THE PASSION IN 3D

The 7 Last Words from the Cross

What he said, what each word cost, and how to teach it



STUDY & SERMON GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Seven Words, Four Gospels

No Gospel records all seven sayings. Matthew and Mark give one, Luke three, and John three. The order used here is the traditional harmony of the accounts.



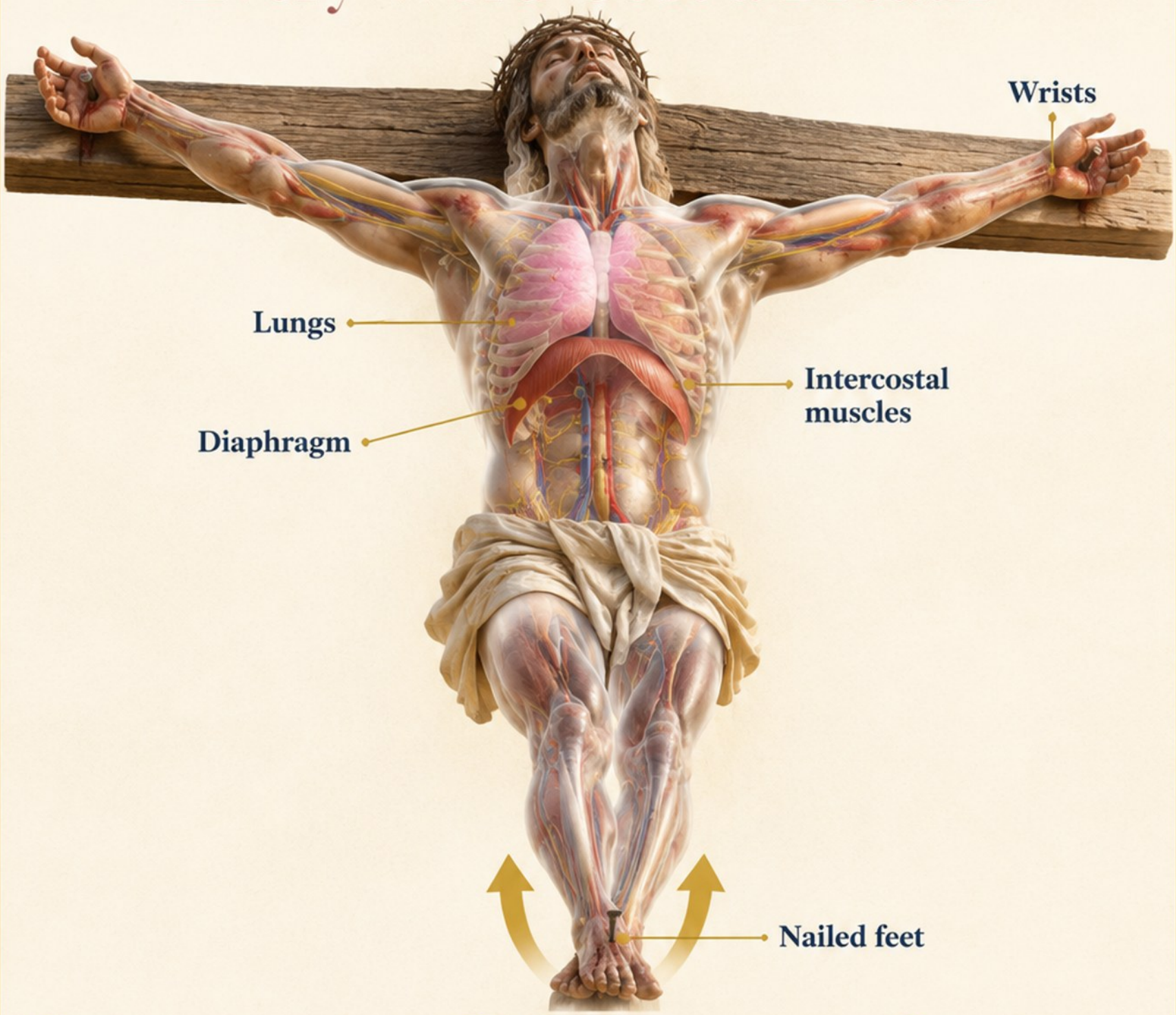
How to use this guide

Each word has two pages. The first gives the KJV text, its context and what speaking cost his body. The second gives a three-point outline for a sermon or study, with discussion questions.

