

## **The Seven Last Words of Christ**

### **First Word**

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.*" And they cast lots to divide his clothing. (Luke 23:33-34)

### **Meditation**

*They gambled for his clothing, what little he had. Decency and a moral choice took a back seat to greed. Today, we're gambling on our climate. Recent history shows continued warming trends. Glaciers, a source of fresh water for communities high in the mountains, are disappearing. Rising sea levels cause Miami Beach to flood on sunny days. Though science overwhelmingly attributes climate change to human activity, we have political leaders who are gambling that it is otherwise. They've given greed a front seat over moral choice.*

### **Second Word**

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "*Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*" (Luke 23:39-43)

### **Meditation**

*The effects of climate change condemn everyone. But some people will be able to mitigate its worse effects. They can live and work in air conditioning. They can even move if the situation where they no longer can tolerate the situation where they live. There will be, however, people who have no choices, no options. They will undeservedly suffer.*

### **Third Word**

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "*Woman, here is your son.*" Then he said to the disciple, "*Here is your mother.*" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. (John 19:25b-27)

### **Meditation**

*We must take care of each other. We must recognize that our choices have an impact on people we don't even know. Climate change will change what we now consider a normal life. It affects agriculture and thus the food we put on our tables. Local maple syrup will become a memory. Longer and wetter storms will overwhelm our storm systems. Less rain and longer droughts will reduce our freshwater supply.*

### **Fourth Word**

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:45-46, Mark 15:34)

## **Meditation**

*We've heard of Flint, MI, but do you know Lowndes County, Alabama? It's one of the poorest areas in the country. It like many other poor rural areas relies upon septic systems to handle sewage waste. As the climate changes and more water falls on the ground, the extra water overwhelms the septic systems and raw sewage backs up into their homes or pools in their yards. It's staggeringly costly to remediate. No one is really addressing this.*

## **Fifth Word**

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "*I am thirsty.*" (John 19:28)

## **Meditation**

*While climate change may increase rainfall in Lowndes County, it can decrease rainfall in other places, such as the Colorado River Basin. Reduced rainfall and higher temperatures will decrease streamflow. In places like Florida, rising sea levels will seep into freshwater aquifers to make the water undrinkable. Hurricanes may become more intense dropping more rain and staying longer, which will increase destruction. Remember Houston?*

## **Sixth Word**

A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "*It is finished.*" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:29-30)

## **Meditation**

*Who cares that the last taste in a dying man's mouth is sour wine? He was condemned to die anyway even though he was innocent. Decisions and policies offer sour wine to many people who are innocent. Why did a study by Dr. Robert Bullard find Black children were five times more likely to have lead poisoning than White children? Why is it that 80% of the children in Guiyu, China have been poisoned by e-waste? Earlier I mentioned Lowndes County, AL. Almost 75% of the population is Black. The answer is environmental racism. Climate change will compound an already unjust web of indifference to suffering innocent people.*

## **Seventh Word**

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "*Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*" Having said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:44-46)

## **Meditation**

*Sin sent Jesus to the cross. He was unjustly accused, unjustly tried, unjustly condemned, and unjustly executed. We cannot ignore climate change. We cannot ignore our role in it. We cannot ignore our responsibility to take steps to ameliorate it. We cannot ignore the heavy burden it places on communities of color. That burden causes undeserved and unjust suffering. Let us not perpetuate this sin.*