

Into Your Hands

Luke 23:44-23:46

This morning we have come to the last of the seven sayings of Jesus as He was hanging on the cross. These were the last words that Jesus spoke before He died. These last words were a prayer to His Father. Follow along with me as I read our text this morning:

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last.

Luke 23:44-46 (NASB)

It is interesting that Luke is the only writer to record the last words of the Jesus: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." This past week I read many last words of famous people who have died throughout history. Often they reveal much about the mindset and condition of those who were facing death. Some are at peace and others die struggling. But these last words of Christ reveal much to us about Him as a person. Rather than cursing

the crowd around Him - rather than cursing God because of His situation - He prays to God, **“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”** Every word of His prayer tells us something important. The first word is:

I. FATHER

Father — this was Jesus’ favorite title for God. It spoke of the intimate family relationship that had existed from all eternity. His first word from the cross had been, “Father, forgive them.” His last word was, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

But in between he had cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” He called him, “God” and not “Father” because in that agonizing moment, the Father turned his back on the Son as Jesus bore the sin of the world. God forsaken by God! But no longer. Jesus dies with the knowledge that the price has been fully paid, the cup emptied, the burden borne, estrangement ended. Jesus yields his life to the One he called “Father.”

I don’t know about you, but I find great encouragement in the fact that at the end of His life Jesus calls God - "Father". Why do I say that? Because Jesus took on ALL the sin of the world. All the bad stuff - all the horrible stuff - all the nasty stuff - all the stinky stuff - yet at the end it all - Jesus still has a relationship with His Father. Look at what the Bible tells us:

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

We all deal with sin in our lives. We know that sin causes separation. Apart from salvation that separation will endure for all eternity. But for the believer there is comfort in the fact that Jesus calls God - "Father". The truth is - we may allow sin to enter our lives and it may hinder our fellowship with the Lord, but it does not hinder our relationship. The saved have been made heirs of the promise, adopted into the family of God, never to be forsaken. If you are a child of God, you will always be a child of God! The Bible says:

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."

John 6:37 (NASB)

The next words:

II. INTO YOUR HANDS

Into your hands — O, the touch of a Father's hands. What son does not long for his father to reach out and embrace him? There is something wonderful about this expression. It speaks of safety

— "I am safe in my father's hands" — it speaks of greeting — "Welcome home my child" — it speaks of love — "Daddy, it's so good to see you again" — it speaks of approval — "I'm so proud of you."

These are not ordinary hands. These are the Father's hands. These are the hands that created the universe. These are the hands that set everything in motion. These are the hands that made the broad expanse of the galaxies - and also made the details in the microscopic world. These are our Father's hands.

For 15 hours Jesus has been in the hands of wicked men. With their hands - they beat him. With their hands - they slapped him. With their hands - they abused him. With their hands - they crowned him with thorns. With their hands - they ripped out his beard. With their hands - they smashed him black and blue. With their hands - they whipped his back until it was torn to bits. But no more. All that is behind him now. Wicked hands have done all they can do. Jesus now returns to his Father's hands.

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

The Bible says:

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Psalms 19:1 (NASB)

Also:

For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands. Psalms 92:4 (NASB)

These are the hands that Jesus is committing Himself to. And what wonderful hands they are.

The next words are:

III. I COMMIT

I commit — The word means to deposit something valuable in a safe place. It's what you do when you take your last will and testament - or your most valuable possessions and put them in a safe-deposit box at the bank. You commit them into safe keeping.

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Folks here is a truth:

You become what you are committed to.

Jesus at this point commits His Spirit to God. But that brings me

to a very interesting point - Jesus was committed throughout His life to do the will of the Father - in the process it would lead to our salvation. Here we find a fundamental truth that cannot be overlooked or over-emphasized. Pilate and the Sanhedrin had cast their voice against Jesus. Sentence was declared and Jesus was crucified upon the cross.

But may I remind you that it was not Pilate or even the religious elite that forced Jesus to bear the cross! Jesus did not endure the suffering of the cross at the will of men. He suffered the torments and death of the cross because this was God's plan of redemption. Jesus died to provide our salvation! Jesus said this:

**No one takes my life from me. I give it up willingly! I have the power to give it up and the power to receive it back again, just as my Father commanded me to do.
John 10:18 (CEV)**

Or what did He mean when He said this:

**"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."
John 12:24 (NASB)**

We live in a day when many want to remove the cross. They don't want to sing about the precious blood that was shed. They don't want preachers preaching about the suffering and death of our Lord upon the cross. But Jesus bore the cross by His own will and He died according to His own choice. Yes this was a crucifixion - but it was not an execution. He committed Himself to God's plan for our salvation. And when it was all finished - He committed His Spirit into the hands of God. Because of His commitment we have salvation. He gave His life willingly to follow the Father - and the Father gave His Son to us. Can any of us forget:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

John 3:16 NASB

Jesus willingly committed His life to follow the Father - the Father willingly committed the son for our salvation.

We now come to the final two words of Jesus upon the cross. He said:

IV. MY SPIRIT

Let me tell you a great truth that many do not realize.