For

Pastors preparing Good Friday or Lent, small groups, Sunday school teachers and personal devotion.

Every Word Cost a Breath



1 Hang (chest locked)



2 Push up (exhale)



3 Speak



Medical Insight

Hanging by the arms holds the chest in an inhaled position. In the view of Edwards and colleagues (JAMA, 1986), to exhale he had to push up on the nailed feet and pull with the arms.

What the body endured

Speech happens only on the out-breath, so every saying meant pain in the feet, wrists and back.

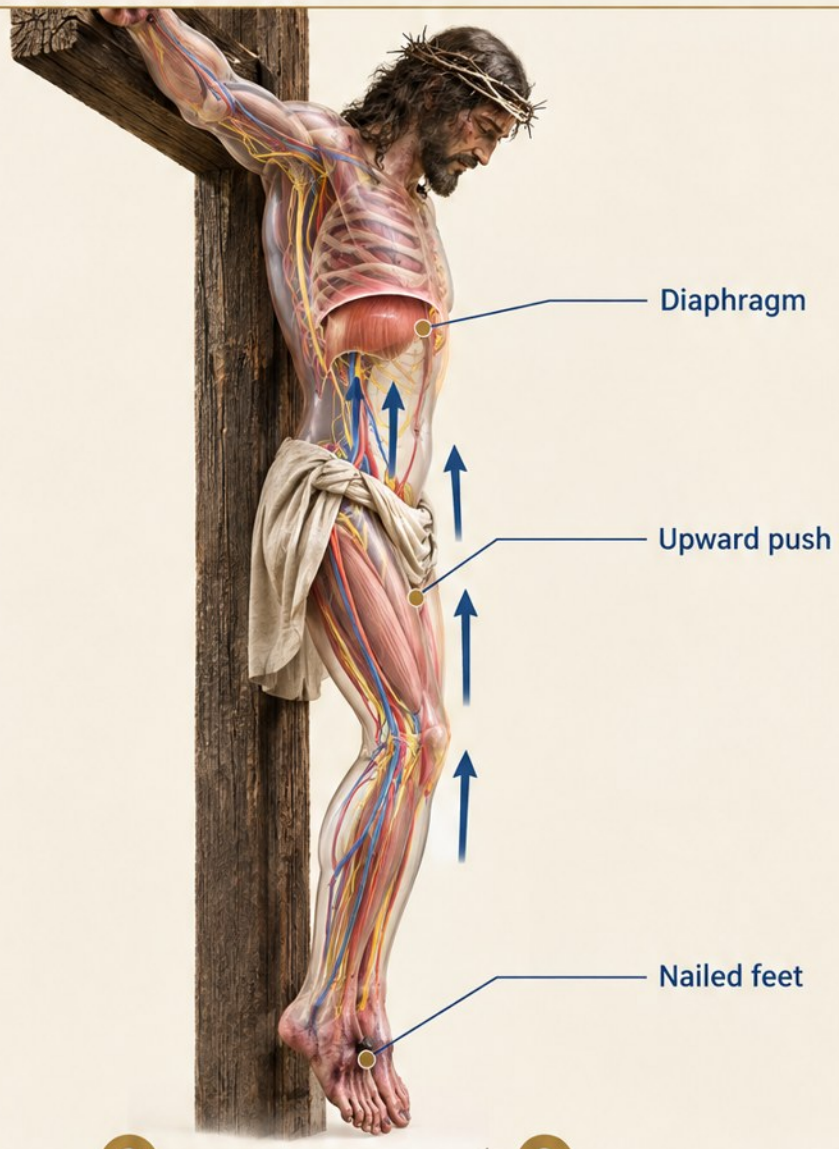
Curiosity

Scholars debate this: Zugibe's suspension experiments questioned asphyxia as the main factor.

