



ST MARY MAGDALENE,
GREAT HAMPDEN

THE SEVEN LAST WORDS
OF OUR
SAVIOUR ON THE CROSS

JOSEPH HAYDN

18TH APRIL 2025
NOON

Welcome to St Mary Magdalene, Great Hampden for this very special service. The Hampden Quartet lead us in an act of worship for Holy Week, Joseph Haydn's "Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross".

Please resist the urge to applaud our musicians.

This is not a concert performance. For musicians and congregation alike, this is a true act of worship, part of our Holy Week devotion. Holy week takes us from Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Cross-and on to the joy of resurrection at Easter.

The meditations at each word are by the Reverend Dr Mark D. Roberts.
<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts/series/>

Our church has stood here for many centuries, and the local community still gathers here to worship God and to demonstrate faith at work in our daily lives. This building provides a sacred space for prayer and meeting between God and his people.

We welcome all who seek God and invite you to join our efforts to be a strong facilitator of good in our community. We seek to build the Kingdom of God in our souls, our lives and our community here in Great Hampden and beyond.

A toilet with disabled and baby changing facilities is available in the churchyard, on the path behind the church.



During the service a collection is taken to support the life of this church. If you don't already give regularly you can support us by contributing to the collection, or by using the contactless donation box opposite the door as you enter or leave

*the church. To give regularly please take a **Parish Giving Scheme** leaflet from the rack, or sign up to the Parish Giving Scheme by scanning here to get started:*



Greeting and Welcome The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Introduzione Sonata I-Largo

***Pater, dimitte illis, quia nesciunt, quid faciunt
Father Forgive Them, for They Know Not What They Do***

Luke 23:34

Then Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do".

It makes sense that the first word of Jesus from the cross is a word of forgiveness. That's the point of the cross, after all. Jesus is dying so that we might be forgiven for our sins, so that we might be reconciled to God for eternity.

But the forgiveness of God through Christ doesn't come only to those who don't know what they are doing when they sin. In the mercy of God, we receive his forgiveness even when we do what we know to be wrong. God chooses to wipe away our sins, not because we have some convenient excuse, and not because we have tried hard to make up for

them, but because he is a God of amazing grace, with mercies that are new every morning.

As we read the words, "Father, forgive them," may we understand that we too are forgiven through Christ. As John writes in his first letter, "But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness" (1 John 1:9). Because Christ died on the cross for us, we are cleansed from all wickedness, from every last sin. We are united with God the Father as his beloved children. We are free to approach his throne of grace with our needs and

concerns. God “has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west” (Ps 103:13). What great news!

Sonata II-Grave e Cantabile

Hodie mecum eris in Paradiso

Today You Will be With Me in Paradise

Luke 23:43

And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise".

As Jesus hung on the cross, he was mocked by the leaders and the soldiers. One of the criminals being crucified with him added his own measure of scorn. But the other crucified criminal sensed that Jesus was being treated unjustly. After speaking up for Jesus, he cried out, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (v. 42).

Jesus responded to this criminal, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise” (v. 43). The word paradise, from the Greek word *paradeisos*, which meant “garden,” was used in the Greek Old Testament as a word for the Garden of Eden. In Judaism of the time of Jesus it was associated with heaven, and also with the future when God would restore all things to the perfection of the Garden. Paradise was sometimes thought to be the place where righteous people went after death. This seems to be the way Jesus uses paradise in this passage.

Thus we have encountered one of the most astounding and encouraging

verses in all of Scripture. Jesus promised that the criminal would be with him in paradise. Yet the text of Luke gives us no reason to believe this man had been a follower of Jesus, or even a believer in him in any well-developed sense. He might have felt sorry for his sins, but he did not obviously repent. Rather, the criminal’s cry to be remembered seems more like a desperate, last-gasp effort.

Though we should make every effort to have right theology, and though we should live our lives each day as disciples of Jesus, in the end, our relationship with him comes down to simple trust. “Jesus, remember me,” we cry. And Jesus, embodying the mercy of God, says to us, “You will be with me in paradise.” We are welcome there not because we have right theology, and not because we are living rightly, but because God is merciful and we have put our trust in Jesus.

