



Seven Last Words Weekly Prayer Guide

“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” ~ Luke 23: 43

The Seven Last Words and Entering the Divine Conversation:

"Seven last words ... they begin with words addressed to the Father, find their centre in a cry at the absence of that Father, and return to address Him again at the end. The words that Jesus addresses to us are held within that relationship with his Father, just as it is there that we shall find our home, within the life of the Trinity. We nestle within that divine conversation."
~Timothy Radcliffe

* This daily guide is designed to encourage you to slowly contemplate and respond personally to the meaning and implications of Jesus' sayings from the cross. Resources of scripture, reflective writing, a daily prayer and questions for deeper personal application and conversation are provided in order to support and guide your meditations.

Daily Readings/ Reflections:

Key Scripture: Luke 23:35-43

Monday: Matthew 16:13-18; Matthew 26:62-64

"Somehow the crucified criminal on Jesus' right was able to see something that day that no one else saw. He saw Jesus reigning as a King and determining the destinies of people even in his tormented and dying state. To see him that way, Luke is telling us, is to see him as he truly is and to understand the source of his power. ... His power is made known only through his death." ~ Fleming Rutledge

Tuesday: Philippians 2:1-11

"The man says to Jesus 'Remember me when you come into your Kingdom.' He recognizes that Jesus is a King. What can it mean to accept that this humiliated and powerless man on a cross is a King?" ~ Timothy Radcliffe

"This thief is right to believe that Jesus is about to kingdom, a kingdom that threatens the kingdoms of this world, built as they must be on the lies made necessary by our attempts to forget that we are creatures destined to die." ~Stanley Hauerwas

Wednesday: Psalm 103:15-17; Psalm 115:12-13; Psalm 69:33-36

"We desperately ask to be remembered, fearing we are nothing. In contrast, this thief confidently asks to be remembered because he recognizes the One who can remember... Like the thief we can live with the hope and confidence that the only remembering that matters is to be remembered by Jesus." ~ Stanley Hauerwas

Thursday: Mark 2:13-16

"The first one home is a thief. Jesus is not very fastidious about the company he keeps." ~Richard John Neuhaus

Friday: Romans 3:22-24; 1John1:5-8; Ephesians2:6-10

"It is not only for the bandits and 'bad elements' on the other side of the civilized divide; it was for us too, with our masks of innocence and our delusions about our own righteousness. His death was for us too." ~ Fleming Rutledge

"The mystery of a love that searched out and found such an unlikely soul as [the thief] is the same love that found us, and if we don't think that we are equally unlikely candidates for salvation, we have not begun to understand the meaning of grace." ~ Richard John Neuhaus

Saturday: Revelation 2:7; Revelation 21:1-5a; John 14:1-4

"The sovereignty of Jesus is a disputed sovereignty ... Christians are those who, like the thief on the cross, have turned to him with faith that is more like a desperate hope and, in listening to his response, have found the faith that moves mountains."
~ Richard John Neuhaus

"We need to know no more than this. To be in paradise is to be 'with Jesus,' to be pulled into God's life by the love made visible on the cross." ~ Stanley Hauerwas

A Daily Prayer of Confession

Lord Jesus, I come to you with an open, seeking heart, admit the following sins and shortcomings and seeking your forgiveness.

I confess that I often forget that your kingdom is revealed through your humble death on the cross.

(Help me to live near the cross)

I confess that I often want you to act more aggressively in order to show your power in more obvious ways.

(Help me to be more gentle)

I confess that I am not quick to respond favourably to those who have committed terrible crimes; forgetting my own sin.

(Help me to identify with all sinners)

I confess that many of my selfish attitudes and actions are rooted in my need to be noticed and my fear of being ignored.

(Help me to remember that you only forget my sin)

I confess that I rarely call out to you for help because I have become so dependent on my own resources.

(Help me to live by faith in you alone)

I confess that I am often found to be living by a small vision, even when I am involved in important things.

(Help me to long for your presence in the midst of my life and work and to keep paradise in view)

Amen.

Questions for Personal Mediation and Group Reflection

1. What is your initial reaction to this word of Jesus from the cross? Is there anything in this passage that you find confusing or unclear?
2. How do you understand the “paradise” which Jesus mentions?
3. How do you feel about criminals being there?
4. What unique things does this conversation between Jesus and the thief reveal to you about who God is?
5. What are the implications of this word for you, for other people and for our lives in the world?
6. What aspect of this conversation do you feel called to live out today?
7. How might this conversation shape your prayers?