

**“THE WAY OF THE CROSS:  
Jesus’ Seven Last Words – *I’m Thirsty*”**

A sermon preached by  
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**John 19:28**<sup>a 28</sup> After this, Jesus – knowing that everything had been accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled – says, “I’m thirsty.”

I remember Thanksgiving before my Papa died. Things are a little different now, but back then, Granny would work for days to get that meal together. She set the table, every cup, plate, and saucer in its place. Everything would come out of the oven. We would pray and sit. I say “we,” but that “we” didn’t include Granny. She had serving to do. Someone needed a hot roll; Gran was there. Someone needed more marshmallow-topped sweet potatoes; Gran was there. Every plate was full, every glass brimming with cold, sweet iced tea.

Then, somewhere between seconds and thirds, Granny would sit down – not at the table, mind you – at the kitchen counter on a stool. The food was mostly lukewarm, but she enjoyed it. Her joy came from serving her family. She thought of us first and herself last. After she had taken care of everyone else, Granny took care of herself.

I think about that when I read Jesus’ words here in John’s gospel. Jesus has taken care of those who crucified him by forgiving them, even clothing them. Jesus has taken care of one of the thieves, crucified beside him, by offering the hope of heaven. Jesus has taken care of his own, dear mother, and his beloved disciple. Jesus has taken care of sinners by offering himself in their place. Only now, with the end in sight, does Jesus even express his own need.

Ironic, isn’t it, that the eternal Word, through whom every proton, neutron, and electron in every single atom of each molecule of that miraculous life-giving combination of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen came into being, Christ, the Living Water streaming from the rock in the wilderness for the thirsty Israelites, the Lord of the Universe, who separated the waters above from the waters below at the very dawn of creation, was *thirsty*.

An ancient Christian named Athanasius once said that “he became like us so we might become like him.” On the cross, God says to us, “Your pain, your hunger, your thirst, is mine.” Our suffering is God’s suffering. God knows what it’s like for the 1.2 *billion* people who don’t have water that’s safe enough to drink tonight. God knows the pain of the almost 2 *million* children who will die this year from diseases related to unclean drinking water. That includes the 4,900 children under five who died in the last twenty-four hours. God knows their suffering.

Christ became like us so we might become like him. Jesus made us *his* brother so we could be God’s children too. We are God’s children when we suffer, and we are God’s children when we serve suffering people. Christ’s cry from the cross demands a response from us. Will we serve Christ by serving those who are thirsty both spiritually and physically or will we be one of those goats on the left to whom Christ will say, “I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink”? In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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<sup>a</sup> Translation, Hammett N. Evans, 2008.