Sonata III-Grave

Mulier, ecce filius tuus ***Woman, Behold Your Son***

John 19:26-27

When Jesus saw his own mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son". Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother". And from that hour, he took his mother into his family.

As Jesus was dying, his mother was among those who had remained with him. Most of the male disciples had fled, with the exception of one whom the Fourth Gospel calls "the disciple he loved." We can't be exactly sure of the identity of this beloved disciple, though many interpreters believe he is John, who is also the one behind the writing of this Gospel.

No matter who the beloved disciple was, it's clear that Jesus was forging a relationship between this disciple and his mother, one in which the disciple would take care of Mary financially and in other ways. Jesus wanted to make sure she would be in good hands after his death.

The presence of Mary at the cross adds both humanity and horror to the scene. We are reminded that Jesus was a real human being, a man who had once been a boy who had once been carried in the womb of his

mother. Even as he was dying on the cross as the Savior of the world, Jesus was also a son, a role he didn't neglect in his last moments.

When we think of the crucifixion of Jesus from the perspective of his mother, our horror increases dramatically. The death of a child is one of the most painful of all parental experiences. To watch one's beloved child experience the extreme torture of crucifixion must have been unimaginably terrible. We're reminded of the prophecy of Simeon shortly after Jesus' birth, when he said to Mary: "And a sword will pierce your very soul" (Luke 2:35).

This scene helps us not to glorify or spiritualize the crucifixion of Jesus. He was a real man, true flesh and blood, a son of a mother, dying with unbearable agony. His suffering was altogether real, and he took it on for you and for me.

Sonata IV-Largo

Deus meus, Deus meus, utquid dereliquisti me? ***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me***

Matthew 27:46

Around the ninth hour, Jesus shouted in a loud voice, saying "Eli Eli lama sabachthani?" which is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Mark 15:34

And at the ninth hour, Jesus shouted in a loud voice, "Eloi Eloi lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

As Jesus was dying on the cross, he echoed the beginning of Psalm 22, which reads:

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Why are you so far away when I groan for help?

Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.

Every night you hear my voice, but I find no relief. (vv. 1-2)

In the words of the psalmist Jesus found a way to express the cry of his heart: Why had God abandoned him? Why did his Father turn his back on Jesus in his moment of greatest agony?

This side of heaven, we will never fully know what Jesus was experiencing in this moment. Was he asking this question because, in the mystery of his incarnational suffering, he didn't know why God had abandoned him? Or was his cry not so much a question as an expression of profound agony? Or was it both?

What we do know is that Jesus entered into the Hell of separation from God. The Father abandoned him because Jesus took upon himself the penalty for our sins. In that excruciating moment, he experienced something far more horrible than physical pain. The beloved Son of God knew what it was like to be rejected by the Father. As we read in 2 Corinthians 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" (NIV).

I can write these words. I can say, truly, that the Father abandoned the Son for our sake, for the salvation of the world. But can I really grasp the mystery and the majesty of this truth? Hardly. As Martin Luther once said, "God forsaking God. Who can understand it?" Yet even my miniscule grasp of this reality calls me to confession, to humility, to worship, to adoration.

Sonata V-Adagio

Sitio

I thirst

John 19:28

He said, "I thirst".

No doubt Jesus experienced extreme thirst while being crucified. He would have lost a substantial quantity of bodily fluid, both blood and sweat,

through what he had endured even prior to crucifixion. Thus his statement, "I am thirsty" was, on the most obvious level, a request for

something to drink. In response the soldiers gave Jesus “sour wine” (v. 29), a cheap beverage common among lower class people in the time of Jesus.

John notes that Jesus said “I am thirsty,” not only as a statement of physical reality, but also in order to fulfil the Scripture. Though there is no specific reference in the text of the Gospel, it’s likely that John was thinking of Psalm 69, which includes this passage:

Their insults have broken my heart,
and I am in despair.

If only one person would show
some pity;

if only one would turn and
comfort me.

But instead, they give me poison

for food;

they offer me sour wine for my
thirst.

(vv. 20-21)

As he suffered, Jesus embodied the pain of the people of Israel, that which had been captured in the Psalms. Jesus was suffering for the sin of Israel, even as he was taking upon himself the sin of the world.

