

Martin Luther wrote, “Christ took our sins and the sins of the whole world as well as the Father’s wrath on his shoulders, and he has drowned them both in himself so that we are thereby reconciled to God and become completely righteous.”

This study invites us to ponder what Jesus said during the cross experience. His words bring depth to our personal understanding of how the crucifixion speaks to each of us.

Jesus was nailed to the cross by the soldiers. He repeatedly said, *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 2:34)*. Having taught his disciples to pray *forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who sins against us*, he forgave in life’s toughest moments (*Luke 11:4*).

People mocked him as he was hung under a sign labeling him the *King of the Jews*. Mockers sneered, *you are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross if you are the Son of God...He saved others...but he can’t save himself! Let him come down now from the cross and we will believe in him.* *Matthew 27:36, 40, 42*

When one of the criminals on a cross near Jesus mocked him, the other man rebuked his fellow offender and asked Jesus to remember him. Jesus responded, *Today, you will be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:43)*

We can only sense Jesus’ presence in the present as he promises to be with all who turn to him.

John stood with Mary near the foot of the cross. Jesus looked at his mother and said, *Dear woman, here is your son (John 19:26)*. His words separate the natural relationship to make way for her to enter a spiritual relationship with him. He turned to John saying, *here is your mother (John 19:26)*. He put her in the hands of the most compassionate man he knew.

Darkness shrouded the middle of the day. Jesus cried out, *my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46)*. Was that the moment when the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all (*Isaiah 53:6*)? The darkness from a world of rebellion, selfishness, shame and evil sought to put out the light of life.

Parched by hell’s flames, the Son of Man cried, *I am thirsty (John 19:28)*.

Sensing the approach of his final moments on the cross, Jesus said, *It is finished (John 19:30)*. He did not say, “I am finished.” He spoke of the full payment for the penalty for sin. He used the word of a master craftsman finishing his masterpiece. The purchase of redemption was complete. Nothing could be added. This word shouts across the ages, for *salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)*.

The last words Jesus uttered on the cross may echo one of the first prayers he learned at his mother’s knee. *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit ((Luke 23:46)*. He lived as the truth and died with redemption and the *God of truth* on his lips (*Psalms 31:5*).

The moment Jesus died, the massive curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the presence of sinful humanity was torn from top to bottom (*Matthew 27:51*). Jesus’ death made forgiveness of sin possible. God tore the curtain to make a way for people like us to have access to God.

The “sacred story” invites each of us to paint ourselves into the picture. Questions arise. Look at your life and try to travel back in time. Which person at the crucifixion is most like you? Think through the words of Jesus on the cross. Which of his seven statements do you most need to reflect on today?

Often the first Bible verse a child learns is *John 3:16—For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*. The “Sacred Story” reveals the price of God’s gift of salvation.

