

LENT SERIES

7 Sayings of Jesus (1 or 7)

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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Turn in your Bible to **Luke 23:26-38**

26 And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. 27 And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. 28 But turning to them Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For behold, the days are coming when they begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’, and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ 31 For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

32 Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. 33 And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. 34 And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments. 35 And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” 36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine 37 and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” 38 There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

Pray.

Introduction:

We begin the 7 sayings of Jesus in chronological order and fittingly Jesus begins with a prayer.

Don't miss the fact that Jesus is actually praying.

This prayer is a prophetic prayer. It comes from Isaiah 53, that great chapter about the suffering servant of God. After a long list of details of how the Messiah will suffer, (which are spot on) you come to:

Isaiah 53:12.

“He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.”

This prayer, **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”**, likely happened as the Roman soldiers were nailing him to the tree. Can you fathom that? While the hammer is striking the spikes, while their stretching him out...in enormous pain...Jesus finds a way to pray. What would you have prayed? I think most of us would have been crying out—“Help ME God!” Perhaps, “Deliver ME God.” Something to do with ME. Instead Jesus is thinking about others.

What's the most pain you have ever been in? Have you ever been in pain so bad that you cried out?

ILLUSTRATION: I'll never forget a morning in April 2015. My feet hit the floor early in the morning. We had a very high bed and when I kind of slid out and hit the floor, something happened. I dislodged a kidney stone. I was in such pain. I begged to be taken to the hospital. I am a grown man and I had to have 2 women drag me into an elevator and into a car...to be taken to the hospital. I screamed out to the Lord for mercy. I wasn't thinking of anyone else at that moment, only myself.

Yet, here is Jesus...in excruciating pain and he's praying for others.

I. WHO HE IS PRAYING TO.

He says, "Father."

God the Son is praying to God the Father, the Ancient of Days, the one who sits on the Great White Throne.

Jesus had always said that God was his Father and that is one of the things that gets him killed. So, here he is, on the cross for calling God his Father and yet he continues to cry out to his... Father.

This is striking to me because many said Jesus was a liar and a fake or crazy. They said that he was demon possessed or a con artist and not God the Son.

Now a trickster may do a very good job of scamming people while things are going well but what about when he gets caught. He usually confesses.

ILLUSTRATION: I remember hearing Lance Armstrong, the 7 time winner of the Tour De France, who had them all taken away for using drugs, say over and over again, "Those people are lying." "I didn't do it." "I am clean." Guess what? He got caught and then what did he say? He said, "I did it." "I was cheating." "I was lying."

After they had already ripped his back open, Jesus continues to call God his Father. While their pinning him to a tree with spikes., he continues to cry out, "Father" "Father", even the end.

Jesus was no cheat. He wasn't a fake. He wasn't mentally ill. Would a mentally ill person pray for his enemies on the cross?

II. WHAT HE IS PRAY FOR.

He is praying that God the Father would “Forgive”. Forgive!

‘Father, **don’t** strike them down right now for doing this.’

‘Father, **don’t** make fire rain down from heaven and consume them.’

‘Father, **don’t** make them stop breathing.’

‘Father, **don’t** send a legion of angels right now to slay the city.’

“FORGIVE THEM!” “FORGIVE THEM!”

To be sure, because we know from other scriptures, he doesn’t mean—sweep it under the rug or forget about it.

He could have said, “Father, turn these guy’s hearts toward me. Cause them to see my glory. Cause them to repent and believe.....and forgive them.”

“By this very act that I am doing right here....let them be forgiven.”

Well, who is the ‘them’?

III. WHO IS HE PRAYING FOR? THE *THEM*?

Specifically, he’s praying for the 4 soldiers who are crucifying him. John 19:23 tells us it was 4 soldiers who crucified him.

They divided his garment, John says, “in 4 parts, one for each soldier.”

This prayer comes right after they had stripped him naked: right in the midst of nails and hammer- a prayer for the soldiers.

But just below in verses 35 & 36 we see 3 groups of people there around the cross. We see the people, the rulers, and the soldiers.

The people watched.

The rulers disdained.

The soldiers mocked.

But the King forgave.