As I reflect on Jesus’ statement, “I am thirsty,” I keep thinking of my own thirst. It’s nothing like that of Jesus. Rather, I am thirsty for him. My soul yearns for the living water that Jesus supplies (John 4:10; 7:38-39). I rejoice in the fact that he suffered physical thirst on the cross – and so much more – so that my thirst for the water of life might be quenched.

Sonata VI-Lento

Consummatum est

It is finished

John 19:30

Jesus said, "It is finished".

I never saw a more difficult film to watch than Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*. For most of that movie I wanted to avert my eyes. It was horrible to watch even a cinematic version of a crucifixion. And it was beyond comprehension to think that this actually happened to somebody, and not just anybody, but my Lord and Saviour. I had studied the crucifixion before, and knew in my head what Jesus experienced. But seeing a visual presentation of his suffering was almost more than I

could bear. When *The Passion of the Christ* was over, I felt palpable relief. Thank goodness it was finished.

When Jesus said “It is finished,” surely he was expressing relief that his suffering was over. “It is finished” meant, in part, “This is finally done!” But the Greek verb translated as “It is finished” (*tetelestai*) means more than just this. Eugene Peterson captures the full sense of the verb in *The Message*: “It’s done . . . complete.” Jesus had accomplished his mission. He had announced and

inaugurated the kingdom of God. He had revealed the love and grace of God. And he had embodied that love and grace by dying for the sin of the world, thus opening up the way for all to live under the reign of God.

Because Jesus finished his work of salvation, you and I don't need to add to it. In fact, we can't. He accomplished what we never could, taking our sin upon himself and giving us his life in return. Jesus

finished that for which he had been sent, and we are the beneficiaries of his unique effort. Because of what he finished, you and I are never "finished." We have hope for this life and for the next. We know that nothing can separate us from God's love. One day what God has begun in us will also be finished, by his grace. Until that day, we live in the confidence of Jesus' cry of victory: "It is finished!"

Sonata VII-Largo

In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit

Luke 23:46

And speaking in a loud voice, Jesus said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit".

Two of the last seven "words" of Jesus were quotations from the Psalms. Earlier Jesus had Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" to express his anguish. Later he borrowed from Psalm 31, which comes to us from Luke as "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands."

On an obvious level, Jesus was putting his post mortem future in the hands of his Heavenly Father. It was as if he was saying, "Whatever happens to me after I die is your responsibility, Father."

But when we look carefully at the Psalm Jesus quoted, we see more than what at first meets our eyes. Psalm 31 begins with a cry for divine help:

O LORD, I have come to you for protection;
don't let me be disgraced.
Save me, for you do what is right.
(v. 1)

But then it mixes asking for God's deliverance with a confession of God's strength and faithfulness:

I entrust my spirit into your hand.
Rescue me, LORD, for you are a faithful God. (v. 5)

By the end, Psalm 31 offers praise of God's salvation:

Praise the LORD,
for he has shown me the wonders of his unfailing love.
He kept me safe when my city was under attack. (v. 21)

By quoting a portion of Psalm 31, therefore, Jesus not only entrusted his future to his Father, but also implied

that he would be delivered and exonerated. No, God would not deliver him from death by crucifixion. But beyond this horrific death lay something marvellous. “I entrust my

spirit into your hands” points back to the familiar suffering of David in Psalm 31, and forward to the resurrection.

Finale—Il terremoto: Presto e con tutta la forza The Earthquake

The Collect

Almighty Father, look with mercy on this your family for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed and given up into the hands of sinners and to suffer death upon the cross; who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

All: Amen.

The Blessing

Christ crucified draw us to himself, to find in him a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sins forgiven; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always.

All: Amen.

With grateful thanks to our musicians:

THE HAMPDEN QUARTET

Alexandra Caldon (violin)

Charlotte Reid (violin)

Zoe Matthews (viola)

Elisheba Stevens (cello)

ST MARY MAGDALENE, GREAT HAMPDEN

Please join us

11.15am on **Easter Sunday** for our Family Festival Eucharist
and Easter Egg Hunt.

HOLY TRINITY, PRESTWOOD

EASTER EVE, 8.00pm—First Mass of Easter

*The Great Easter Celebration begins with the kindling of the Easter Fire,
followed by the first mass of Easter. This year our worship will include
contributions from the Trinity Voices choir.*

The service is followed by a Champagne Reception to celebrate Easter.