

An Ecumenical Good Friday Service

7 LAST WORDS

**Father,
forgive
them, for
they do
not know
what
they do.**

**Truly, I say to you,
today you will be with me
in paradise. Woman, this is your son.**

**This is
your
mother.
My God,
my God,
why
have you
forsaken
me? I
thirst.**

**It is
finished.
Father,
into your
hands I
commend
my spirit.**

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

12:00 p.m. April 19, 2019

Sierra Vista, Arizona
Seven Last Words of Christ

(Adapted from a liturgy by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson)
Ecumenical Good Friday Worship
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

12:00 pm April 19, 2019

First Word

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Luke 23:34

By: Deacon Ben Wetherill

Second Word

"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Luke 23:43

By: Ms. Rosemary Snapp

Third Word

"Woman, Behold Your Son"

John 19:26-27

By: Chaplain Lynell Scott

Fourth Word

"My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?"

Mark 15:34

By: Rev. Tina Squire

Fifth Word

"I Thirst"

John 19:28

By: Mr. Tim Ash

Sixth Word

"It Is Finished"

John 19:30

By: Chaplain Kevin Weston

Seventh Word

"Father, Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit"

Luke 23:46

By: Rev. Allison Cornell

Music:

By: Ms. Doreen Oberg

Thank you all for coming. Special thanks to our speakers for their prayers and meaningful reflections.

Seven Last Words of Christ

Welcome and Invitation to Worship

(Please stand)

Opening Hymn: What Wondrous Love is This - #439 Hymnal 1982

Pastor: The Lord be with you

People: And also with you

Pastor: A reading from the Gospel of John:

Now the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. I tell you most solemnly, unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life will lose it and anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone would serve me, they must follow me. Wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honor them.

Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name!

Pastor: The word of God, for the people of God

People: Thanks be to God

Pastor: Please be seated. *(Opening remarks and introduction to this service)*

Pastor: Let us pray:

Unison Prayer: Merciful God – as we remember how your son, Jesus, bore our sins, how seven times He spoke, seven words of love. We ask you to bless our gathering and this hearing of your word as we recall His agony on the cross. He cried for mercy on the souls of all of us. We ask you to help us understand the mystery of your love and make us into people who reflect that love back to the world you created. Amen

THE FIRST WORD

(Please Stand)

*“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”
Luke 23:34*

Reader: **Our first reading is from the Gospel of Luke**

“32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, ‘**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.” (Luke 23:32-34)

Reader: The word of God for the People of God

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: Please be seated.

FIRST MEDITATION: Deacon Ben Wetherill

Pastor: The scene around the cross is crass and unfeeling. The soldiers are part of an execution detail, bored with crucifixion. Perhaps this team will have conducted several crucifixions this week already. The first time they saw a crucifixion they may have been moved by its brutality, but now they are calloused, emotionless.

First, the soldiers begin with the cruel process of nailing the criminal to a cross, then hoisting him up, the cross swaying forward, then back until it is secured with wedges at the bottom to hold it upright in the hole. And when that task is done, they sit around the base waiting for the criminal to die – sometimes for days. To pass the time they gamble, deciding by a casting of lots who will be awarded the victim’s last possessions. That is the scene.

But in the midst of it comes an astounding, powerful word from the “criminal” on the center cross: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34a)

Song: **Behold the Wood – See insert**

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O comes let us adore.*

First Verse

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

THE SECOND WORD

(Please Stand)

“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Luke 23:43

Reader: Our second reading is from the Gospel of Luke

“39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: ‘Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!’ 40 But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’ 42 Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ 43 Jesus answered him, **‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.’**” (Luke 23:39-43)

Reader: The word of God, for the people of God

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: Please be seated

SECOND MEDITATION: Ms. Rosemary Snapp

Pastor: It was a terrible thing to be unjustly condemned to be crucified. It added insult to injury to be crucified between two obvious criminals. But there’s a story here and a lesson. This brief passage relates one of the most amazing prayers and promises in the entire Bible and was no accident. It was the fulfillment of prophecy from Isaiah 53: 9, 12

“He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.... He poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:9, 12)

Song: **Behold the Wood**

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

Second Verse

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

THE THIRD WORD

(Please Stand)

“Woman, Behold Your Son”

John 19:26-27

Reader: **Our third reading is from the Gospel of Luke**

“25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘**Woman, here is your son,**’ 27 and to the disciple, ‘**Here is your mother.**’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.” (John 19:25-27)

Reader: The word of God, for the people of God

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: Please be seated

THIRD MEDITATION: Chaplain Lynell Scott

Pastor: Of the four gospel writers, John is the only one who records Mary's presence at the cross. But it would be expected that Jesus' mother be in Jerusalem at Passover – after all, we read, “Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover” (Luke 2:41). Probably after Joseph's death – presumed to have taken place before Jesus began his ministry – Mary would come up to Jerusalem for the Feast with friends and relatives. Now her son is in trouble – arrested, tried, condemned, and now dying. Surely, Mary's place is close to her son. And so Simeon's prophecy given at Jesus' dedication comes to pass:

“And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” (Luke 2:35b)

She is near him now, but her heart is broken. She is consoled by friends.

