

WHAT'S IN A BREATH?: The Breath of Jesusⁱ Luke 23:44-47; John 19:28-30

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you here today. If you are a guest with us, we want to say a very special welcome to you. I'd love the opportunity to get to know you more. You can connect with us by texting the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mount Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword, a link will be sent back to you and that will take you to a short form. When you submit that form, it notifies me and I look forward to following up with you.

Or feel free to swing by our information center located in the fellowship area. There we have a gift we would love to put in your hands and a way of saying thank you for being our guest today. We are thrilled you have chosen to worship with us today.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

I want to invite you to take your bibles and turn with me to two places this morning. Luke 23 and John 19. Place your finger in those two locations as we jump in today.

We are in the middle of a teaching series we've called, "What's in a Breath." We are taking a look at some of the places in the Bible where it is said that God breathes. So far we have looked at the breath of life and the breath of God. Today we are going to look at the breath of Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION: Famous Last Wordsⁱⁱ

I read an article this past week on the last words of famous people. Sometimes people's final words are serious, some are sad, while others are funny. Here's some final words that this article I read mentioned. Frank Sinatra's last words were, "I'm losing it." Winston Church's last words were, "I'm bored with it all." John Wayne turned to his wife and said, "Of course I know who you are. You're my girl. I love you." Humphrey Bogart's last words were, "I should have never switched from scotch to martinis." And Steve Jobs, the inventor and CEO of Apple, according to his sister said, "Oh wow. Oh wow. Oh wow."

We have recorded for us in the Scriptures the last words of Jesus. In fact, there are 7 specific statements Jesus makes that are recorded in the Gospels.

Today, I want to look at two of those. According to the chronology of the Gospel accounts, these two statements are the last two things He says before he dies on the cross. I want to begin with the very last statement and then consider the next to last statement.

MESSAGE:

Read along with me in your copy of God's Word. Luke 23, verses 44-47 is where we will begin today. *⁴⁴It was now about **the sixth hour**, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵while the sun's light failed. And **the curtain of the temple was torn in two**.* Stop here for just a second. A couple of things here and then we'll zoom in on the actual last statement.

Luke tells us that it was the sixth hour. The Jewish day began at sunup, which would have been around 6am.ⁱⁱⁱ So, the sixth hour here would have been 12 noon. At the time, darkness fell over the entire land until the ninth hour. Jesus' crucifixion most likely began at 9am, then at 12noon darkness fell, and that lasted until Jesus died around 3pm.^{iv}

We also know that between the darkness falling at lunchtime and Jesus' death, the curtain of the temple was torn in two. In the temple, there was a place called the holy of holies. This area of the temple was considered to be the place where God would reside or visit. Law stated that only one person could enter into the holy of holies, the High Priest, and could only do so on one day a year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. That is the day the High Priest would make a sacrifice for the sins of Israel.

The bible describes the holy of holies being set apart from the other parts of the temple by a curtain. This curtain is said to be as thick as a man's hand and about 60 feet tall. Luke says that curtain was torn in two. Matthew described how it was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now, this is come into greater view in just a moment. But this is the background Luke is describing.

Then, as Jesus approached His death, He cried out in a loud voice. Verse 46 of Luke 23. *⁴⁶Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this **he breathed his last**.* [There it is; the last breath of Jesus]. *⁴⁷Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"*

The final word of Jesus, His last breath, was a quote from Psalm 31:5. This prayer was a prayer that was taught to kids in the Jewish Tradition. So, in Jesus' final breath, His final words was a prayer He was taught as a boy.

ILLUSTRATION: Prayers Taught as a Kid

I would imagine that as a kid you were taught certain prayers. I bet we would echo having been taught the very same prayer. Let's see if you can complete this bedtime prayer. This is all skate, so loud and proud. Are we ready?

Now I lay me down to sleep... (I pray The Lord my soul to keep). Okay, very good. But do you remember the rest of that prayer? It gets real dark, real quick. Know what I mean?! How does it go? If I should die before I wake, I pray The Lord my soul to take. Okay, Sweetie. Good night, sweet dreams! Wait what?! What were our parents teaching us? How did we get any sleep at night?

Well, Jesus' last statement from the cross was a prayer he was taught as a kid. It is recorded in Psalm 31:5. That says, *"⁵ Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God."*

So, let's take a look at three significant words in Jesus' final breath on the cross. His first word...

1) Father.

Every time Jesus addresses God in the Bible, He refers to Him as Father. There is one exception to this. The only time Jesus did not address God as Father was also in a statement on the cross.

While Jesus was being crucified, and the sins of the world were thrust upon Him, in that moment He became our atoning sacrifice. He bore your sin and mine in that moment, becoming the once and for all sacrifice for our sin. But in that moment, Jesus cried out in what is recorded in Matthew 27:46. *⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* Jesus addressed God, not as Father, but as My God. That is the only time He says anything but Father in reference to God.

