

The Lord's Last Words Readings

"Forgive them."

³² There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. ³³ And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."** —*Luke 23:32-4*

"Behold your son!" "Behold your mother!"

²⁵ Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, **"Woman, behold your son!"** ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, **"Behold your mother!"** And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. —*John 19:25-27*

"You will be with Me in Paradise."

³⁹ Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

⁴³ And Jesus said to him, **"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."**

"Why have You forsaken Me?"

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, **"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"** that is, **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"** —*Matthew 27:46*

"I Thirst."

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" ²⁹ Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it* to His mouth. —*John 19:28*

"It is finished."

³⁰ So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, **"It is finished!"** —*John 19:30*

"Into Your hands I commit My spirit."

⁴⁶ And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, **"Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last.** Luke 23:44-46

The Lord came into the world to glorify the human nature he took on in the world, that is, to unite it to its divine source. This is how he keeps hell eternally in its place and in obedience to himself. Since this could not have been accomplished except by allowing his human nature to be tested, including even the ultimate test, the suffering on the cross, therefore he underwent that experience. —*True Christianity 2*

The Lord's Last Words

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

—Luke 23:33-4

Four weeks from today we celebrate the Lord's resurrection on Easter morning.

The Lord's will is to forgive us, to help us love each other, to bring us into heaven with himself. He fervently desires our happiness. So his purpose in coming into the world was not to be punished in our place, but to overcome the power of hell that was causing so much unhappiness and misery in the world, and to make His love for the human race evident, which He did by completely filling His human essence with love so that He became pure divine love. (Secrets of Heaven 3212.4, 1737). The crucifixion, then, was not God's punishment, but a way to overcome hell and make His human Divine.

One of the great mistakes of the Christian Church has been to think that the whole of redemption was accomplished by Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. But in fact everything the Lord did throughout His life was part of his redemption. He was teaching, healing, and going through temptations or trials throughout His whole life. His suffering on the cross was his final and fiercest test, yet everything that he said at that time was an expression of the same love that he showed for all people throughout his life.

The Lord continues the same work today:

In our struggles or temptations the Lord carries out an individual redemption, just as He did a total redemption when He was in the world. —True Christianity 599

The women and men who followed the Lord saw what was happening on the cross and struggled with their loss of hope and their guilt over having abandoned the Lord. Likewise, we struggle today with the loss of confidence in our ideals and relationships, for our shame for having at times gone against the Lord's love. Yet today the Lord expresses the same Divine love for each one of us.

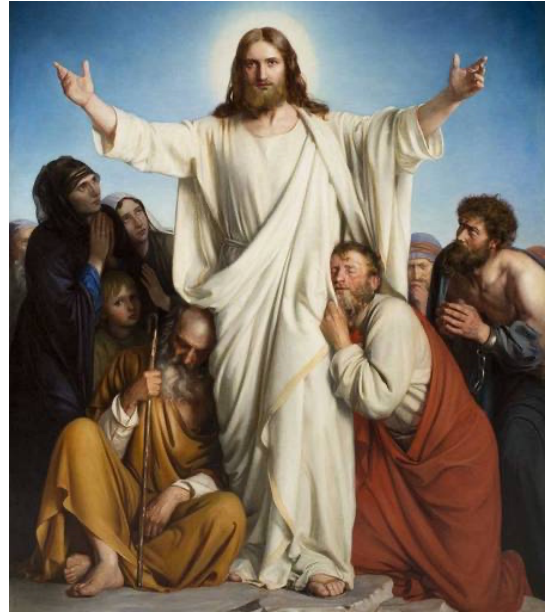
The Lord is mercy itself. Therefore he forgives the sins of all people. He blames no one for any sin. He says, "They do not know what they are doing." —True Christianity 539.2

The work of the Lord to forgive us today as He did long ago is expressed in these lines from the hymn:

**For all who look upon My cross and suffer still with shame and loss,
again, today, as long ago, “Forgive them, for they do not know.”**

The Lord often forgave people, as He forgave the woman who washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. The Lord said, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she has loved much.” (Luke 7:47) Divine Love is always forgiving.

