



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**“SEVEN LAST WORDS:
WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON.
SON, THY MOTHER”**

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: Luke 23: 32-37
Date: Good Friday, April 19, 1957

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on Good Friday, 1957.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Luke 23: 32-37).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

This meditation was preached as part of a community observance on the Seven Last Words. The participating churches were Westminster, Faith Lutheran and Christ Methodist. It was the sixth year of the cooperative observance. Also participating were Reverend Thomas Kelso, Reverend William McCartney, Reverend Russell Riethmiller, and Reverend Harry Peelor. The order of the service was:

- The Words from the Cross
- Forgiveness at the Cross: Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.
- Authority at the Cross: Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.
- Remembrance at the Cross: Woman, behold thy Son! Behold thy Mother. (Dr. Galbreath’s meditation)
- Submission at the Cross: My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me.
- Suffering at the Cross: I thirst.
- Victory at the Cross: It is finished.
- Confidence at the Cross: Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.

The pouch contained two sets of notes.

Seven Last Words

- I. **Woman, Behold thy son. Son, Thy Mother.**
- II. **“Must Jesus bear the cross alone, and all the world go free? No, there’s a cross for everyone; and there’s a cross for me.”**
- III. **We come to stand with those at the cross.**
- IV. **And, as we stand, we share the agony of that hour.**
- V. **Religious history has its account of those who have meditated upon the cross and received their stigmata for it.**
- VI. **None more fully shared the suffering of Christ than Mary, his mother.**
- VII. **Symeon’s words of prophecy, uttered upon his dedication as an infant must have come back, “And a sword shall pierce thine own soul also.”**
- VIII. **How she would have taken the cross in his place!**
- IX. **Jesus, upon the cross, had only one worldly care – that of his mother.**
- X. **This is the sting that no faith can completely blot out. We may have the assurance of our own salvation – but how can we heal the wounds of those who remain.**
- XI. **Finally, looking to his mother, then to John, he said, “Woman, behold thy son.”**

XII. Mary would need John – not just for physical aid, but to receive the affection previously lavished upon Jesus.

XIII. John, behold thy mother. John was yet young – had leaned upon Jesus, physically and emotionally. Only His mother could solace him.

XIV. We have been so fearful of falling into the errors of the Roman Church that perhaps we have not properly revered her who suffered more for our Master than any of that company of disciples.

Father, Forgive Them

I. Who were “They?”

A. The Soldiers

1. They were garrison troops, assigned an unsavory detail.
2. It had not been their decision – they followed orders.
3. How could they have known that the prisoner of the day was King of Kings?

B. The Crowd

1. It was a holiday, and the throngs had nothing better to do.
2. There are always those who will follow an execution.
3. How were they to know that when they cried “Crucify Him,” they were condemning the Savior of the World?

C. The Religious Leaders

1. They had nothing against him, personally.
2. But he was a disturber – upsetting the confidence of the people in their faith.
3. There was always the danger that the tinderbox of emotions should be set aflame , and the Roman legions be set loose again.
4. It was far better that one man should be sacrificed than that the peace of Israel be endangered.
5. How were they to know He was the Messiah – this unlearned peasant of Galilee?

D. They never knew –

1. Each knew what he did – but never knew the enormity of it – or surely the Roman soldier would have revolted against Caesar himself – or the crowds would have risen in defense – or the chief priest would have been first to do homage.
2. They did not know, for they did not take time to know, they did not wish to know, it was easier to follow instinct.
3. Seeing, they never perceived. Hearing, they never understood.

II. We Stand in the Same Condemnation

A. We treat one who serves us with disdain.

1. A person who hungered for a word that should restore respect has been ground under once more.
2. We repeat a story – told on good authority – but thoughtless of the fact that we have robbed another of his most prized possession – his honor.
3. We speak harshly and unreasonably to a child – thoughtless of the depth of hurt.

B. We blind ourselves to the radical damage of our sin.

III. His Amazing Grace

- A. As we view the cross, our sin becomes real – our eyes opened to its baseness.
- B. But beyond the grossness of the scene is the wonder of it – the marvel of the God who gives himself there – a God who said, “Though your sins be scarlet, they shall be white as wool.”
- C. Here we stand at the foot of the cross, overwhelmed by the mercy of Him who said of them – and say of us – “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: Luke 23: 32-37

Luke 23:32 and 33 say: ³²And there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. ³³ And when they came unto the place which is called the skull, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

- Why do you think it was important for the writer to note that Jesus was crucified along with criminals?
- Why do you think the writer noted that Jesus was between the two?

Luke 23:34 says: ³⁴ And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And parting his garments among them, they cast lots.

- Attention is rightly paid to Jesus' words. Why do you think special note was made of the casting of lots for his garments?

Luke 23:35 through 37 say: ³⁵ And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also scoffed at him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if this is the Christ of God, his chosen. ³⁶ And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, offering him vinegar, ³⁷ and saying, If thou art the King of the Jews, save thyself.

- Why do you think the writer noted the rulers and the soldiers separately? Why couldn't it have simply been said that all mocked him?
- Why do you think it was important to note the challenge that was put to Jesus to save himself?

Study Questions -- Part II

Sermon :

Seven Last Words

At II – What cross do you carry?

At III and IV – Imagine you had been standing at the cross. What would you have said to those around you?

At VI – Specifically, what would you have said to Mary to try to comfort her?

At IX – How different might this day have been if Mary had not been there to see her son crucified? What might his central concern been if he wasn't worried about her?

At X – Originally it was worded This is the grief instead of This is the sting.

At XI, XII and XIII – What expectations do you think Jesus had for Mary regarding John? For John regarding Mary?

At XIV – How do you view Mary and her role in the church?

Father Forgive Them

I.A. – What would a soldier's life have been like assigned to Jerusalem?

I.A.3. – What would their view of Jesus have been?

I.B. – What kind of person would attend an execution? Is it really that different in theory from those who slow down to look at traffic accidents?

I.B. 3. – With the advantage of hindsight what might those people think knowing what they witnessed?

I.C. 2. – In what ways did Jesus make their lives more difficult?

I.C.3. – What might the legions have done to the Jewish leaders?

I.C.4. – In what ways do we continue to sacrifice the few for the many? Economically? Politically? Educationally? In social justice?

I.D. – Where in your life do you sometimes miss the big picture because you are immersed in details?

I.D.3. – What have you seen or heard after the fact that you missed at the time?

II.A. – When have you treated someone with less respect because you have not known that person as an individual but merely as someone serving a momentary purpose?

III – When are you most in touch with the gift given to you by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross?

III.C. – What changes can you make in your life to show gratitude for God's mercy?