

1. Luke 23:34 [Luke 23:32-38]

The climax of Jesus’ passion is His arrival at the place called the Skull, where He is crucified. The journey is over. Jesus has now reached His goal.

Jesus, who knows no sin, is among criminals. And each criminal carries forth his own cross to the place of execution. After constant mocking, insults, and flogging, Jesus is exhausted. Soon, it was feared that Jesus may die before being crucified. For this, the Roman soldiers compel Simon of Cyrene to carry His cross. Simon follows the footsteps of Jesus. This procession of cross-bearers draws a crowd. Just days earlier, the crowds had welcomed Jesus into the city with shouts of acclamation: **“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”** (John 12:13) Now there are tears as He is led out of the city.

Amid the great noise of weeping, jeers, and rattling armor, Jesus is humble and quiet as He stumbles toward the cross. As He arrives, He is placed into position. As He stands, Roman soldiers begin driving nails through His wrists and ankles. Then the cross is hoisted up and dropped into its hole. Lifted above the crowd, Jesus peers through swollen and bloodied eyelids and with bruised ears He listens to the carnivallike scene below: the scoffing and insults of the crowd, soldiers haggling over His clothes, thieves on his left and right cursing Him. Jesus has shown nothing but God’s love to these people who treat Him with such contempt. He could call down the wrath of God on them if He chose, but instead He takes the whole wrath of God upon Himself as He says a prayer for the Father’s absolution of the people: **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”** (Luke 23:34).

2. Luke 23:43 [Luke 23:39-43]

Two criminals are crucified with Jesus, one on His left and one on His right. No one weeps for them. The crowd likely thinks good riddance. Maybe a victim or two of their crimes is weeping, but not for the perpetrators who die, but for the stolen possessions never recovered or for the loved ones murdered. One of those criminals, who is on the brink of eternal death and hell is converted by Jesus’ announcement that sin is forgiven by virtue of the cross. This criminal expresses his repentance by confessing His sin. He fears God, unlike the other criminal, and he recognizes that his tortuous death is the just punishment for the sins he has committed. He stands under the judgment of God’s wrath, and he confesses that his guilt merits such punishment. Combined with his confession of sin is his confession of faith in Jesus: for **“this man has done nothing wrong”** (Luke 23:41).

Helpless and hopeless but for the Man who is dying beside him, the criminal cries out, ***“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”*** (Luke 23:42). With His arms outstretched in love, Jesus replies, ***“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise”*** (Luke 23:43).

### 3. John 19:26-27 [John 19:25-27]

Jesus is fully conscious in spite of all that His body and soul had endured. He is almost unrecognizable from the brutal beatings. With nails piercing through His wrists and ankles, He is bearing the sins of the whole world upon that cross with each breath being more painful than the last. As He endures great agony, He continues to care for Mary, His mother.

It is a tearful thing to lose a parent. It is even more tearful to lose your child. For some time now, Scripture has had no mention of Joseph, so we assume that he is dead. Thus, the tears of Mary must now be a flood. First, she lost Joseph, and now she sees her son Jesus nailed to a cross. The oldest son is supposed to care for his widowed mother. Now, even when Jesus is dying, who will take care of Mary? Who will comfort Mary in her grief? Who will protect the mother of God? Jesus meets her need, even as He meets our needs saying to Mary, ***“Woman, behold your son!”*** And then to John, the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, ***“Behold, your mother!”*** (John 19:26-27).

### 4. Matthew 27:46 [Matthew 27:45-49]

There is perhaps nothing more tearful than sensing abandonment by those we hold most dear. Before the Last Supper, Judas abandoned Jesus, and he had been one of Jesus’ twelve closest friends. It must have hurt Jesus deeply. An even deeper hurt would have been the panicked desertion of the other disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, when a mob came to arrest Jesus. Peter and John followed to the courtyard of the high priest, but here even Peter, the rock, crumbled like a handful of sand before accusations that he was a disciple of Jesus. So, Peter, too, after denying his Lord three times, fled weeping into the night. Surely the pain of Peter’s denial is greater than the nails and thorns.

But the most tearful moment of all is the abandonment of Jesus by His own heavenly Father. The words Jesus speaks are from Psalm 22, a Psalm of David. Jesus, like his ancestor David before Him, feels abandoned by God. In the case of David, and all of us, it isn’t true; our heavenly Father does not abandon us. But in the case of Jesus, it is true. Jesus, the innocent Son of God, hangs from the cross, bleeding, bruised, and burdened with the sins of the whole world.

From noon until three o’clock that day, a strange darkness came over the earth. All astronomical learning points to the fact that this could not have been a natural

eclipse of the sun. It was God who darkened the sun's light by means of His own power just as He shook the earth and split the rocks. This darkness signified judgment. It was not a mere reaction of the natural sun, but a sign wrought in the sun by God. Darkness and judgment go together. So repugnant has Jesus become with the refuse of our guilt laid upon Him that even His own Father cannot look on Him. Thus, Jesus cries out, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46).

5. John 19:28 [John 19:28-29]

A mystery full of mysteries is how we might describe the Holy Trinity. Scripture teaches that there is One God, but that this God is forever in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each Person is different in role and work, yet they are not three gods, but one God.

Just as incomprehensible is the mystery of the incarnation. Scriptures reveals Jesus Christ to be fully and completely both God and Man. As eternal God, our Lord Jesus Christ created the world, set the stars in the heavens, and put the seas in their basins. He governs the passage of seasons and the course of history. He determines the length of our days. Yet, as man, like you and me, He becomes tired and thirsty. He weeps over the death of His friend Lazarus. He holds children in His arms and blesses them. He bleeds when His flesh is pierced. His mouth becomes dry. He chokes on dirt and blood that become paste in His throat. He can make rain fall from the sky, but He can't give Himself a cup of water, for He will not use His almighty power to His personal advantage. Helplessly, the Second Person of the Trinity begs for something to drink, saying, "*I thirst*" (John 19:28).

6. John 19:30 [John 19:30]

At last, the cup of God's wrath has been drained. Jesus has swallowed the awful medicine for sin that we should have drunk. Every transgression has been atoned for – for Adam's sin, yours, mine, the sins of the whole world for all time. From now on, you and I can know for certain that no matter what evil happens to us, it is not God punishing us. This is still a fallen world and bad things will continue to happen, but our debt has been paid in full. The devil may rant on and tempt you to think otherwise. But he's wrong. The cross says you are forgiven; God is at peace with you. There on the cross, we receive God's grace. And if you should ever doubt this truth, just look to the cross. For upon the cross, Jesus proclaims, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30).

7. Luke 23:46 [Luke 23:44-47]

It's 3 o'clock. Jesus has hung on the cross for only six hours. Not long, really. But it's not the amount of time Jesus spends on the cross that atones for sin, or even the

degree of pain afflicted. Rather, it is the fact that, concentrated into this time, Christ has born all the punishment that all the sins of all history deserve. God the Father accepts the suffering of Jesus as full atonement for sin.

In just six hours, Jesus' suffering draws quickly to an end. Slowly the crowd still remaining begins to realize that this is no ordinary man who draws His last breaths. Since the noon hour, darkness has covered the land. There is an earthquake. The temple curtain is ripped in half. Graves are broken open. With one last great shout, Jesus cries out, "***Father, into your hands I commit My Spirit!***" (Luke 23:46). With those words said, He breathed His last. Jesus has died. God is dead. The Holy Trinity is fractured. Upon all that has taken place this day, the centurion standing guard confesses aloud, "***Truly this man was the Son of God!***" (Mark 15:39).