

Good Friday - Reflections

The last moments. Final words. With the last of strength, the Lord Jesus speaks to us from the cross seven times. These are the last of his words. Just before he dies, Jesus makes us know what is going on in his heart. This Testament, which he leaves us, is especially dear to us.

Let us focus today on three statements of Jesus. The first one is:

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

Pilate judged Jesus and found no guilt in Him. Nevertheless, he condemned him to a cruel death on the cross. Pilate sent Jesus off believing that one troublemaker's death is better than stirring up a malcontent mob.

Yet Jesus does not demand revenge. Jesus asks for forgiveness for those who inflicted His Passion, who nailed Him to the cross. The people who unfairly judged Jesus and condemned him to death did not know his Love. They were closed-hearted and did not recognize that he gave them what they most wanted, what they were constantly looking for.

However, Jesus' Love does not perish. It continues. Praying for forgiveness for them, Jesus expresses his unwavering desire that people will open their hearts, know and accept God's Love. Jesus taught that God loves all people. He also loves those who reject him, who condemn him to death. Jesus came into the world to reconcile with God people who, while desiring Love, at the same time constantly reject it and destroy it.

Jesus' words are also a prayer. It is a prayer of forgiveness for the sins of those who, by harming, are not fully aware of what they are doing. Forgiveness widens the heart by creating space within it for others. Forgiveness heals, even more, the forgiver than the person to whom it is given. Any closure of the heart will sooner or later result in bitterness. To forgive does not mean to minimize the suffering we experience. To forgive does not mean to forget. Evil remains evil in any situation. To forgive is to balance on the verge of "I don't have to do this" and "yet I forgive." Primarily for myself.

Forgiveness is grace. Forgiveness is a new creation. And must be perceived in terms of a miracle. No one has power and is not strong enough to forgive, but only God. We know this from our own lives. Man can do nothing other than

expect righteous revenge. Forgiveness is not easy. It may be our biggest challenge of all.

Sometimes we lack the courage and strength to forgive. Sometimes we get hurt too much and too deeply. At such times, we must repeat: May God forgive you, because I cannot yet. Let this be our prayer. A prayer that will change our hearts over time.

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 27:46

The most difficult feeling for me in this world would be the feeling of total loneliness. Awareness that no one cares about me, that no one loves me, that it does not matter to anyone whether I live or die.

Jesus, in his cry from the cross, used the opening words of Psalm 22. Jesus, who prayed from his people's holy books, remembered numerous sentences and words that expressed, better than others, the needs and anxieties of people towards God. So, in the last moments of his earthly life, Jesus is asking a question, which the tormented Psalmist addresses to God - "why?"

It is a secret to which only the Father has the key. For this reason, Jesus' question has theological significance in connection with his sacrifice. Through this sacrifice, Jesus would experience a feeling of abandonment by God in full solidarity with sinful man.

Jesus' question does not hide any regret that would lead to rebellion or despair; There is no trace of reproach to the Father in this question; it merely expresses a feeling of helplessness and loneliness and abandonment - the feeling that Jesus experienced for us.

This silence of God is the most severe punishment for Jesus. The feeling of God's absence and abandonment, experienced in the sphere of sensations and emotions, is the most significant anguish for the soul of Jesus, which drew its strength and joy from union with the Father.

This torment exacerbates all other sufferings. But Jesus knows that in this final phase of His devastation, which reaches the deepest recesses of his heart, He completes the work of salvation. That is the goal of His sacrifice.

By quoting the first words of Psalm 22 - and perhaps mentally reciting it further during the Passion - Jesus knew its ending, which was a hymn of deliverance, the proclamation of salvation given to all men by God. The experience of abandonment is only temporary suffering that gives way to personal liberation and universal salvation.

This prospect indeed kept Jesus' heart alive. We remember that He always showed His death as a passage to the resurrection, as His true worship. He knows that the hour of victory is near - precisely at the climax of the drama of the cross.

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:30

By saying the word "finished", Jesus announces that he has completely fulfilled his mission. Even though he faced many obstacles from the very beginning to the very end. He was tempted, he was persecuted, he remained faithful and loving to God to the end. He even loved in such great suffering that he now experiences while hanging on the cross.

Jesus did not succumb to any temptation, because the Love of God the Father was his greatest treasure, and it was what he valued more than his own life. Of course, Jesus was afraid of suffering and death. However, this fear was not able to force him to betray God's Love. Jesus was not a slave to anxiety because he was convinced that Love is stronger than all evil than all suffering, and even death.

Each of us was created out of Love and for Love. Nothing but perfect Love, together with God's Love, can satisfy the desires of our heart. However, we often do not live by Love because we are slaves to our desires and easily become victims of various temptations. We are also slaves to the fear of suffering and death. We often betray Love to get some pleasure, avoid suffering, and save the way of life we are used to.

Jesus came to free us from this bondage. He frees us from the power of our desires and fears by showing us the power of God's Love. If through meeting with Jesus, we experience this Love, if this Love becomes our greatest treasure, then, just like Jesus, we will become free, and we will be able to live Love in every situation. We will be able to live according to the deepest desire of our heart, according to the will of our Creator.

"It is finished." The plan was fulfilled; salvation has become possible. God's Love has been shown.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for showing us the truth, that even in such unimaginable sufferings as you have experienced yourself, it is possible to be faithful to love. Thank you for showing us the wonderful and unchanging Love of God our Father. Lord, we ask You, open our eyes so that we may know that this Love is the most precious treasure, that it is stronger than all evil, all suffering, and even death itself. Open our hearts so that we can receive this Love. Free us from the bondage of our desires and fears, so that we can be faithful to this Love in every situation, so that at the end of our lives, just like you, we may entrust our spirit into the Father's hands and live with Him and with all who are united to Him in the unity of Love for all eternity. Amen.

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