge**. This is what he told them in Romans 12:17-18, “*Don’t be revengeful, don’t repay anyone evil for evil. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*”

The reason this is powerful is because it shows us **it may not be possible**. I can’t control what someone else does. All I control is what is in my own heart, and God calls us to do our part. If it’s possible, as far as it depends on us, live at peace with everyone.

Do what God calls you to do, do it today. If there is a broken relationship in your life, seek restoration today. Don’t wait until tomorrow.

Years ago, I had a woman who I knew well come to my office with tears streaming down her face. I had never seen her like this, she was overcome with sadness

and the tears wouldn't stop. I asked her what was wrong and between the tears she told me that her father had just passed away suddenly.

It is a sad situation to lose a parent suddenly, without warning. But that was only part of the reason for her sadness. She and her father were on the outs and hadn't talked to each other for quite a while. She knew as a Christian she should make an effort to repair that relationship but she kept putting it off.

For many of you, you still have that chance, but tomorrow is not guaranteed. You have a relationship that is not where it should be, or maybe you have a marriage that is not where it's supposed to be. **Get up off your butt and do something about it!** Apologize. Repent. Forgive. Show some grace!

You have a son or daughter and the relationship is not good. Dad, mom, get out there and do what it takes. Kids, do you have a parent you're not speaking to? Look, you have one set of parents and you have one life to honor them. Do it!

If you have been fighting with your brothers or sisters over something that happened years ago, fighting over money, over this, or that. Grow up, will you? Soar higher than the crowd. *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they're doing."*

Some of you might say, *"How in the world can I forgive, when I hurt like I do? You don't know what they did to me!"* Colossians 3:12-13, this is how you forgive when you don't feel like it. *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. **Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**"*

How do I forgive when I don't feel like it? I forgive like the Lord forgave me. You take all the wrongs that everyone has done against me, add them all up, multiply them by a hundred and they do not come close to the ways that I've wronged God; and yet, He forgives me freely.

How do I forgive? As the Lord forgave me. Why is this so important? Why is forgiving others so important?

Matthew 6:14-15, *"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."* When man was at his worst, God's Son was at His best. *"Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."*

It may have been someone else's fault. **Yeah, so what?** It may have been our fault. In any event, it's time for us to do what's right, and we're going to do what Jesus taught us to do on the cross, when He prayed for those who were hurting Him, and we are going to forgive and pray.

Have you been hurt? Have you been wronged? Do you have a relationship that's not where it's supposed to be? Maybe you wronged someone else.

What do you do? You pray. Start praying for the person or people that you hurt or who hurt you. Pray God's best for them. Pray His blessings, His goodness. Pray for you own heart.

Ask God to take your hard heart and to make it soft. When you have a hard time forgiving others, think about how you have been forgiven, and then forgive like that.

Even though you may not feel even an ounce of forgiveness inside of you, **do it by faith**, tell God that you choose to forgive. Ask God to show you what He wants you to do. A letter, a phone call, a gift, a hug, an apology, an email, a face-to-face visit, ask Him what He'd have you to do and then commit to do it.

In His prayer on the cross Jesus revealed our greatest need, and that is **forgiveness**. In the New Testament, there was the final sacrifice. God's Son, who the Bible calls the Lamb of God, shed His innocent blood so that we could be forgiven.

Understand that you are never made right with God by being religious, by trying to do good things. It's impossible to work your way to God. The only way that we are made right with Him is by His sacrifice. And Jesus did that so we could be forgiven.

I read about a murderer that died in the electric chair. I don't remember the exact details but it went something like this: A reporter interviewed his mother and his mom said, *"He was such a good boy."* And in disbelief the reporter said, *"A good boy? He killed 7 people with an ax!"* And the mom said, *"I know, I know, but he was such a good boy, he had a good heart."* And I guess it isn't unusual for a mom to say something like that regardless of what their son or daughter has done. They love their child in spite of what they have done. We also see this played out in the Bible in Romans 5:8, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Like the mom He loves us anyway.

Isn't that something? Jesus knows everything we have ever done or said, He has seen us at our absolute worse and he loves us anyway and wants to adopt us into His family as His own son or daughter.

You are not saved by being religious, you are saved by having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. **Religion is about being good, relationship is about being loved.**

If we didn't need a Savior, there would be no Easter holiday, no reason for Jesus to come, for God so loved you that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for you, and when you accept Him as your Savior and your Lord, you can have all of your sins removed. Your guilt is taken away. You are forgiven. You will never, ever be the same.

Maybe you are here this morning because God brought you here today. God is reaching out to you and you have a choice. **You can say yes or no.** You receive it. You embrace it. You believe it.

Or if you reject it, you walk out of here the same way you walked in. You receive it. You accept it. You say yes, your life will never be the same.

God loves you, wants to forgive you, and wants to offer you new life through Jesus Christ. **That is what Easter is all about.** Your prayer today should be, *"Yes, forgive me. Make me new. Make me a brand new person. I surrender my life to You. Jesus, be the Savior and the Lord of my life."*

Let's pray. *"Heavenly Father, I am ready to give You my life. I acknowledge my sin. I need a Savior. Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God, who died for me for the forgiveness of my sins. Be the Savior of my life. Be my Lord. I surrender my life to You. Because You died for me, it is my honor to live for You. Thank you for loving me and setting me free. In Jesus' name I pray."*