

Jesus Gave His All for Us

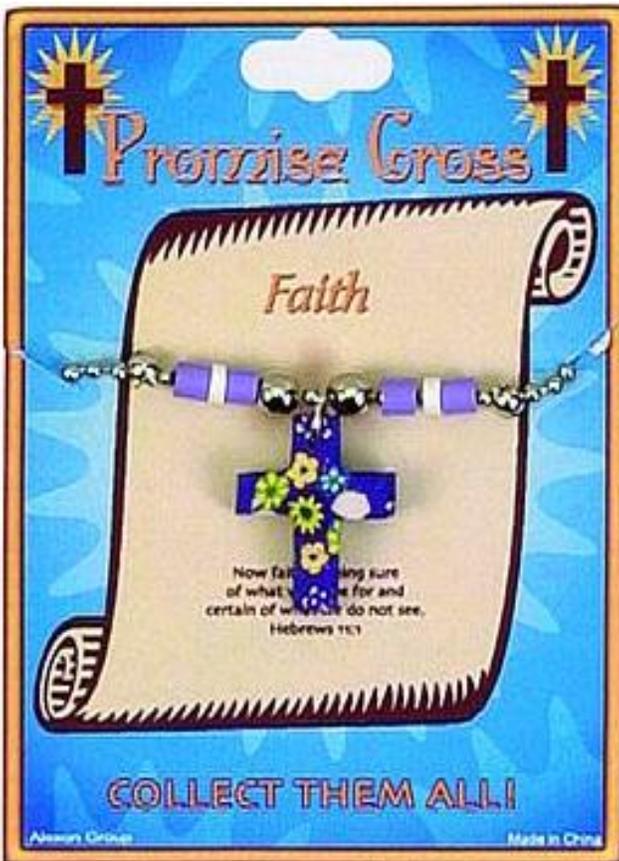
Message for Good Friday, April 10, 2020
by Bruce Fraser

The song “There is a Green Hill Far Away” contains this verse:

We may not know, we cannot tell,
what pains he had to bear;
but we believe it was for us
he hung and suffered there.

Very true. We cannot begin to imagine what the sacrifice of Jesus was like for him, or how great it is for us. All we can do is say, “Thank-you” and give our lives to him in love. That’s what we will do today.

Below is an advertisement I received in the mail.



There is nothing new about using the cross as a piece of jewellery; lots of people do that. The crosses we have in churches are made of metal or wood, polished so they gleam. They are smooth, clean, respectable. But this ad struck me as being way over the top. It has bright colours and is decorated with pretty flowers. And just like you used to find toys in boxes of Sugar Crisp cereal, they want you to collect all twelve.

The cross is not respectable; it is a disgrace. The cross is not pretty; it’s ugly. The cross is not a toy for playing; it’s a weapon for killing people.

And yet the apostle Paul says this:

Galatians 6:14

May I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus' words from the cross

Forgiveness

Luke 23:34

“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

There is nothing new here. Jesus taught this in the Lord’s prayer: “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.” What is profound here is that Jesus lived out his teaching, right to the very end. Even in the most extreme circumstances, he never changed. Lord, help us to be like Jesus.

Hope

Luke 23:35-43

“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.”

It would have been perfectly understandable for Jesus to say to this stranger — a criminal, no less!: “Listen, I’d love to help you, but I’m dealing with my own crisis right now.” Instead, Jesus receives this man who is reaching out to him for help, and gives him his promise. Jesus gives him hope.

Compassion

John 19:25b-27

“Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!”

Here again, Jesus sees the need of someone else. This time, though, it is not a stranger; it is his own mother. Her heart is breaking, and for once Jesus is completely helpless to bring comfort to someone. Even though he cannot take away her pain, he arranges for someone else to be with her in that pain, and to look after her from then on.

Despair

Mark 15:33-35

“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

How ironic! Just moments ago, we read how Jesus gave hope to the dying criminal. Now here is Jesus

with no hope for himself.

The consequence of sin is that we cut ourselves off from God. God is holy, and nothing polluted by sin can come near God. The Bible talks about how Jesus took our sins upon himself. That means that Jesus is utterly alone in bearing this burden. His sacrifice is more than we will ever know.

Need

John 19:28-29

“I am thirsty.”

Again, this is so ironic. Jesus is the one who said, “Those who drink the water that I will give them will never be thirsty again” [John 4:14]. He who gave living water to others, is himself in need of a drink. This gives us just a glimpse of how the Jesus’ sacrifice completely emptied him.

Completion

John 19:30

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished!” And he bowed His head and gave up his spirit.

These words can be taken two ways. They could be the words of defeat: “We’ve lost; the enemy has won; it’s all over.” Or they could be the words of victory: “We have completed our mission. Everything is done.”

This is where it’s so important for us to try to think like the disciples: they believed these were words of defeat. All their hopes and dreams died with Jesus. Later they found out otherwise; but for now, they are completely crushed.

Peace

Luke 23:46

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last.

This is a direct quote of Psalm 31:5. Every Jewish mother taught her children to say this prayer at their bedtime. That is the same prayer Jesus used as he died, with one change: he added the word “Father.”

Jesus died confidently, with the peace that comes from trusting his heavenly Father. When we know Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we can die with that same peace. Not just die—we can *live* with that peace. Yes, there are trials and troubles, but knowing that God is with us makes all the

difference in the world.

Conclusion

These are the words that Jesus spoke from the cross. What is perhaps just as important is what he did not say. These seven sayings use 55 words. Talking in a normal voice, I can repeat them in about half a minute. Jesus hung on the cross for six hours, from nine o’clock in the morning until three in the afternoon.

Six hours on the cross. Thirty seconds of talking. Maybe that’s all that Jesus *could* say. Those were six hours of agony, pure torture, on top of what he had been through during the night, and the beating he received from the soldiers.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Sometimes in a worship service when we do a prayer of confession, we read aloud from the bulletin. Sometimes we do it quietly, each one communicating silently with the Lord. And since I don’t include that in every worship service, sometimes we don’t do it at all.

Today I’m asking you to do something different. Take a piece of paper and write on it the ways you have failed God. Don’t just say something vague like, “I could have done better.” Be specific.

Don’t worry about someone seeing what you wrote. This is just between you and the Lord.

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S GRACE

Now read over your list. With each item, tell God you’re sorry, and ask for forgiveness. Pray for help to be a better person. Be open to God working in your life to make this happen. Again, take your time to do this.

When you have done this, crumple the paper into a ball and place it in a glass bowl. Light a match and watch the paper burn away to ash. It is a symbol that our sins are completely wiped out, forgiven. We are washed free from sin, and can live for Christ.

Give thanks to Jesus for his sacrifice for you.

Now let’s sing “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.”