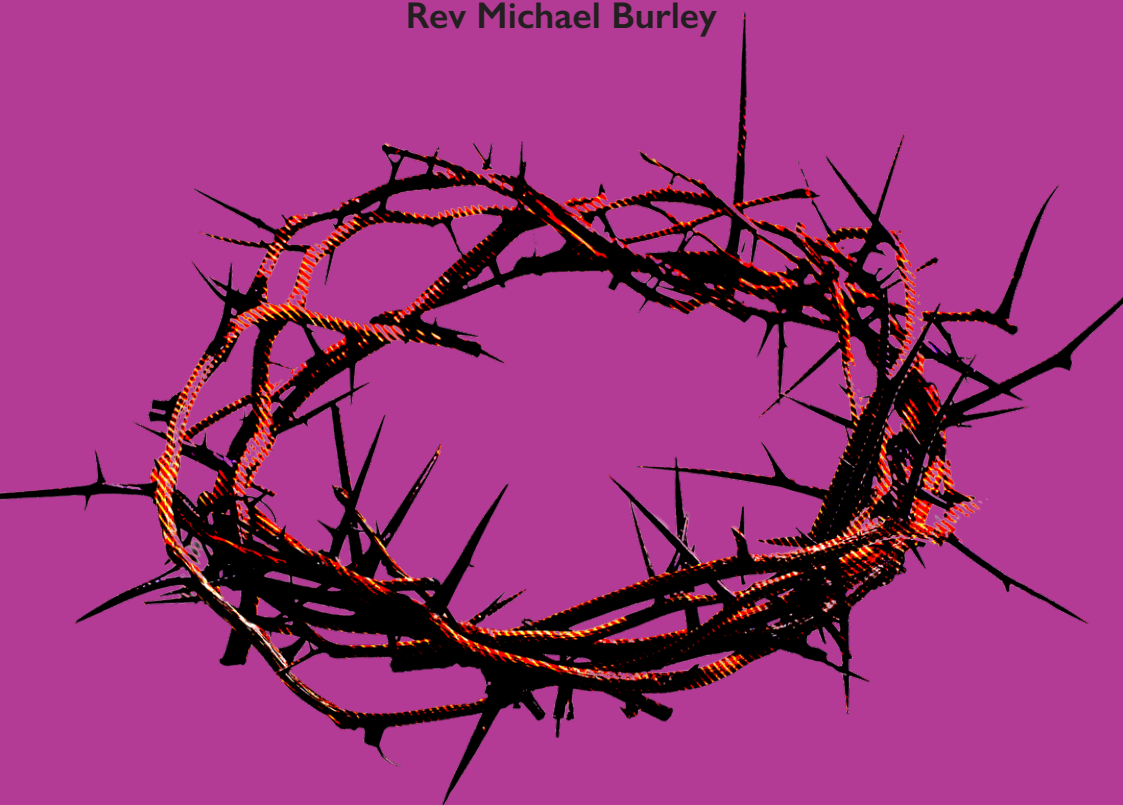
