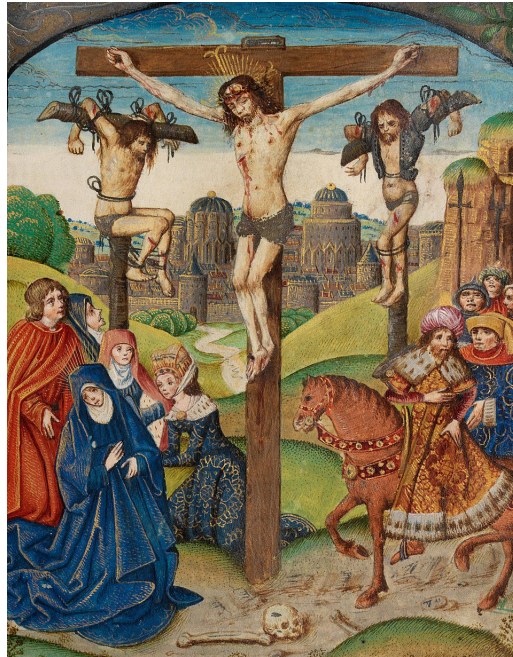




Words from the Cross

Study Five



Crucifixion of Christ on the Cross between two thieves; anon, c1503



When words are few, they often carry great weight. Can you remember a time when someone's last words, or a final conversation, stayed with you long afterwards?

What gave those words power?

Jesus and the Thief on the Cross

(Read Luke 23:39–43)

Two criminals hang beside Jesus, each facing the same death but responding differently. This conversation is unique to Luke's account, and it serves to reinforce two characteristics of his gospel, that of the innocence of Jesus, and how powerful is a moment of realisation of who Jesus is, and what that means for us.

Luke begins with the mocking comment of the one criminal, but then the other has a moment of clarity, recognising that Jesus is not a pretender and will indeed reign in some way as king. It's a whisper of faith, perhaps his first and only prayer, and Jesus' reply is immediate, assuring him he does not

have to wait, because very soon he will enjoy fellowship with Jesus in 'paradise', a word symbolising a place of beauty and delight.

Even in agony, Jesus listens and responds with mercy. His final conversation before death is one of grace. Lent leads us to this place, where all our pretence falls away and only grace remains.



What does this brief exchange tell you about Jesus' heart and priorities?

How does this story shape your understanding of salvation by grace?

What might it mean to live in the freedom of 'today you will be with me'?

Jesus, His Mother, and the Beloved Disciple

(Read John 19:25–30)

As Jesus hangs on the cross, a brave few - family, friends and followers - gather beneath him, others having fled through fear. Even in this moment of agony and surrender, Jesus continues to engage in conversation, not with power or accusation, but love and care. He entrusts his mother to the disciple (traditionally believed to be John), and the disciple to her.

Even in death, Jesus is forming a community of love and care.

This tender exchange stands in contrast to the hostility and violence surrounding the scene. Where the

powers of the world assert dominance often through cruelty, Jesus' words create belonging and responsibility. His final act is not one of condemnation but of relationship and love.

This moment reveals that faith is never solitary. At the foot of the cross, strangers become family, bound together by the love of Christ. The Church begins here. Lent invites us to notice who stands beside us and how Christ still entrusts us to one another's care.



Why do you think Jesus' final concern is to connect people rather than to speak about himself?

How does this scene shape our understanding of community and care?

What relationships might God be calling you to tend or reconcile this Lent?

'Unless there is Good Friday in your life, there can be no Easter Sunday.'
(Fulton Sheen)

'Lent is the time for greater love: listen to Jesus' thirst... Repent and believe.'
(Mother Teresa)

'God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy.'
(Pope Francis)

Jesus' Final Words to the Father

(Read Luke 23:44–49)

Darkness covers the land, the curtain of the temple tears, and Jesus cries out in the midst of agony, abandonment, and injustice. He does not cry out in despair but entrusts himself fully to the Father. This moment is not just the end of his earthly life; it is the culmination of a life lived in perfect communion with God, even in this time of suffering.

His final breath is not a cry of defeat but a declaration of faith. In our own seasons of darkness - whether personal, communal, or global - this scene reminds us that surrender is not passive resignation but active faith. It is choosing to place our lives, our pain, and our hopes into God's hands.

Here, our journey through Lent finds its fulfilment in perfect obedience, perfect trust, and perfect love. His last breath becomes a prayer. For us, these words offer both comfort and challenge - a reminder that life and death alike can be placed in God's hands.

The cross, once a symbol of shame, becomes the ultimate conversation of love between Father and Son, overheard for the world's redemption.



What does Jesus' final prayer reveal about his relationship with the Father?

How might these words guide us when we face fear or uncertainty?

What does it mean, practically, to 'commit our spirit' to God each day?

Summing up

The final conversations of Jesus are brief, but they contain the heart of the gospel: mercy offered to the undeserving, love that builds community even in suffering, and trust that surrenders everything into the Father's care. Lent leads us here - to the cross where all words fall silent except those of grace. From this place, resurrection hope will speak again.

Think about later

Spend time this week with one of Jesus' sayings from the cross.

Read it slowly, perhaps aloud.

Let it become your prayer - a way of entrusting yourself, and those you love, into God's care.

A closing prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
you spoke mercy to a dying thief,
love to your grieving friends,
and trust to your Father in heaven.
Teach us to listen to your voice,
to speak words of compassion,
and to rest our lives in your hands.
Amen.