THE FIRST WORD

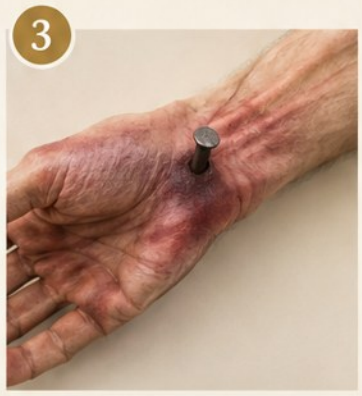
FATHER, FORGIVE THEM

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.











LUKE 23:34 (KJV)

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

CONTEXT

Luke places it as he was crucified, about the third hour (9 am).
A few early manuscripts omit it; most scholars accept it as early and authentic.

WHAT THE BODY ENDURED

The nails were fresh. To speak he had to exhale, and in one leading view that meant pushing up on the nailed feet. His first breath was spent on his executioners.

THE FIRST WORD · LUKE 23:34

Sermon & Study Outline

BIG IDEA

Father, Forgive Them.



I The prayer: he prays for enemies, as he taught

II The blindness: they know not what they do

III The offer: the same forgiveness reaches us

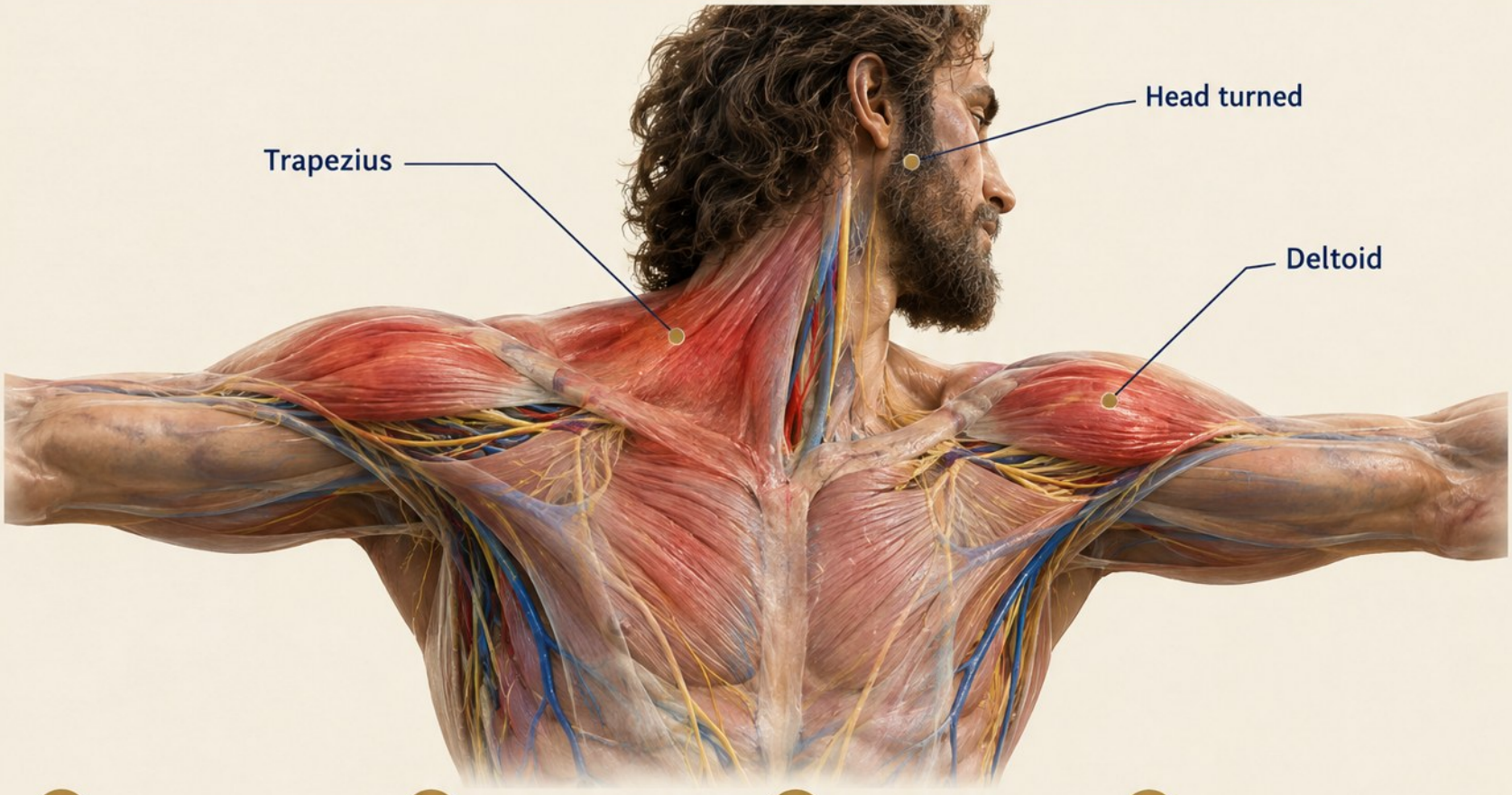
DISCUSS

Whom do I find hardest to forgive? How does his prayer change the way I see my own sin?