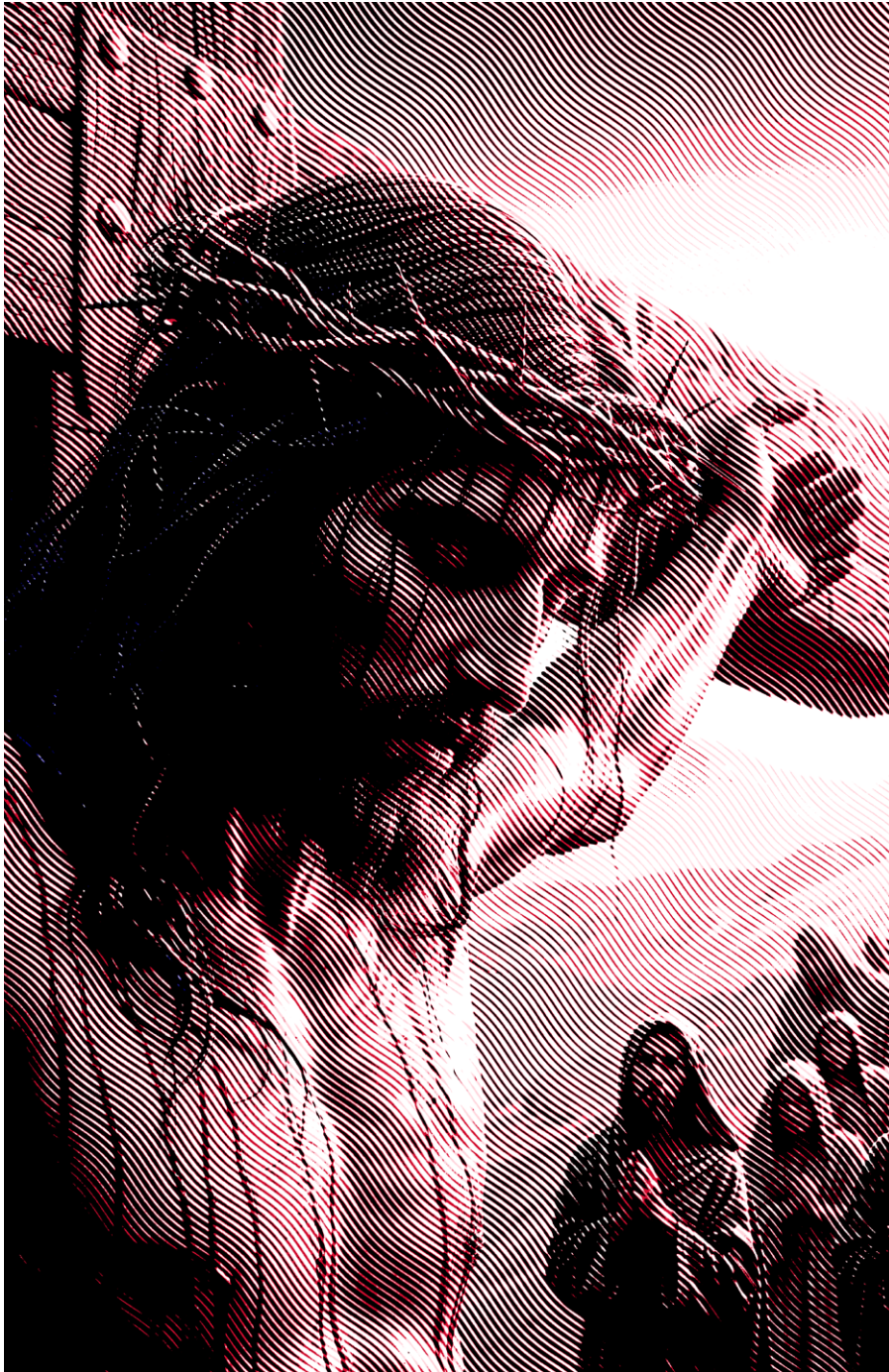