You Are Going To Exist Forever

Once you have been born - you are going to exist forever. You see we are spiritual beings and spiritual beings last for eternity. Where you spend eternity is up to you - but you're going to exist somewhere.

In the book of Matthew there is a story of a great judgment. God will separate people into two groups. He will place some on His right and He will place some on His left. The two verses below tell us what happens next:

"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"
Matthew 25:34 (NASB)

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Matthew 25:41 (NASB)

You can look up in your Bible what the criteria was for the separation - but the point I want to make is - there is only two destinations for people. You are either in God's kingdom - or you are not. There is no third option. You will not sit on the sideline.

A choice will be made. What choice did Jesus make? Or text for today tells us:

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Jesus chose to follow the Father. He made a choice. Each of us will make a choice too.

How did Jesus handle His death? He did three things:

A. Jesus Died PRAYING to God

– In the final moments prior to His death, Jesus spent them in prayer to God. He used those final precious moments as an opportunity to talk and commune with the Father. He lived in prayer and died in prayer.

B. Jesus Died TRUSTING God

– Jesus died committing His spirit to God. He had endured the cross, even being forsaken for a time, but His prayer revealed that His confidence and trust in God the Father had not wavered.

What a powerful lesson for us to learn. All the time God is good and God is good all the time. God is sovereign and in control of

every aspect of our lives. We must trust Him in the valley as well as on the mountain. Our circumstances may change, but our God doesn't! Job said it best when he said,

**"I will continue to trust God even if he kills me."
Job 13:15 (ERV)**

C. Jesus Died SUBMITTING to God

– He never once refused to submit to the will of the Father. Jesus knew that He must die so that sinners might live - He submitted to that. He was not concerned with His desire, but that of God the Father.

If Jesus was willing to submit to suffering and death, bearing our sins in His body, surely we can submit to live for the Lord and serve Him. Is it too much to ask you to live for Jesus after all He has done for us and continues to do?

How many of you remember the little prayer,

"Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep"? It goes like this:

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

That little prayer is a prayer of trust.

There are teenagers that have learned the prayer a different way
- it goes like this:

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I park my hot-rod in the street.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord to pull the brake.

We can laugh about this little poem - but as I thought about it - there is a great truth found here in this poem when it comes to death. If you are a believer in Christ - God has pulled the brake on death. Oh sure you will die physically - unless Christ returns before that. But God has pulled the brake on eternal death. Jesus said it this way:

"I am the resurrection. I am life. Everyone who believes in me will have life, even if they die. And everyone who lives and believes in me will never really die." John 11:25-26 (ERV)

God has put His brake on death. For those who believe death - eternal death - has come to a stop. How do I know this - because I know the rest of the story. I know that Jesus died on a cross. I

know that He was buried. But I also know that three days later - He rose again.

He put His faith in the Father. He put His trust in the Father. He put His hope in the Father when He said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

The Father did not leave Him in the grave. The Father did not abandon Him to eternal death - but the Father gave Him eternal life. If He did that to Jesus – He will do that to us too.

In his great sermon “Go Down Death,” - Peter Marshall tells the story about a little boy he knew who was suffering from a terminal illness. At first he didn’t understand what was happening to him, but as the months passed, and he had to stay inside while his friends went out to play, the truth dawned on him. The idea intrigued him and he wondered what death would be like.

One day his mother was reading to him the stirring tale of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. She told him of Lancelot and Guinevere and the beautiful maiden Elaine. She read to him of the final glorious battle when so many gallant knights met their death.

At length, she was finished and put the book down. The little boy was silent for a moment. Then he asked the question that

had been playing upon his childish mind, the question his mother was dreading to answer. “Mother, what is it like to die? Mother, does it hurt?”

Quickly tears sprang to her eyes, so she excused herself to go into the kitchen to compose herself. She knew it was a question of deep significance. She knew she must find a good answer. For a moment she leaned against the kitchen cabinet, her knuckles pressed white against the surface, praying to the Lord for an answer. And the Lord gave her an answer. In that moment she knew what she should say.

“Kenneth,” she said as she returned to the next room, “Do you remember when you were little and you would play hard all day? When the evening came you would be so tired that when you came in, you would lie down on Mommy and Daddy’s bed and fall asleep.”

“That was not your bed. That was not where you belonged.”

“But you only stayed there a little while. In the morning, you were surprised to wake up and find yourself in your own bed.”

“You were there because someone you loved had come and taken care of you. During the night while you were sleeping, your father came — with big strong arms — and carried you to your own room.”

“Sweetheart, death is just like that. One night you are very tired and very sleepy. You fall asleep and the next morning you wake up to find ourselves in another room — our own room where you belong —because the Lord Jesus has come and with his big arms, he has carried us from our home in this world to our home in heaven.”

The light on the little boy’s face showed that he had understood. And a few days later he fell asleep just as his mother had said.

That is what death is like for those who believe. - we can only image what life is like beyond that. But Jesus has walked the path before us to lead the way.