THE SECOND WORD

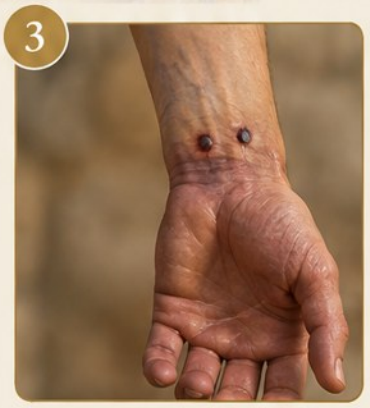
TODAY IN PARADISE

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee,
To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.




1


2


3


4

LUKE 23:43 (KJV)

And Jesus said unto him,
Verily I say unto thee,
To day shalt thou be with me
in paradise.

CONTEXT

Two criminals hung beside him. One mocked; the other asked: Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom (Luke 23:42).

WHAT THE BODY ENDURED

Turning his head toward the man beside him strained the neck and shoulders already bearing his weight. The promise was short: every word was costly.



THE SECOND WORD · LUKE 23:43

Sermon & Study Outline

Big idea: Today in Paradise.

I Grace at the last hour

II A simple faith: remember me

III A sure promise: to day, with me

DISCUSS What did the thief bring to Jesus, and what did he receive? Who do I think is too far gone for grace?