UNDERSTANDING FAITH

Seven Words from the Cross

Rev Michael Burley





SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS

Introduction

Over two thousand years ago Jesus was crucified. The Roman occupiers nailed him to a Cross. After 3 hours of agony, He bowed His sacred head and died.

Christians believe His death stands at the heart of their faith and carries immense significance.

The Gospels record seven sayings spoken by Jesus from the cross, each revealing deep theological and spiritual meaning. This tract offers reflections on each of these final words.

**O Saviour of the world,
who by your cross and precious blood have
redeemed us,
save us and help us, we humbly pray.**

Michael



THE FIRST WORD

When they came to the place called “The Skull”, they nailed Jesus to the cross there, and the two criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Jesus said “Forgive them, Father! They do not know what they are doing.”

Luke 23 v 33-34

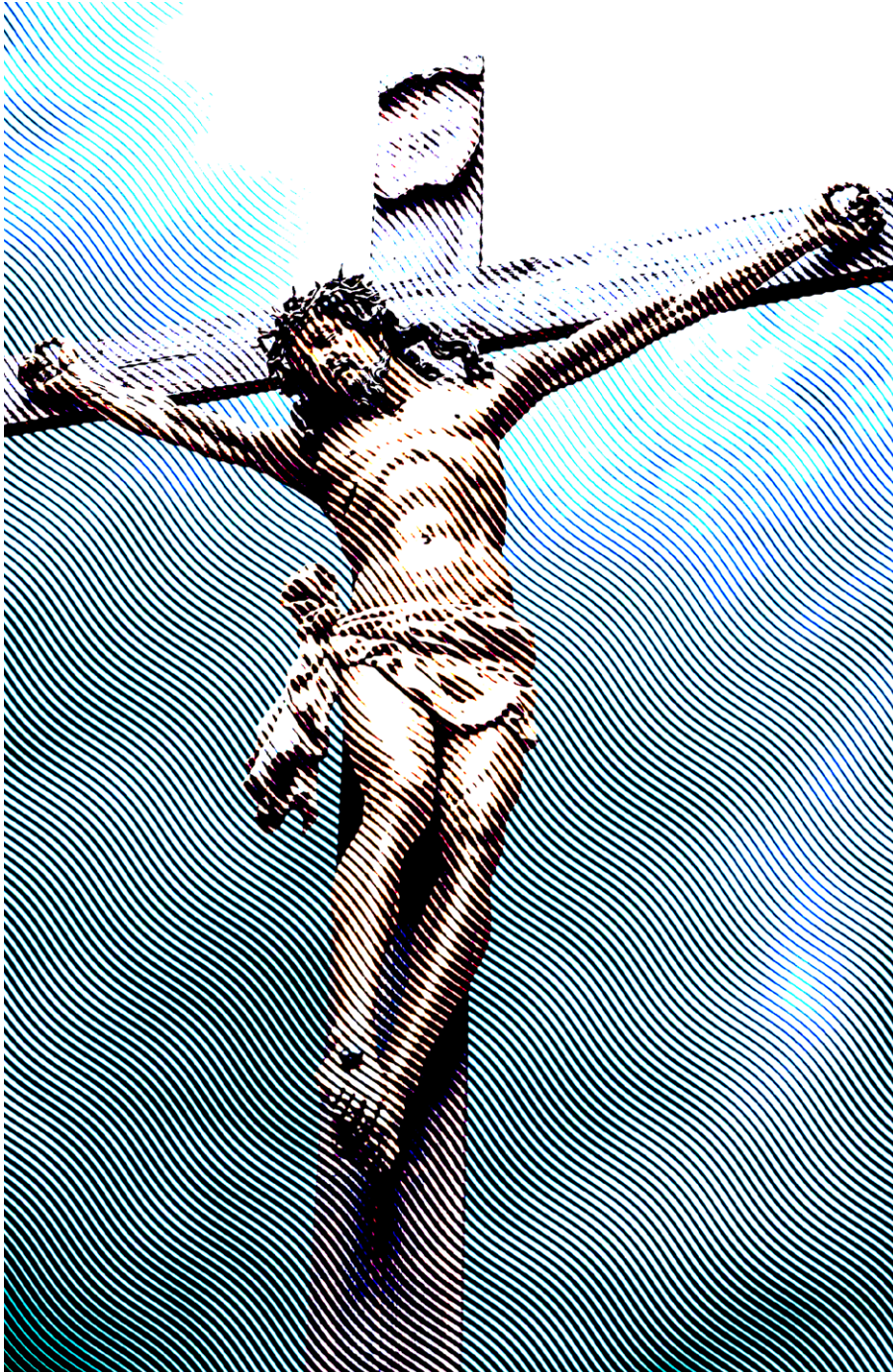
Nails were being driven into our Lord’s hands and feet. This word of prayer shows that there was no bitterness, no rancor, and no malice in Jesus toward his enemies. Instead, He interceded for them.

In the original Greek it says that He did not just pray but He kept on praying continuously. *“Father forgive them, Father forgive them, Father forgive them.”*

His prayer fulfills the prophecy found in Isaiah 53:12,

“For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.”

This prayer offers an invitation to every repenting sinner encouragement to come to Christ on the Cross because forgiveness is available through Christ.



THE SECOND WORD

One of the criminals hanging there threw insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” The other one, however, rebuked him, saying: “Don’t you fear God? Here we are all under the same sentence. Ours, however, is only right, for we are getting what we deserve for what we did; but he has done no wrong.” And he said to Jesus, “Remember me, Jesus, when you come as King!” Jesus said to him, “I tell you this: Today you will be in Paradise with me.”

Luke 23:39-43

The Scottish writer George F. MacLeod wrote

“Jesus was crucified, not in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves.”

One of the criminals crucified with Jesus mocked him, while the other acknowledged his own guilt and asked Jesus to remember him.

Jesus replied, *“Today you will be with me in Paradise.”*

This word reveals that salvation is granted by grace, even at the final moment of life. It offers assurance that anyone who turns to Christ in faith moves from death, gloom, and hell to a position of life, peace, and joy.



