



This morning as we walk towards Easter I want to look at two of Jesus' last words from the Cross and then see how the Resurrection impacts those words. This started me thinking about some of the **last words** of some people. For example:

P.T. Barnum, the circus promoter's last words were "What were the receipts today at Madison Square Gardens?" What a strange last comment, because it really didn't matter what the receipts were for that day, he couldn't take any of it with him anyway.

Diana, Princess of Wales said "My God, what's happened?"

Queen Elizabeth I, who died in 1603, said "All my possessions for a moment of time".

Joan Crawford, a famous movie star whose career spanned 40 years, lay dying in New York City hearing her private nurse praying for her said "***** it! Don't you dare ask God to help me." What an awful way to go out into eternity!

Dwight L. Moody, who was the Billy Graham of his day and shook two continents for Christ lay dying in 1899, with his family gathered around him, spoke these words, "Is this dying? Why, this is bliss. There is no valley. Earth is receding; Heaven is opening; God is calling; I must go." Now that is a legacy to leave your children.

Let me read a few of Jesus' last words from Mark 15:33-37 *"At noon the whole country became dark, and the darkness lasted for three hours. At three o'clock Jesus cried in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." This means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" When some of the people standing there heard this, they said, "Listen! He is calling Elijah." Someone there ran and got a sponge, filled it with vinegar, tied it to a stick, and gave it to Jesus to drink. He said, "We want to see if Elijah will come to take him down from the cross." Then Jesus cried in a loud voice and died."* John 19:28-33 *"After this, Jesus knew that everything had been done. So that the Scripture would come true, he said, "I am thirsty." There was a jar full of vinegar there, so the soldiers soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a branch of a hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' mouth. When Jesus tasted the vinegar, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and died. This day was Preparation Day, and the next day was a special Sabbath day. Since the religious leaders did not want the bodies to stay on the cross on the Sabbath day, they asked Pilate to order that the legs of the men be broken and the bodies be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man on the cross beside Jesus. Then they broke the legs of the man on the other cross beside Jesus. But when the soldiers came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs."* I read these together so we could place them in the context in which they happened on the cross that day.

I. He was forsaken that we would be accepted.

Turn back to Mark 15:33-37. As you know Jesus hung on the cross for 6 hours. He was crucified at 9 am (3 hrs after sunrise and died at 3 am.). We pick up the passage in vs. 33 in the 6th hour, which would make it noon. Jesus has forgiven the soldiers who nailed him to the cross and who had gambled for his clothes. He has promised the thief on the cross that on that very day Jesus would see him in paradise. And by this time he has heard the catcalls, laughter and taunting remarks from the rabbis & pastors at the foot of the cross for a while. Then, it says at high noon darkness came over the whole land and it lasted for the next 3 hours. In the Greek it says the

darkness 'fell', one moment it was brilliant and sunny and the next moment it was pitch black. It was like someone switched off the sun light as if turning off a light switch. It was not an eclipse or clouds rolling in, it was a thick inky blackness that you could almost touch. I believe it was the kind of blackness that chilled the skin, curdled your blood and made the hair on the back of your neck stand up. It was so eerie that the catcall from the peanut galley stopped and everyone knew something creepy or supernatural was happening. In the darkness and silence all you could hear was the gasping for breath and the groans of pain of those on the cross somewhere beyond you in the blackness. Then they heard Jesus suck in his breath and then a cry came from the cross which I believe anyone who heard it then or hears it today would never forget. Jesus with something between a groan and sob said "Eloi, Elio, lama sabachthani" which means "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?"

The word 'forsaken' means 'to be abandoned'. Now this is important! Jesus didn't say this because he 'felt' abandoned; he said it because he 'was' abandoned. II Cor. 5:21 "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*". Ray Pritchard describes what happened with these powerful words, "Imagine that somewhere in the universe there is a cesspool containing all the sins that have ever been committed. The cesspool is deep, dark and indescribably foul. All the evil deeds that men and women have ever done are floating there. A river of filth constantly flows into that cesspool, replenishing the vile mixture with all the evil done every day. Now imagine that while Jesus was on the cross, that cesspool is emptied onto him. See the flow of filth as it settles upon him. The flow never seems to stop. It is vile, toxic, deadly, filled with disease, pain and suffering. When God looked down at his Son, He saw the cesspool of sin emptied on his head. No wonder he turned away from the sight. Who could bear to watch that?" (Keep Believing Ministries)

So as Jesus hung on the cross, suspending between earth and heaven the sin of the world those things that we have done which disgust us were poured over Jesus. And because God is holy and pure (that is just who he is) he could not look at the sin, so He closed his eyes to the cross and the lights went out. The same God who spoke into the darkness at creation and said "let there be light" must have thought "let there be darkness, for I can't stand to see Jesus covered by that filth" and the lights went out, the chill of that clammy darkness enveloped the cross, as God was forced to look away.

