

CROSSROADS (EASTER2020):
"CHRIST SURRENDERED"
(Luke 22:42b; John 18:12b; Luke 23:34a; John 19:30a)

4.10.20 Good Friday

INTRODUCTION

Three little words. When we hear that phrase, usually only one thing comes into our minds: "I love you." And some of us of a certain age may remember a song by that title that confirmed those words, published and first recorded in 1930 by the Rhythm Boys - including among its members a 27-year-old baritone named Bing Crosby. Its lyrics start with the phrase "three little words," and the song ends with what we'd all probably expect: "Three little words, eight little letters, which simply mean I love you."

Of course, there are many other three-word phrases with which we are familiar: Stay the course, safe and sound, I don't know, against all odds, never look back, change is good, this will pass. Our relationships may often be punctuated with: I'll be there; how are you; please forgive me. TV and movies certainly have provided a few: "Make it so" was spoken by Capt. Jean-Luc Picard of the starship Enterprise in the "Star Trek: Next Generation" TV show whenever he agreed with a crew recommendation. "Seize the day" (in Latin, "carpe diem") was made famous by the late Robin Williams as an English teacher at a boy's prep school in the 1989 film, "Dead Poet's Society." "Let It Go" became many kids' theme song from the 2013 Disney movie, "Frozen." Of course, sports has given us any of a number of these phrases. In baseball, "going, going, gone" signifies a homerun. "The Fall Classic" tells us the conversation is about the World Series. In horse racing, we have "The Triple Crown." Both a hockey and national moment of joy comes to anybody who mentions the phrase, "Miracle On Ice." Personally a few of my favorites are: Kill menow - whenever I hear something that is just too goofy to believe, let's do lunch - especially if the other guy is buying and, of course, my all-time favorite, where's the chocolate.

The interesting thing about many of these phrases - and obviously so many more is that, in just three words, we know exactly what is being discussed; in fact, just three words give us such specific information that they simply couldn't be about anything else. "Fall Classic" can only mean the World Series. "Miracle On Ice" takes us all back to only one thing: the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, and the amazing victory of the US hockey team over the Soviet Union.

When we turn to look at the events of Holy Week and, in particular, everything that happened connected with Christ's crucifixion - in particular, Gethsemane and the cross - there are also some three-word phrases that tell us a story that is quite literally overwhelming - but not just the words themselves and what they mean but, even more so, because of who was saying them. Let's look at four of those phrases now.

TEXTS

Our first three-word phrase sets the stage for literally everything that will follow. Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane. His disciples were falling asleep all around him, but he was terribly wide awake, praying to His Father, knowing all the time what in just a few

moments would begin for Him. He is praying so passionately, under so much anxiety and agitation that, according to Luke: ***[B]eing in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground- Luke 22:44***, a documented medical condition known as "hematidrosis," which occurs when, under extreme physical and emotional distress, the blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, causing them to discharge blood. Jesus is in that extreme level of anguish because of knowing two things heading his way: first, the reality of the physical torture He is going to have to endure, and secondly, and most devastating to Him, the rupture of His eternal relationship with His Father due to His completely taking onto Himself all the sins of the world. And yet, because of His love for His Father, His obedience to His Father's plan of salvation, and His love of us, even as He prays: ***"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from Me"*** - ***Jesus Christ, Luke 22:42a***, it's the three- word phrase he utters next that is so remarkable: ***"not my will"*** - ***Jesus Christ, Luke 22:42b***. As God, He knows what's ahead - every last, horrific detail. But as the Son, He is completely committed to the obedience of his Father - in every detail, with no limits. And as the Savior of the world, He loves us to the point of choosing to ***"lay down His life for His friends"*** - ***Jesus Christ, John 15:13b***. When Jesus, in all His agony, says those three simple words, ***"not My will,"*** that's when we know that Jesus is going to the cross - and salvation is going to be accomplished.

Our second three-word phrase comes from the moment of Jesus' arrest. This is the one part of the entire story of Holy Week that absolutely never ceases to blow me away. Now keep in mind that the guy being arrested, though humanly existing as Jesus of Nazareth, is God ...as in - ***"I and the Father are one"*** - ***Jesus Christ, John 10:30***, and ***"Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father"*** - ***Jesus Christ, John 14:9b***. This is the guy who, as God, ***created the heavens and the earth*** - ***Genesis 1:1b***, who, in fact, created the entire universe; as John said at the beginning of his gospel: ***Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made-John 1:3***. And the apostle Paul chimed in with this: ***The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together*** - ***Paul, Colossians 1:15-17***. And as the prophet Jeremiah had stated so strongly in the OT: ***God made the earth by His power; He founded the world by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens by His understanding*** - ***Jeremiah 10:12***. And that same power continues over all He created; as the writer of Hebrews celebrated (and I love the wording of the English Standard Version): ***[Jesus] upholds the universe by the word of His power*** - ***Hebrews 1:3a(ESV)***.