THE THIRD WORD

Standing close to Jesus' cross were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that time the disciple took her to live in his home.

(John 19:26).

The death of Jesus was witnessed by his mother, Mary.

Jesus looked down at

The one who bore Him in Bethlehem,

the one who taught Him,

the one who fed Him,

the one who wiped away His tears,

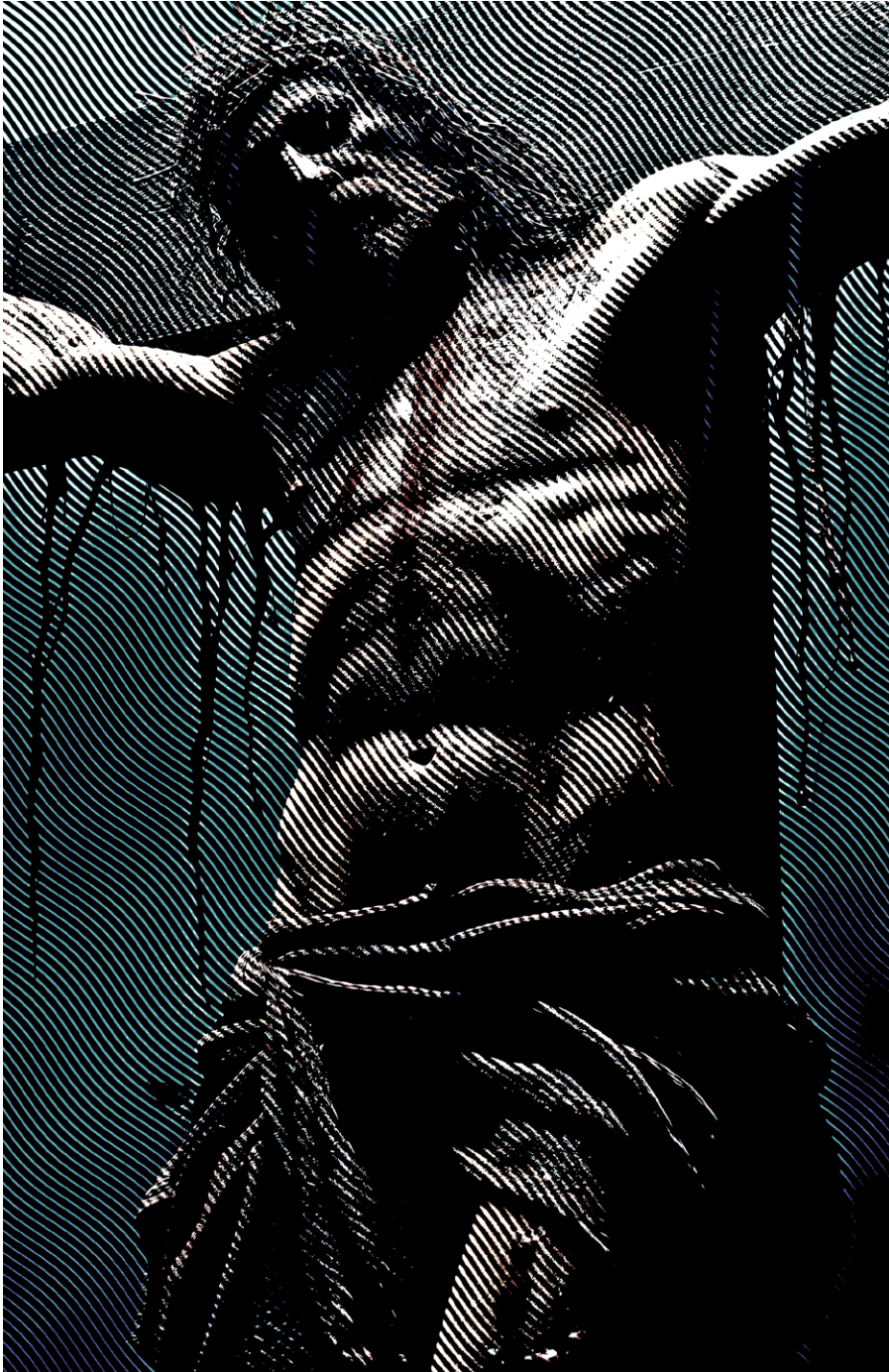
the one who hugged Him,

the one who now grieves watching her son slowly die a criminals' death.

John the beloved disciple was the only one of His closest followers at the cross.