Song: **Behold the Wood**

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

Third Verse

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

THE FOURTH WORD

(Please Stand)

*My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?
Mark 15:34*

Reader: **Our fourth reading is from the Gospel of Luke**

“33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*’—which means, ‘**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**’ 35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, ‘Listen, he’s calling Elijah.’” (Mark 15:33-35; also Matthew 27:45-47)

Reader: The word of God, for the people of God

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: Please be seated

FOURTH MEDITATION: Rev. Tina Squire

Pastor: At the very center of the Seven Last Words, the Fourth Word is probably both Jesus' lowest point as well as a theological high point of the crucifixion. We'll spend a bit longer seeking to understand its implications. The early crowds have long ago dispersed and the long time of waiting for death had begun. An eerie darkness has descended upon the entire area, a crushing gloom.

The criminals on either side are still alive – and might have lived for days on the cross. But Jesus is not so strong. He has somehow endured a cruel scourging that would have killed lesser men. He has lost a lot of blood, even before climbing the hill to Golgotha and having his hands and feet nailed to the rough cross.

Mark tells us, “It was the third hour when they crucified him” (Mark 15:25). Sometime after the crucifixion took place, Luke tells us: “It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour” (Luke 23:44). But Jesus lasts only six hours.

Song: **Behold the Wood**

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

Fourth Verse

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

THE FIFTH WORD

(Please Stand)

“I Thirst”

John 19:28

Reader: Our fifth reading is from the Gospel of Luke

“28 Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, **“I am thirsty.”** 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.” (John 19:28-29)

Reader: The word of God, for the people of God

People: Thanks be to God

Reader: Please be seated

FIFTH MEDITATION: Mr. Tim Ash

Pastor: It is near the end of Jesus’ human life. He senses it. He has hung on the cross for six hours now. It has become hard for Jesus to even get a breath. Hung from his arms, he must pull himself up each time he wants to breathe. His shoulders ache, his mouth is parched. He is exhausted. And yet he does not want to die without a final word. He asks for something to drink to wet his lips for this final effort and the fulfillment of yet another scripture from Psalm 69:21 - “They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.” (Psalm 69:21)

Song: **Behold the Wood**

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

Fifth Verse

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

THE SIXTH WORD

(Please Stand)
“It Is Finished”

John 19:30

Reader: Our sixth reading is from the Gospel of Luke

“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘**It is finished.**’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (John 19:30)

Reader: The word of God, for the people of God

People: Thanks be to God

Reader: Please be seated

SIXTH MEDITATION: Chaplain Kevin Weston

Pastor: Jesus’ journey had begun in a simple stable in the City of David some thirty years before. Now it was finished. What did Jesus Come to accomplish? What was finished? What was this mission that was now finished? Why did Jesus come? Let’s look at how Jesus defined his mission – and later, how his apostles understood it. We read about his commission to “preach the Gospel to the poor” in Luke 4:18, 43. “To bring life” in John 10:10, “to destroy the devil’s work” in 1 John 3:8, “to bring fire upon the earth” in Luke 12:49, “to testify to the truth” in John 18:37. But each of these seems like a means or aspect of the ultimate purpose, to save us from our sins. Consider these purpose statement verses

- “Look, the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!” (John 1:29)

- “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10)

- “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give

his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

Song: **Behold the Wood**

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

Sixth Verse

All: *(Refrain) Behold. Behold the wood of the cross on which was hung our salvation. O come, let us adore.*

THE SEVENTH WORD

(Please Stand)

“Father, Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit”

Luke 23:46

Reader: Our seventh reading is from the Gospel of Luke

“44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.**’ When he had said this, he breathed his last.” (Luke 23:44-46)

Reader: The word of God, for the people of God

People: Thanks be to God

Reader: Please be seated

SEVENTH MEDITATION: Rev. Allison Cornell

Pastor: Under the Romans, crucifixion was often a long, drawn-out process. That was the idea – a prolonged, tortuous death for criminals would not only inspire horror in the hearts of the populace, but also provide a public reminder of the danger of any attempt to resist Roman power.

Criminals would often last for days before they finally succumbed, though on this day, the day before a Sabbath, any surviving criminals would be killed by breaking their legs (John 19:31-33) and their bodies removed from the cross through some kind of agreement brokered with

the chief priests so as not to overly offend Jewish sensibilities.

Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:46) These words are also the fulfillment of scripture from Psalm 31:5. Into your hands I commit my spirit. They are the same word form an evening prayer used in their daily devotions by the Jews. But notice the loud voice – scarcely what one would expect from a man about to die. But Jesus seems determined that his final words be heard. His words are firm and confident. Let our words be confident as we pray as well.

Unison Prayer:

Lord God, you have given us everything. You have not held anything back. Help us in like manner to give of ourselves. Sanctify us in Christ’s name. Bless us and all that we think, feel, say, and do that we, like Jesus may be a blessing to others. This we ask through Jesus Christ, Your son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen

Closing Song:

Were You There When They Crucified My Lord – #172 Hymnal 1982

Thank you for being with us today in our prayers, songs, reflections, and listening to God’s story of his wondrous love for you, me, and the whole world.

Please join us for refreshments in the Parish Hall following the service.

***St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church:
Connecting with God, with each other, and with the world.***