THE THIRD WORD

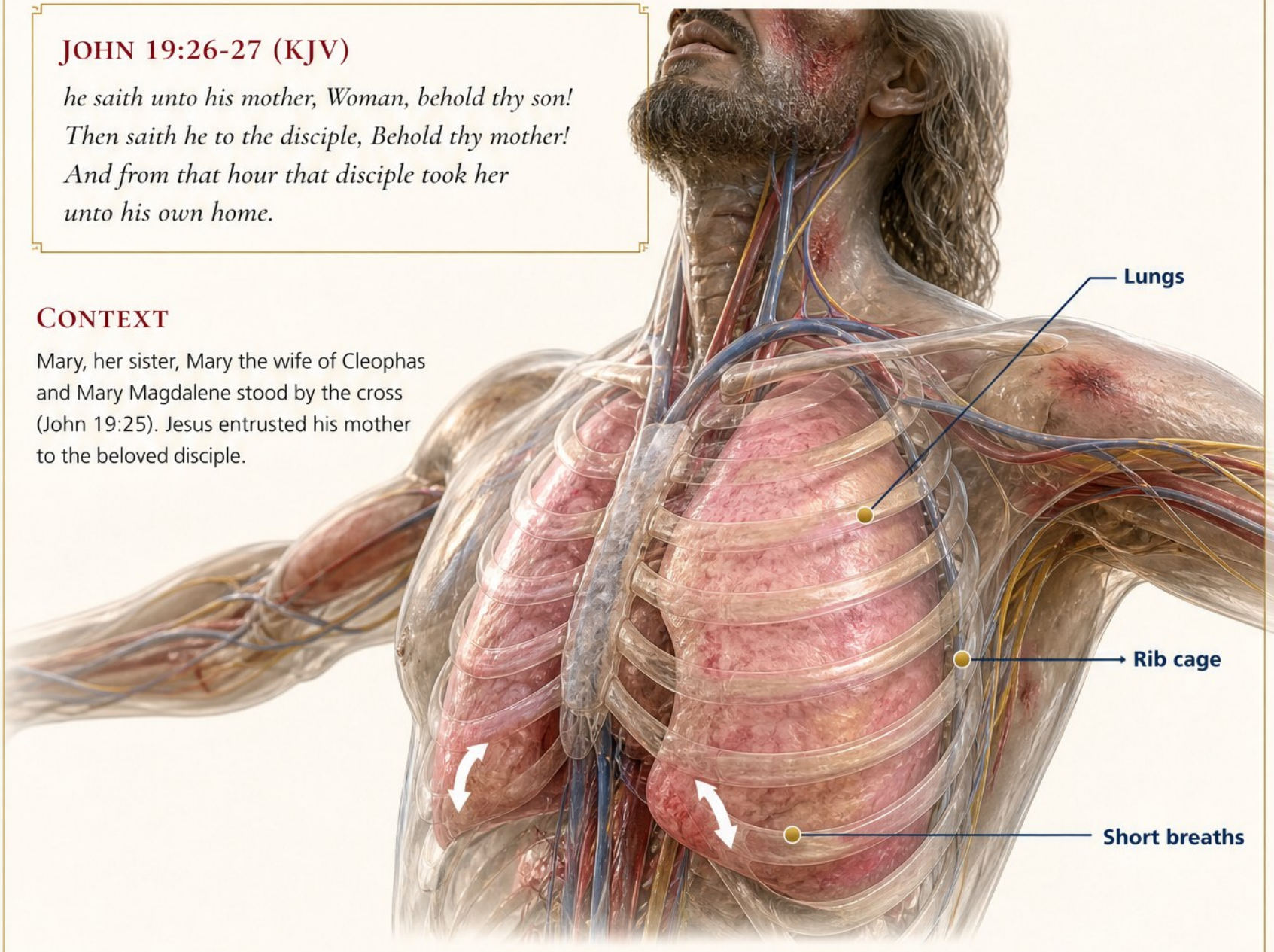
Woman, Behold Thy Son

John 19:26-27 (KJV)

he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!
Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!
And from that hour that disciple took her
unto his own home.

Context

Mary, her sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene stood by the cross (John 19:25). Jesus entrusted his mother to the beloved disciple.











Medical Insight

Restricted chest expansion makes each breath shallow and laborious.

What the Body Endured

He was looking down from the cross, speaking in short phrases between breaths. Even in agony he cared for the practical needs of his family.

Curiosity

From the cross he could see his mother and the disciple standing nearby.



THE THIRD WORD · JOHN 19:26-27

Sermon & Study Outline

BIG IDEA

Woman, Behold Thy Son.