But there is one more part to this story. Look again at the passage and notice the words Jesus used here. He says "my God, my God why have you forsaken me?" At first glance that may not seem strange but can you remember Jesus' first words on the cross? His first words were "Father forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing" (Lk. 23:34). And then if you think about his last words on the cross they were "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk. 23:46). In both of these instances he used the term 'Father', a term of endearment and closeness. But here in Mark 15:34 he used the word Eloi which is simply translated, God. It would be like my kids who call me dad all of a sudden address me as Reverend David Spate. If they did that I would know that something had changed that some distance had come between us and our relationship. For Jesus, here in the midst of his suffering as the sins of the world were poured over his being and sticking to his very soul, something changed. That feeling within, that he knew from the beginning of time, that He and God were one ('if you have seen me you have seen the father', 'I and the father are one') somehow had radically changed. Hab. 1:13 "*your eyes are too pure to look on evil*".

God had walked away because as we know He had to walk away. And as the sins of the world stuck to Jesus, the holiness of Jesus paid for the sin of the world. Don't miss the picture painted here. Jesus hanging in pain covered from head to toe glued to his very being the sin of the world all alone in the darkness. These words are too deep for us to fully comprehend. It is said that the great Reformer Martin Luther read these words and meditated on them for many hours, not moving to eat, sleep, or drink. He sat silent trying to grasp their meaning. After many hours he stood up and held up his hands and said, "God forsaken by God! Who can ever understand that?" Now let's zoom forward to the time when Jesus rose from the grave. Remember, it was the sin and sickness of the world that Jesus allowed to take his life. I say that because Rom 6:23 says "*for the wages of sin in death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*". It was the wages (which are the things we receive for what we do) which as they adhered to Jesus caused him to die. And then on the first day of the week, Sunday, up from the grave he arose, the eternal life flowed back into him and I believe as he shook himself, the residual effects of the sin being attached to his body flew off adhering to the walls of the tomb. He walked out CLEAN once again, full of power and fully united with the Father and fully GOD once again. And the cross and the sin and the darkness of Calvary was distant, dealt with bit of history. And because he was fully God again and because the sins had been left hanging on the cross and the walls of the tomb, he was able to offer "the gift of God which gives eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord".

That means that because the darkness and the sins and the separation from God were left far behind in Jesus' life, that as he enters our life, our sins, our darkness, our separation from God are also left behind.

A little 5 year old had done something wrong and so his mother had to punish him. When he came back out of his room he was worried that his mother was still angry with him. As he entered the kitchen he spied a chalkboard on the wall that mom would write her lists on. So he climbed up on the counter and wrote this on the chalkboard "Dear mom, if you forgive me please wipe this out". When he returned a short while later he was overjoyed to see the board was completely erased. Because of the cross and because at the resurrection Jesus broke the power of sin to claim us and cause death, which is the 'wages of sin' to hold us as the pure and risen Lord enters our lives he then wipes the slate clean and allows us to begin again. For at the resurrection he proved that our sins were paid for and new life is possible. He was forsaken so we could be accepted by God.

II. He struggled with thirst so we wouldn't have to struggle with doubt.

Let me add one more thought concerning how the words of the cross find power in the resurrection. Turn to Jn. 19:28-33. Did you notice before Jesus said, "I thirst" we read, "So that the Scriptures would be fulfilled." Sometimes we miss the fact that the details of the crucifixion of Christ were fulfilling prophecies from the Old Testament. Although the Old Testament was written hundreds of years before the crucifixion, these prophecies read as if the writer were standing there watching Jesus die. The cry "I thirst" fulfilled these words, "My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth, they have pierced my hands and feet, they put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst." (Psalm 22:15-16; 69:21).