Seeing His mother and John, Jesus entrusted Mary to his care. In doing so, He honoured the commandment to honour one's parents

Christ full of compassion and concern for human relationships, even in death, provides for those He loves.



THE FOURTH WORD

And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Elo-i, elo-i, lama sabach-thani?” which means, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Mark 15:33-34

Never in the life of Jesus had He experienced any abandonment by the Father, but now, on the cross, He was cut off from God and suffered hell for us on the cross.

We are told that from noon to three p.m. there was great darkness, and towards the end of this three-hour period of desolation this word came from the mouth of Jesus. This question is a quotation from Psalm 22:1.

Here, Jesus fully enters the depths of human despair, standing in the place of sinners and absorbing the consequences of sin on their behalf. Jesus, is our mediator and substitute; our sacrifice, The Lamb of God who takes the sins of the world upon Himself. He takes our sin and, in grace, undeservedly, passes His righteousness on to us.

Jesus, whose very being was God, found Himself utterly, absolutely, despairingly.

**cut off from all that gives life and breath
cut off from all that gives purpose and hope
cut off from the source of his being
cut off, even from himself**

**plumbing the depths of the human condition to
walk in the place of the utter absence of God, in the
place of sinners.**

But because He was abandoned, we shall never be abandoned. We shall be received, forgiven, reconciled, adopted, and justified through Christ and have eternal fellowship with God.



THE FIFTH WORD

After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), “I thirst.”

John 19:28

By this cry Jesus was fulfilling prophecy found in Psalm 69:21

“Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy but there was none, for comforters, but I found none. For comforters but I found none.

They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar to drink”

This thirst of Jesus reveals His true humanity. He truly suffered. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

We do not fully understand suffering. Scripture teaches that it did not exist before the fall of Adam and will have no place in the renewed creation. Yet suffering marks our present world and remains, in many ways, a mystery. In Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, God enters fully into this reality. Having suffered himself, He knows our pain and meets us with compassion.

When we turn to Him, He walks with us and sustains us. From the cross he cries, “I thirst,” identifying himself with all who endure hunger, violence, and loss. He is present in the world’s deepest anguish the deserts of Ethiopia- the anarchy of the Congo- the destruction of Gaza. He bears suffering with us.



THE SIXTH WORD

A bowl was there, full of cheap wine mixed with vinegar, so a sponge was soaked in it, put on stalk of hyssop and lifted up to his lips. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished”;

John 19:29-30

By this point, I believe Jesus had passed through the darkness of divine abandonment. The anguish was over; the night had lifted. Then He cried out with a loud voice, *“It is finished.”*

This declaration comes from a single Greek word - *tetelestai* - a term commonly used in the ancient world to mean *“paid in full.”* In New Testament times, a completed debt or tax receipt would bear this word as its final stamp. Spoken from the cross, it is not a cry of defeat, but the proclamation of victory.

“It is finished.” The suffering has reached its end.

“It is finished.” The burden of sin has been fully borne.

“It is finished.” The separation between God and humanity has been overcome.