God cannot have fellowship with that which is sinful. This is why we often feel isolated from God. Perhaps you are here today and you would say, "Pastor, I

feel so distanced from God, like He's not there." That's because of sin in your life.

But I have good news for you. God saw us in that predicament and provided a solution to our sin problem. It was Jesus, becoming the perfect atoning sacrifice for our sin. Scripture teaches that when we place our faith and trust in Jesus as the Lord of our lives then we are forgiven. But more than forgiven, our relationship with God is restored.

If you feel isolated from God today, maybe The Holy Spirit is whispering to you about your need for forgiveness by placing your faith in Jesus. At the end of our time together, we will have a time of response, and I would encourage you to surrender to Jesus, today.

And while the gospel accounts makes it clear that Jesus called God Father, it illustrates to us the kind of relationship Jesus had with God. And it also calls to our attention the kind of relationship that God desires to have with you. Jesus had a very close, personal and intimate relationship with God. That's why He called Him Father.

Jesus teaches that that kind of relationship with God is possible. That we can call on Him as Father. When Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray, He told us how we should address God. Matthew 6:6-9. *⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and **pray to your Father** who is in secret. And **your Father** who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for **your Father** knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this: "**Our Father** in heaven, hallowed be your name."*

Now, I understand that many of you didn't have a good relationship with your earthly father. That has not been my experience, but I know that to be the case for many. I believe God wants to be the Father you never had. He desires a relationship with you. God moved Heaven and earth to make that happen. He is perfect and wants to be a Father that you never had.

Just as Jesus referred to God as Father, we also should call on God as our Father. Through faith in Jesus, the Bible tells us we become children of God. God does not want to be isolated from you. He wants to have a loving,

personal, intimate relationship with you. He is not unapproachable. The writer of Hebrews tells us that we can boldly approach the throne of grace. Paul said in the book of Romans that we have gained access to God.

For thousands of years, Israel did not view God like this. He was unapproachable. We see evidence of that with the example of the curtain that mentioned earlier. However, when Jesus died, it all changed. Because Jesus as our atoning sacrifice, the curtain ripped demonstrating that God is no longer distant but available. A relationship with God is only made possible through faith in Jesus as Lord.

The second word that stands out in Jesus' final breath is the word...

2) Hands

Luke 23:46 says, *"⁴⁶Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your **hands** I commit my spirit!"* A couple things about the hands of God.

John 4:24 tells us that God is Spirit. And being spirit means that God does not have a body. He is not limited by time space or the confines of a physical body. Therefore, God does not have hands, feet, eyes, or ears like us. I think sometimes we view God as a Gandalf type figure. But He is not. He is spirit.

So, why does the Bible make references to God having body parts. The Scriptures say things like God hears, God walks, God moves, and the like. But those references are what are called anthropomorphism. That is a word that means to describe God in human like terms.

And the reason the Bible describes God in this way is because God is desiring to communicate with us in a way that we can understand. Our finite minds are incapable of fully understanding the totality of who God is. God doesn't have eyes, yet He sees you and knows you. God doesn't have ears yet He hears every prayer. God doesn't have arms, but yet He still holds us in His love. God doesn't have hands, yet He knit you together in your mother's womb. By assigning these attributes, it helps us relate and understand God a little better.

So, Jesus commits His spirit into God's Hands. Scripture often refers to the strength of God's hands. John 10:27-29 says, *"²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has*

*given them to me, is greater than all, and **no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand**.* Our salvation is secure in the hands of God.

Again, in Isaiah 41:10, *"¹⁰fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, **I will uphold you with my righteous right hand**."* God provides for you strength and His hand to carry you in the moments when things are so overwhelming that it's impossible to even move.

Think about Jesus' statement here. Into Your hands, the hands of the Father, I commit my spirit. Jesus, God in the flesh, is placing His life into God's hands. Don't you think if God can hold Jesus, the Son of God, that He's got you, too?! No matter what you are going through, no matter what you are facing, the hand of God is made available to you! Isn't that good?!

Let's keep going. The third word of significance in Jesus' final breath...

3) Commit

Jesus said that He commit His spirit to God the Father. That is that Jesus completely trusted God The Father. No fear. No worry. No doubt. Resting in The Father. Committing His spirit.

ILLUSTRATION: Biblical Examples of God Being Trustworthy

All throughout the Bible, we see that God is trustworthy and true. He always makes good on His Word. God told Abraham that He would make Abraham into a great nation, and that is what He did. From the nation of Israel came the Savior of the world.

God told Moses that He would lead the people of God out of slavery in Egypt. That is exactly what happened. There are countless examples of God's faithfulness to His people in the Scriptures. Every promise, every word, every claim, can be trusted.