I He honored his mother to the end

II He formed a new family at the cross

III He calls us to care for those left behind

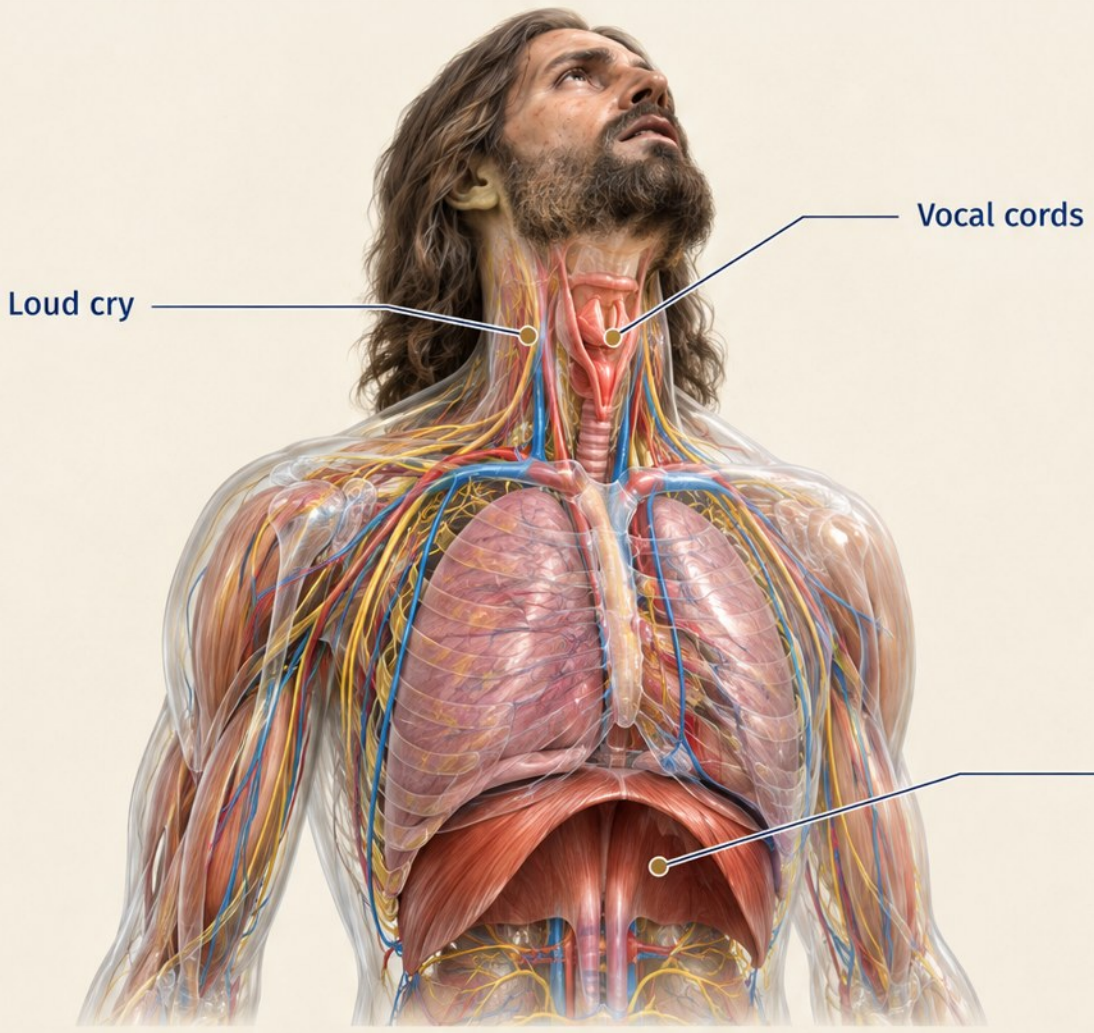
DISCUSS

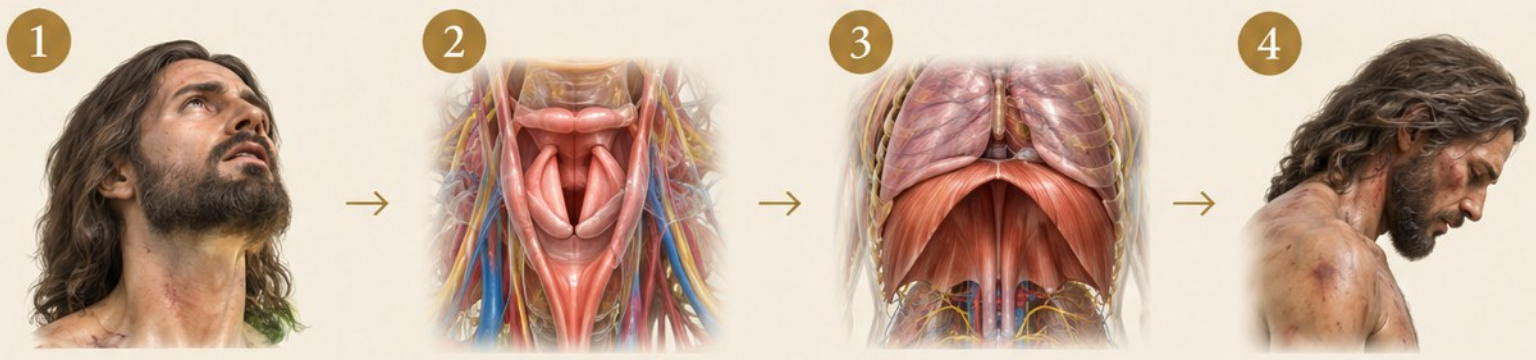
Who in my family or church needs someone to take them home? How does the cross create a new family?