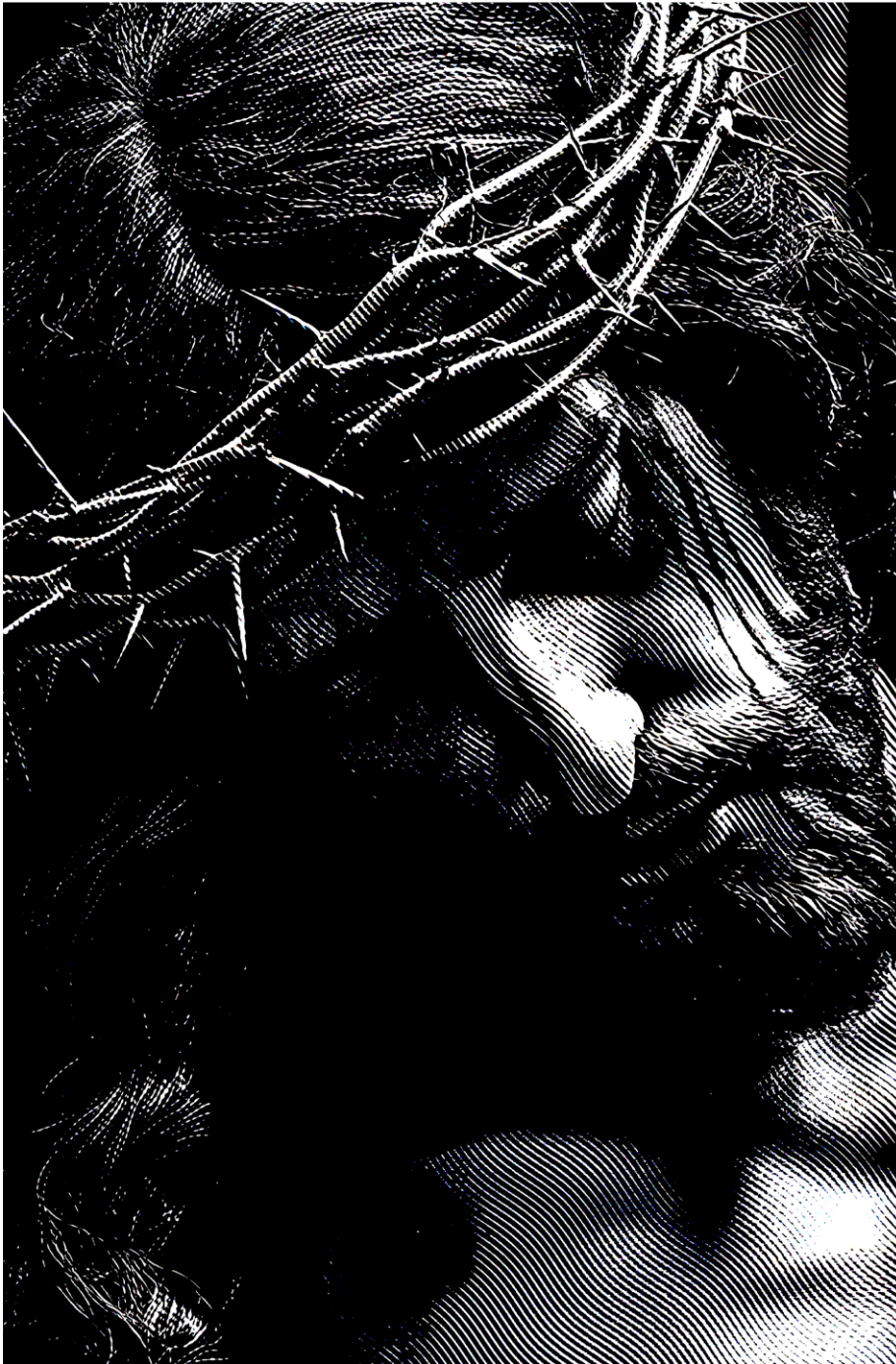
Through Christ’s death, reconciliation is accomplished. Hostility gives way to peace; alienation is replaced with restored relationships. In Jesus Christ, God draws near to us in love and mercy.

“It is finished.” Redemption is complete. We are bought back from bondage and freed from slavery in all its forms - slavery to sin, to self, to the law, to empty striving, to pride, and to dead works. In Christ, we are released into true freedom.

“It is finished.” The power of evil is broken. The ruler of this world is defeated by the blood of the Lamb, we rest in this promise:

“If the Son sets us free, we are free indeed.”

John 8 v36



THE SEVENTH WORD

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

Luke 23:46

Now His hell was over, the gloom was gone, and the darkness has disappeared. There was now only the sunshine of the Father’s presence. Here on the cross Jesus quoted, with some adjustment, from Psalm 31:5,

“Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth.”

He added something to that verse. “He addressed His prayer to His Father a final testimony that communion was restored.

*This was the end:
the end of pain,
the end of abandonment,
the end of the ordeal.
Wounded, exhausted, and alone,
Jesus offered his last breath in trust.
He entrusted his life ~
and all that gave it meaning ~
into the hands of God.
Even in abandonment,
faith endured.
The darkness did not prevail.*

“Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit.”

FINAL REFLECTION



From the cross, Christ speaks:

- Words of Forgiveness to us whose sin he bore.
- Words of Salvation to the lost.
- Words of Love to the broken.
- A Cry of abandonment as He became sin for us.
- A Cry of Humanity as He shared in all human suffering.
- A Cry of Victory before he died.
- His last word, surrender to the Father and the restoration of fellowship.

In his death, love is revealed in its deepest form.

Prayer

**We glory in your cross, O Lord,
and praise you for your mighty resurrection;
for by virtue of your cross
joy has come into our world.**