The final breath of Jesus was not your typical final breath. Two ways His last words proved to be different. First, verse 47 of Luke 23. *⁴⁷Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"* Matthew's account said that not the centurion, but the guards proclaimed Jesus as Lord that day. The men who had become very familiar with people's final breaths understand Jesus' last to be different.

The second way that this final breath was different is that it wasn't the final word. Just as Jesus predicted with the Disciples, that He would die and then on the third day He would rise, it happened. More about that in another sermon in our series.

CONCLUSION:

Before we end our time today, I want to look at the statement Jesus said on the cross just before the one we studied today. John chapter 19, verses 28 through 30. *28After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." 29A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. 30When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "**It is finished**," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

The word translated, "it is finished," was a common word of Jesus' day. It meant that something was complete. Servants would say, "It is finished," when they had completed the tasks their Master had given them. Artists would say the phrase when they painted the last stroke of their painting. When a vendor settled on a purchase price of an object, they would say, "It is finished." Completed. Done.

In that moment, Jesus paid the debt of sin. He finished the task God sent Him to accomplish. Colossians 2:13-14 says, *"13And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having **forgiven us all our trespasses**, 14by **canceling the record of debt** that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.* It is finished. Paid. The debt of sin has been cancelled.

In addition to that, Jesus' final breath saying, "It is finished," means that He has given us victory. See, this statement was not a cry of defeat. It was a shout of victory. Jesus wasn't saying, "I am finished." He said, "It was finished."

There is nothing we can do to pay the debt of our sin. The cost is too high. It is a cost that demands a death. Jesus paid the price. All we have to do is embrace Him as Lord and Savior of your life. We have victory over sin, death and the grave!

God, in His unconditional love for you, sent His one and only Son to this earth. Jesus willingly died on the cross, in your place and in mine, so that we could be forgiven of our sin and brought back into a relationship with God.

If you are here today and you have never trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then today is the day to do that. We will have elders here at the front and we would love nothing more than to visit with you about what it means to make Jesus your Lord and Savior. In a moment, I'm going to pray, we will stand and sing, but I invite you to respond to Jesus.

LORD'S SUPPER SET UP:

Following our time of response, we will observe The Lord's Supper, Communion. While the Bible never tells us how often to observe The Lord's Supper, it does tell us to do it in remembrance of Jesus. Remembering what we have talked about today. His death, in our place, His burial, but then His resurrection. The Lord's Supper is a powerful object lesson that communicates just that.

The Bible also tells us that we are to approach The Lord's table with reverence having examined our hearts. So, the invitation today is extended to believers to prepare our hearts as we come to observe Communion.

At Trinity we believe that The Lord's Supper is reserved for those that have trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior. That is the only stipulation Scripture places on this ordinance. So, if you are here today and you do not have a personal relationship with Jesus, know that we are so glad you're here. This is the right place to discover what that means. But we would just ask you to observe today and not participate as we partake in a very meaningful expression of our faith, Communion. But believer, let's use this time of response to examine our hearts and prepare to approach The Lord's table.

If you need to visit with someone this morning, you come during this time. I'm going to pray and let's respond to the prompting of The Holy Spirit on our hearts. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*, Moody Press: Chicago, 2008; Gary M. Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary: John*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2000; H.B. Charles Jr., “*It is Finished*,” article published by HBC2 Ministries, April 2, 2021, accessed online: <https://hbcharlesjr.com/resource-library/sermon-outlines/it-is-finished-john-1930/>; Zach Kincaid, “*Sermons From The Cross*” article published by ShareFaith, accessed online: <https://www.sharefaith.com/blog/2017/04/sermons-from-the-cross/>; Justin Holcomb, “*The Seven Last Words of Jesus from the Cross Explained*,” article published by Christianity.com, August 17, 2022, accessed online: <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/jesus-christ/jesus-last-words.html>; Mike Berland, “*The Seven Sayings of Christ on the Cross*” article published by Faithlife October 27, 2007, accessed online: <https://sermons.faithlife.com/sermons/29367-the-seven-sayings-of-christ-on-the-cross>; Skip Heitzig, “*Expound: Luke 23*,” message taught Wednesday, April 29, 2015, Calvary Church Albuquerque, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/186/sermon/2513>; Troy Rackliffe, “*Jesus 7 Statements From The Cross: Sermon 6 & 7*,” taught at Glade Community Church, Daniels WV.

ⁱⁱ Chris Higgins, “*64 People and Their Famous Last Words*,” published by Mental Floss, February 12, 2016, accessed online: <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/58534/64-people-and-their-famous-last-words>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Got Questions, “*What Time was Jesus Crucified*,” accessed online: <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-time-was-Jesus-crucified.html>.

^{iv} Ibid.