One might suppose that in saying, “Father, forgive them,” Jesus was interceding on our behalf. When the Lord was going through temptations, He prayed to the Father as if He were praying to another person. At those times, he was not yet fully united with the divine love that was in him, and he was still working to align his humanity with that divine love.



It's not that the Lord prays to the Father for us and intercedes in that way; for then He would be acting in an entirely human manner. Rather He is constantly excusing and constantly forgiving, because He is constantly showing compassion. The Lord Himself is doing this since the Lord and the Father are one (John 14:8-12).
—*Secrets of Heaven* 8179.2

You can see how insane people are who think that God can condemn anyone, curse anyone, throw anyone into hell, predestine anyone's soul to eternal death, avenge wrongs, or rage against or punish anyone.... In reality, God cannot turn away from us or even look at us with a frown. To do any such thing would be against his essence, and what is against his essence is against Himself.
—*True Christianity* 56

On the cross the Lord said to His mother, **“Woman, behold your son!”** Then He said to the disciple John, **“Behold your mother!”**
—*John* 19:26-27

The Lord's command is to love one another as He has loved us. (*John* 13:34, 15:12)

It's significant that Jesus addressed his mother as “woman.” He never actually called her “mother.”

Through Mary, Jesus took on a human form that was limited, weak, and with inherited tendencies towards evil. As he perfected his human form he gradually put off all the limitations, weaknesses, and evil tendencies that he inherited from Mary and put on in place of them the divine humanity that he had from the divine love within him. He became no longer the son of Mary, but entirely the son of God. For this reason, He did not call Mary his mother. Instead, He referred to all who do God's will as His mother:

Once Jesus' brothers and mother came, and they were standing outside asking for Him, calling Him. And a crowd was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.”

But He answered, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” And He looked around in a circle at the people who sat around Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”

—*Mark* 3:31-35



On the cross, the Lord asked Mary and John to take care of each other, expressing His desire for all people in his church to care for each other.

John means good actions from a caring heart, and “woman” and “mother” mean the church. So the whole statement means that wherever good actions are being done from a caring heart is where the true church will be found.
—*New Jerusalem* 122

So in reality the Lord's words to John and Mary are addressed to all of us, that we should love and care for each other, because that is what His love does.

For God loves each and every human being; and because He cannot do good to them directly, but only indirectly by means of other people, He therefore breathes into people His love, just as He breathes into parents love for their children.
—*True Christianity* 457

The words in the hymn are **“Behold your mother! See your son:” All those who love Me, every one.**

There were “two robbers crucified with Jesus, one on the right and another on the left.” (Matthew 27:38) A few days earlier the Lord had told the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, in which the good,

compassionate people were on the Lord's right, and the selfish, uncaring people on His left. At the crucifixion it appears that the robber on the Lord's left was mostly concerned with escaping that terrible punishment, cursing Jesus even as he asked for His help. There is no indication that the man felt bad about the robbery he had done, though clearly he felt bad about being punished for it.

In contrast, the criminal on Jesus' right felt bad about what he did—he acknowledged his sin and said that he deserved the punishment. To him the Lord said,

“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

—*Luke 23:42-43*

How we feel about wrong we have done in the past is a sign of our character:

When we get ourselves caught up in evils, as usually happens as we grow up, if we feel anxiety when we reflect on something bad we have done, it is a sign that we will still receive an influence through angels from heaven. It is also a sign that we will later allow ourselves to be reformed.

—*Secrets of Heaven 5470.2*

The Lord desires to raise all without exception to Himself into heaven. —*Secrets of Heaven 2401*

The Lord said, “If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to Myself.” (John 12:32). Yet He can only bring into heaven those who turn to Him and repent of their evil.

When sin brings sorrow and dismay, the Lord says, **“I’ll be with you in heav’n today.”**

Throughout His life the Lord gave people the promise of eternal life. When Jairus' daughter died,



Jesus said, “Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.” And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, “Little girl, arise.” Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. —*Luke 8:52-55*

The Lord did not create the universe for his own sake but for the sake of people he would be with in heaven.... It then follows that divine love...has the goal of a heaven made up of people who have become angels and are becoming angels, people with whom it can share all the bliss and joy of love and wisdom, giving them these blessings from the Lord's own presence within them.