Why all this mention on the power of God in His creating all and sustaining all? Because of what happened next in the Garden: The gospels tell us that a large crowd of men, armed with swords and clubs and accompanied by a contingent of Roman soldiers, came into the Garden looking for Jesus to arrest Him. Why is just one guy, who the religious leaders insist is nothing more than just a man, somehow creating the need for such a large group of people, complete with weapons, to simply arrest Him? Well, a couple of reasons may have entered in: first, the crowds who surrounded Him to celebrate His arrival in Jerusalem just a few short days before suggested a great deal of support for this guy, and arresting Him could conceivably cause a

riot; and second, the religious leadership, who worked closely with the Romans to maintain order - an arrangement that was beneficial to both of them - may have offered to the Romans the idea that Jesus was planting seeds of rebellion against Roman authority, what with all the talk of His possibly being the "the Messiah" - a concept that for many would have been a strictly political idea - which certainly would have gotten their attention.

So, as they arrived, they would have begun to surround the entire group, even as they were focused on finding Jesus. Peter, sensing the danger, pulled out a weapon of his own and, swinging wildly, cut off the ear of a guy named Malehus, a servant of the high priest. Jesus immediately reprimanded him, telling Peter: **"Put your sword back in its place.... Do you think I cannot call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" - Jesus Christ, Matthew 26:52a, 53-54**, adding in John's gospel: **"Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" - Jesus Christ, John 18:11b**. And then, according to Luke's gospel, Jesus shows the ongoing amazing grace of God, even as all the hate and animosity of His enemies is on full display: **[Jesus] touched the man's ear and healed him - Luke 22:51b**.

Now, here's where it gets truly overwhelming to me: Having at Christ's disposal twelve legions of angels? That's "God" stuff. The healing and restoration of a severed ear? That's "God" stuff. But all that changes in a moment, with our next three-word phrase, as the mob and soldiers descend on Jesus to arrest Him; according to John: **They bound Him - John 18:12b**. That is staggering. Think of all Jesus surrendered in that moment: all the power of the universe. All the Power that created, all the Power that sustained, all the Power that healed (which He had just demonstrated, by the way)- in that moment, Jesus surrendered His Godhood and became, completely and totally, a human being - with all its fragility, all its ability to experience pain, all its ability to be hurt and damaged and tortured ...and bleed ...and die. In that moment He surrendered God stuff to become man stuff- to be completely us. To me, that moment - **they bound Him** - is the most overwhelming moment of all. To think that the Lord of the universe would very literally give up who He was to save who I was. In that moment in the Garden, Jesus surrendered Himself to become every one of us.

Now our next three-word phrase is no less remarkable for the context in which it occurs. By this time, Jesus has been nailed to the cross. He is experiencing every agonizing moment as fully human - no divine numbing of the pain, no divine miracle of jumping down from the cross. He remains in place - spikes cruelly holding His hands and feet. In addition to that, all His opponents were getting in their last laughs, their last insults at Him; as Matthew wrote: **Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" - Matthew 27:39-40**. As Mark's gospel adds: **In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked Him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but He can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe" - Mark 15:31-32a**. And as Luke's gospel completes the dark picture: **The soldiers also came up and mocked Him. They**

offered Him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself" - Luke 23:36-37.

And Jesus' response to all this? **"Father, forgive them"-Jesus Christ, Luke 23:34a.** No anger in the midst of pain, no fury at the massive injustice that is occurring, no venomous words hurled back at His enemies. Only one thing: **"Father, forgive them."** The apostle Peter received enough information from this moment on the cross that, some thirty years later, he would write: **Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth." When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly-I Peter 2:21-23 (quoting Isaiah 53:9).** In the face of such hate, He sought the absolute best for all those who opposed Him - His Father's forgiveness. Peter had it right: What an example! And the Greek actually tells us more: The word used here literally means Jesus praying to His Father that He would send their sins away, literally dismiss them. What Jesus is praying for is not forgiveness for a moment but that, by God's grace, all those involved in this moment would someday come to the realization of who He was, and their need of forgiveness - not just for the sins of this day, but for their entire lives. That's what He came for, to save all sinners, including these standing right before Him. And the grammatical construction suggests that this phrase was repeatedly spoken during Christ's time on the cross, so that it underscores the very theme of the cross itself: **"Father, forgive them"**

And we get our concluding three-word phrase from the apostle John, with an insertion from Luke, as the agony of Christ's crucifixion came to an end; as their gospels tell it: **[K]nowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When He had received the drink, Jesus [called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit My spirit.] "It is finished." With that, [He breathed His last,] He bowed His head and gave up His spirit- John 19:28-30 [Luke 23:46].**

The phrase? **"It is finished."** The meaning? Priceless! When Jesus voices that simple, three-word phrase, he is declaring some incredible truths:

- 1) The terrible price of sin has been paid, and
- 2) God is satisfied with the payment.