THE FOURTH WORD

My God, My God

Matthew 27:46 (KJV):
And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?





MEDICAL INSIGHT

A loud cry needs a deep breath and a strong push. After six hours, with low oxygen and growing exhaustion, this cry took what strength remained.

WHAT THE BODY ENDURED

A loud cry needs a deep breath and a strong push. After six hours, with low oxygen and growing exhaustion, this cry took what strength remained.



THE FOURTH WORD · MATTHEW 27:46

Sermon & Study Outline

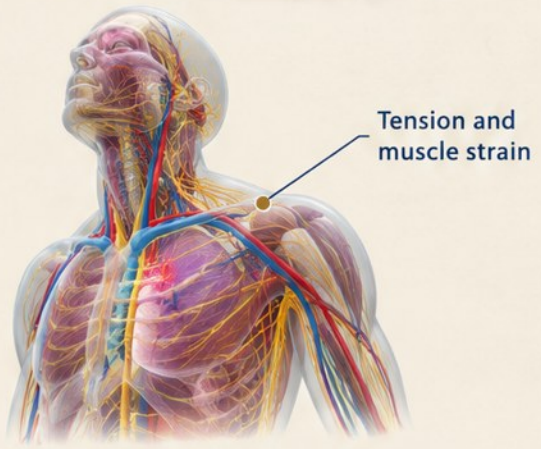


BIG IDEA

My God, My God.



I The darkest moment: bearing our sin



II The prayer of the Psalms in anguish



III Forsaken so that we never will be

DISCUSS

Why did he quote a psalm instead of his own words?
How can Psalm 22 help me pray in dark times?

THE FIFTH WORD

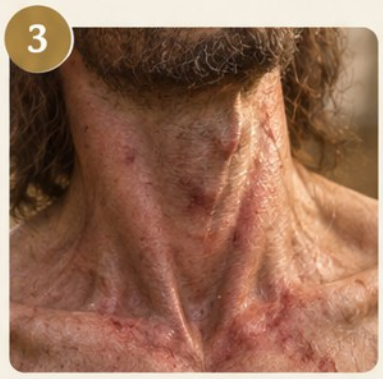
I THIRST

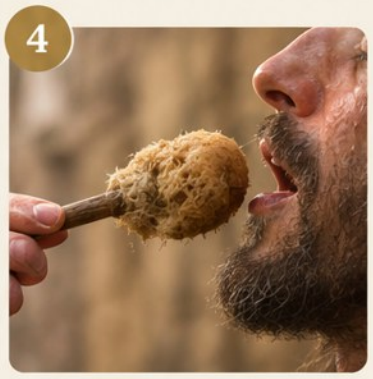
After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.











MEDICAL INSIGHT

John 19:28 (KJV)

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

WHAT THE BODY ENDURED

Blood loss, sweat and a night with no water left him severely dehydrated: dry mouth, swollen tongue, falling blood volume. The shortest word was the most physical.

CONTEXT

John says he spoke to fulfill Scripture (Psalm 69:21). Sour wine on a sponge was lifted to him on hyssop (John 19:29).



THE FIFTH WORD · JOHN 19:28

Sermon & Study Outline

BIG IDEA

I Thirst.

I Truly human: the Son of God was thirsty

II Truly faithful: Scripture fulfilled

III The Living Water thirsted so we may drink (John 4:14)