One of the greatest arguments to support the truth of the Bible is how we can read prophecies written hundreds of years before an event occurred, and then we can read how those predictions came true at the cross of Jesus with amazing accuracy.

For instance, consider ten Old Testament prophecies about the death and burial of Jesus that were precisely fulfilled:

1. Psalm 41:9 says the Messiah would be betrayed by a friend who would eat bread with Him. That was fulfilled when Judas took the piece of bread Jesus offered him and then betrayed Jesus.
2. Zechariah 11:12 predicted the Messiah would be sold out for 30 pieces of silver. That's exactly the amount Judas was paid.
3. Isaiah 50:6 predicted His back would be beaten; and He would be spit upon. We know that happened during the torture of Christ.
4. Isaiah 53:12 even predicted the Messiah would be crucified with criminals and Jesus was crucified between two thieves.
5. Psalm 22:16 predicted His hands and feet would be pierced. And this was written hundreds of years before crucifixion even existed!
6. Psalm 22:6-8 predicted the Messiah would be mocked and insulted by the bystanders. Those standing by the cross taunted Jesus to come down if He was the Son of God.
7. Psalm 22:17 that none of his bones would be broken.
8. Psalms 22:18 even predicted the soldiers would cast lots for His clothes!
9. Psalm 69:21 predicted He would be given vinegar to drink, we just read where that happened.
10. Isaiah 53:9 predicted the Messiah would be buried in a rich man's grave. These are details that couldn't have happened by chance!

What are the odds of these ten things just happening by chance? Imagine I have ten pennies and wrote the numbers 1 through 10 on them and placed them in my pocket, what would be the odds of me reaching into my pocket and on the first try pulling out the penny marked #1? Not bad odds, actually, 1:10 chance. But to put that penny back and then on my second try pull out the penny marked #2 has odds of 1:100. The odds of reaching in and pulling out penny #3 on the third try is 1-1000. Get the picture? Let's move ahead. The odds of pulling out each penny in order, when I get to penny #10 would be 1:10 billion! And Jesus fulfilled DOZENS of Old Testament prophecies, not just these ten!

David Dykes puts it this way. These predictions about Jesus' death would be like finding a document from the 1200's that predicted that in 1963 the leader of a nation named America would be killed in a city named Dallas with a shot from a rifle from the sixth floor of a Texas book depository while riding in a limousine.

At the time when it was written, there was no such thing as an America, a rifle, or automobiles. A verified prediction like that would shake the world.

If you are a reasonably intelligent person you can't ignore the fact that Jesus precisely fulfilled dozens of scriptures written hundreds of years earlier. When he said I thirst in order to fulfill the OT scriptural prophecies he wanted to help chase our doubts away. When you look at the prophecies which Jesus fulfilled at Calvary and at the tomb, and then add that the greatest prophesy of all; which foretold his death and resurrection, there is only one conclusion left; Jesus is the one he said he was. As for the resurrection, it is the singular event that stands believers apart from those in other religions. You can find Mohamed's, Buddha's and Confucius' tomb with their body still in it, however, Jesus' tomb is empty and because of that we know we are forgiven and accepted by God.

There is a church in Norway where the figure of a lamb can be seen carved high up on the tower of the church. There is a fascinating story behind that carving. When the church was under construction many years ago, one workman who was working on the scaffolding on the uncompleted building lost his balance and fell screaming toward the pavement many feet below. His fellow workers climbed down expecting to find him dead, but to their amazement and joy, he was alive and walking with only slight injuries. At the moment of his fall, a flock of sheep was passing underneath the tower. When the workman fell, he landed on top of a lamb. The lamb was crushed to death, but broke the workman's fall and he survived. In memory of his miraculous deliverance, the workman carved a lamb on the tower at the exact height from which he fell.

At Easter, we remember that there was a time when darkness 'fell' and God turned away from Jesus as our sins were paid for. He broke our fall and was rejected by God so we would be accepted. If we wonder this is true, we need to remember that he was "thirsty" as the scripter's said. By saying this, he showed us that he would do whatever it takes to help us relax in the fact that he is our Savior and ever present resurrected Lord.

For information about Brentview Baptist Church and its ministries,
please contact the church office at:
3512 Charleswood Dr NW, Calgary, AB T2L 2C3
Phone: 403-284-4691 Fax: 403-284-0132 email: mail@brentviewbaptist.com
Website: www.brentviewbaptist.com