Charles Spurgeon said, **“Father forgive them was the prayer of a dying man, but it was not a dying prayer.”**

Like ripples in a pond, this prayer just keeps going. From the soldiers...to the Jewish leaders...to the people...to the criminals hanging there...to every person who has ever lived. “Father, forgive them.”

IV. HOW JESUS IS ABLE TO PRAY THIS.

“For they know not what they do.”

But, didn't they know what they were doing?

Acts 3:14-15 (Peter's speech) , “But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed the Author of Life, whom God raised from the dead.”

Acts 7:52 (Stephen's speech) Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered.”

1 Corinthians 2:8, “None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Did they know what they were doing or not?
The answer is yes they did and no they didn't.

They didn't know the fullness of who he was. They didn't believe and therefore didn't know...that the Righteous One, The Author of Life, The Lord of Glory was there on the cross.

Corinthians says that if they had known, they wouldn't have done it.

How is Jesus able to pray this for his enemies?

Remember Joseph in Egypt? Thrown in a pit & Sold into slavery by his brothers. Left in prison. Remembered by God the whole time. Raised to the vice president of Egypt...forgave his brothers. What did he say, "You meant it for evil but God meant it for good." "God sent me on ahead of you to Egypt to preserve our people."

Jesus can pray this because ultimately the rulers, the people and the soldiers didn't kill Jesus.

He is merciful at this moment because he knows that, though these various people are the human players, God is behind it all. It's God's plan. The cross isn't a tragedy. Jesus didn't get caught in a wicked game.

John 10:17-18, "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

John 18:36-38, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." 37 Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king." For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth."

John 19:10-11, “So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you? 11 Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.””

So there it is. Pilate and the Jews are doing it. The Roman soldiers are doing it. But...God is **doing** it. Jesus lays it down cause he wants to. Cause it's the plan of God. **Jesus is able to forgive his enemies on the cross because the cross is the plan of God.**

Question:

Did God answer Jesus' prayer?

(God the Father answers the prayers of God the Son)

Did this lead to the criminal on the cross' salvation? v.42

Did this lead to the Centurion at the cross saying, “Truly this man was the Son of God.” [Mark 15:39] also here in v.47

Did this prayer get answered in Acts, when thousands were converted?

Some application:

1. We should follow Christ' example and forgive others freely.

Once upon a time there was rich and powerful landlord. He had a lot of people that owed him money, some a lot of money. He set up a meeting with one man who happened to owe him several million dollars. The man explained that he couldn't pay. The landlord became angry and ordered the man, his wife, all of his children and all of his things to be sold to pay the debts. The man dropped to his knees and begged him saying, “Please give me more time and I'll

pay somehow. Just don't take my family!" Surprisingly, the landlord had pity and let him go and forgave his debt. The man went away very happy. On his way home, he saw someone who owed him \$50. He went straight at him and grabbed him and choked him. "Pay me my money!" The other man pleaded with him saying, "Give me more time. I'll pay." The man refused and had the man put in prison until he should pay.

Some friends of theirs saw this happen and they went back and told the landlord what had happened. He set up a meeting with the man again. When he came in the landlord said, "You evil man. I forgave your huge debt and had mercy on you but you went out and had NO mercy on someone that owed you almost nothing."

The landlord said, "Take this ungrateful man to the torturers until he can pay his debt."

The man received unthinkable forgiveness but gave no forgiveness.

How is it that Jesus so willing forgives even his enemies while they're crucifying him and yet we struggle to forgive people even the most petty things?

You may have someone in your life you have a hard time forgiving! Maybe it'll help you this morning to ask the Lord what He was doing in the midst of that. Someone may have meant it for evil but God wants you to see what he was doing.

2. No one is too far from Christ' mercy and grace! If he can pray for those killing him, then no one is beyond his reach.

3. As Spurgeon said, **"Father forgive them was the prayer of a dying man, but it was not a dying prayer."**

Jesus' prayer was for you. He prayed for you! Before you were even born, he prayed for you that you might be forgiven for what you've done. Oh yes, you knew what you were doing in your sin but then again you didn't. You did it out of ignorance.

The good news is that today Jesus reaches out to you and offers you his forgiveness.

He prayed, "Father, forgive him... Father, forgive her...for they know not what they do."

Come to Jesus today. Bow the knee.

Pray this, "Father, forgive ME! I'm a sinner. I need to be saved."

Amen.