A human being had lived a life pleasing to God - very literally perfectly pleasing to God. As a result, His perfection qualified Him to be a sin sacrifice from the entire world. Remember when Jesus first appeared to John the Baptist? John identified Him with an eye to the OT: **"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"-John the Baptist, John 1:29b.** That picture of the "lamb of God" flashed back to the days when God installed the sacrificial system through Moses, particularly focused on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), when a lamb, perfect in every way, was sacrificed for the sins of the people – a foreshadowing of what was to occur on the cross. And the apostle Peter recognized in Jesus not only the sacrificial nature of Christ's life but also the necessary perfect nature of Christ's life; he wrote: **[Y]ou know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious**

blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect - 1 Peter 1:18-19. That's what the life of Jesus accomplished- offering His perfect life in trade for my grossly imperfect life. **It is finished** signaled that all Jesus came from heaven to do was now done, completed - mission accomplished!

APPLICATION

So, two thousand years later, what do these phrases mean for us, for how we are to be living as Christians? Let's go phrase by phrase:

- 1) The meaning of "**not my will**" really comes into focus when Jesus is telling Peter to put his weapon away: "**Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?**"-**Jesus Christ, John 18:11b.** Jesus is asking that question to Peter is pointing out two incredibly crucial things:
 - a) First, that this path He is taking has been prepared and planned by His Father, and Christ knows that God's plans are perfect.
 - b) Because of who Jesus knows prepared this "cup" for Him, He can rest and trust in the goodness of those plans, knowing that God will provide all He needs to accomplish His plan; as Paul would later write: **[W]e know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" - Paul, Romans 8:28.** Jesus had said multiple times that, essentially, His entire life was a calling to God's purpose. This moment in the Garden was simply one step in that life. Even as **they bound Him,** He could rest, even surrender Himself completely, to God's purpose.

What we can likewise rest in is that, no matter the "cup" God has prepared for us, His plans for that "cup" are perfect and, just like with Christ, God will provide all we need to accomplish the purpose of whatever particular "cup" God brings into our lives. Because God's plans are perfect, and because God provides all we need, we can completely rest in "**not My will,**" knowing that the best life is the life lived in God's will. Do we trust God enough to know that He will provide all we need for every need, that every "cup" from Him is the gift of a loving Father to us?

2. His next phrase, with the context in which Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them,**" is overwhelming. In the midst of physically, tangibly receiving all the hate and anger directed at Him, He is continuing to look far beyond the moment to a far bigger picture - of people who were acting but not comprehending what they were doing. Regardless of the circumstances, Jesus kept His Father's eyes and His Father's heart toward all those around Him. He had preached to His followers at the Sermon on the Mount: "**You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven"**- **Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:43-45a (quoting Leviticus 19:18b).** Jesus was very literally practicing what He had been preaching. By praying for them, He was demonstrating His love for them. Even as their worst is being inflicted on Him, He is desiring the best for them. That really must beg the question to us: In light of all Jesus was suffering, can any wrong done to us compare? If Jesus could forgive in that moment, how can we not forgive anything and everything that may have been done to us? Note that Jesus didn't qualify His forgiveness; He just

prayed, "**Father, forgive them.**" God knows every detail of anything that has wronged us, and He is more than able to bring the remedy necessary. Notice that no place in the teachings of Jesus or the apostles are we told that consequence is our responsibility. That's God stuff. What we are told is that forgiveness is our responsibility. That's God's-people stuff- in particular, people who should know and understand forgiveness using that understanding to forgive others knowing just how much God has forgiven them. Jesus' blood is as much for them as for us. Therefore, our forgiveness should seek to show as much effort and energy as Jesus showed in "**Father, forgive them.**"

3. And, with the phrase "**It is finished,**" we have the awesome blessing of assurance that our salvation is complete. There is nothing left to do; there is nothing we have to earn. Our salvation is completely found in the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross. Jesus left no sin behind when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. So, a couple things become evident:
 - a. We can know that, if we have surrendered our lives to God through Christ, if we have confessed and asked forgiveness for our sins that, as John wrote in his first letter: ***If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness – 1 John 1:9.*** If that has happened, then we are clothed in the perfect life of Jesus Christ, and God sees us as He sees His own Son - as perfect!
 - b. We can know that the same power that forgave us our sins keeps us sealed in that salvation. As Christ said: "***I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of My hand***" - ***Jesus Christ, John 10:28.***
Praise God!

CONCLUSION

Three little words. Small in number - amazing in meaning. I hope and pray that, for all of us, these phrases have filled our hearts and minds with the truly "amazing grace" of God. No wonder they call it "Good Friday." Let's pray!

God bless, y'all!