Divine Providence 27

On the cross Jesus cried out, **“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”** —*Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34*

The Lord came into the world to overcome hell and to make his human divine. He could overcome the Hells by allowing them to attack him in his times of trial and then struggling against the hatred and contempt that they spewed at him. It was also by means of these trials that he made his human divine. The same way we can overcome our own evils and be regenerated only by going through spiritual struggles and trials, and at these times we may feel that God has abandoned us.

During our spiritual tests, we are apparently left completely alone, although in fact we are not alone—at those times God is most intimately present at our deepest level giving us support.

—*True Christianity 126*

As long as our trials continue, we think the Lord is absent, since evil demons disturb us, sometimes to the point where despair almost prevents us from believing God exists at all. But the Lord is closer than we can possibly believe. —*Secrets of Heaven* 840

For since He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted. —*Hebrews 2:18*

Lord's trials were the very fiercest of all. A trial is as fierce as the love is great. —*Secrets of Heaven* 1820

In his temptations in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.” (*Matthew 26:38*) And for us,



All trial carries with it some kind of despair; otherwise it is not a trial.... Those who are sure of victory feel no anxiety, so they face no test.... Because the Lord endured the most dreadful, fiercest trials of all, he too was inevitably driven to despair, a despair he was to overcome and dispel by his own power. —*Secrets of Heaven* 1787

The hymn says, **When hell attacks remorselessly: “God, why have You abandoned Me?”**

The Lord was never abandoned by the Father (the Divine Love that was in Him). Yet the appearance of being abandoned was part of the trial that opened Him up to being completely filled with that Divine Love.

On the cross the Lord said, **“I Thirst.”**

—*John 19:28, Luke 22:17-19*

When Jesus met a woman at Jacob’s well in Samaria, he asked her for a drink. In the conversation that follows it becomes clear that his reason for asking her for a drink was because he wanted to connect with her. He wanted her to know that he could offer her eternal life if she embraced the truth He was giving her.

Jesus said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” —*John 4:13-14*



Likewise, when the Lord drank with his disciples at the Last Supper, His real thirst was to bring his disciples into his heavenly Kingdom. He said, “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” (*Matthew 26:29*)

Because He came into the world to save humankind, He said, “I thirst,” which means that from Divine love He willed and desired the salvation of the human race. (*Apocalypse Explained* 386:30)

“I thirst”—to share My cup with you; in heavenly realms to drink it new.

On the cross the Lord said, **“It is finished.”**

—*John 19:30*

But what was finished?

The Lord's suffering on the cross was the final crisis by which he finished uniting his humanity with his divinity, and his divinity with his humanity, and in this way glorified himself. —*Secrets of Heaven* 2776

Now **“It is finished.” All is done: Divine and Human joined in one.**

Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane,

I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. —*John* 17:4-5

In the world the Lord was continually in the process of becoming one with the Father, or of being glorified. The disciples had a glimpse of this when the Lord was transfigured.

His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them.... And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. —*Mark* 9:2-8

When Jesus was transfigured (in a state of glorification or union with the Divine Love) He does not appear beside the Father, but by Himself, because the Divine Love (the Father) is in Him.

The Lord's Human, after it was glorified or made Divine, cannot be thought of as human, but as the Divine love in human form. —*Secrets of Heaven* 4735

Consequently, the Lord finally said, **“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”** —*Luke* 23:46

The right hand means a higher power, and sitting at the right hand of Jehovah means omnipotence. —*Secrets of Heaven* 4933

So when the Lord was taken up into heaven, He said, “All power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (*Matthew* 28:18)

But the power that was given to Him was the power of love—the power to heal, to save and to draw all people to Himself. And so when the Lord was glorified, He descended as the Divine Truth: the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1,14) But when He went back to the Father having glorified Himself, he then became divine good or divine love entirely.

When the Lord was in the world He made His Human Divine truth... But after the Lord had fully glorified Himself, which was done when He endured the last of temptation on the cross, He then made His Human also Divine good. —*Secrets of Heaven* 7499

So the hymn says, **and yielding to Love's command, “I put My spirit in Your hand.”**

So these words of the Lord on the cross show how the Lord's love was active throughout His whole life, and how it can be active in our lives today. Amen.