DISCUSS

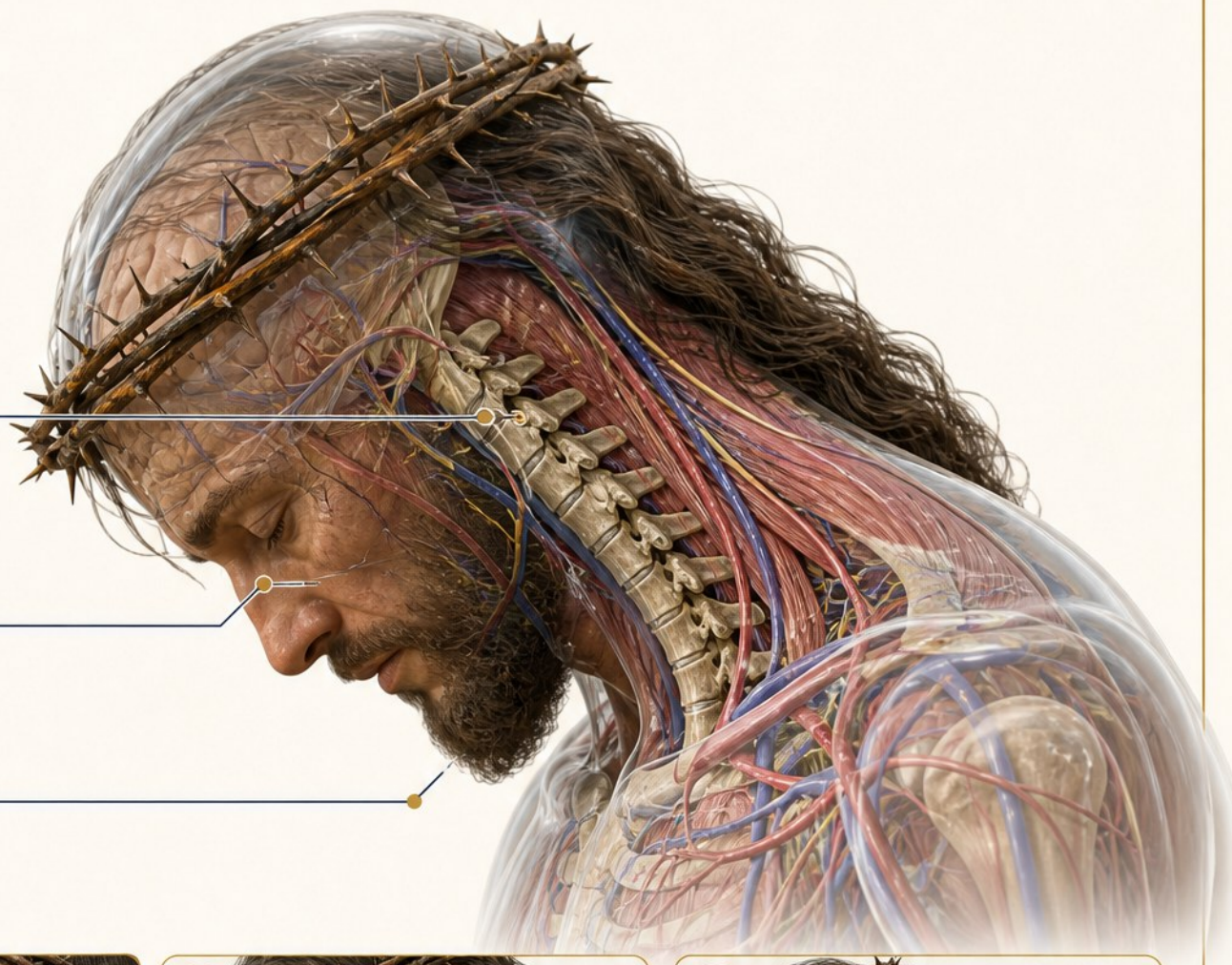
What does his thirst teach me about his humanity?
What am I thirsty for today?

THE SIXTH WORD

It Is Finished

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

JOHN 19:30 (KJV)



CERVICAL SPINE
The neck bears the weight as the head tilts forward.

BOWED HEAD
A deliberate act of surrender and completion.

LAST BREATH
The final exhale as he gives up his spirit.







CONTEXT
In Greek it is one word, *tetelestai:* completed, brought to its goal. He had said: *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do* (John 17:4).

WHAT THE BODY ENDURED
The sour wine moistened his lips enough for one clear word. Then he bowed his head, a deliberate act, and gave up his spirit.

MEDICAL INSIGHT
The bowed position reduces lung capacity and blood pressure, consistent with the body's final exhale and natural shutdown.



THE SIXTH WORD · JOHN 19:30

Sermon & Study Outline

BIG IDEA

It Is Finished.

I The work of salvation complete

II The debt paid in full

III Nothing left for us to add

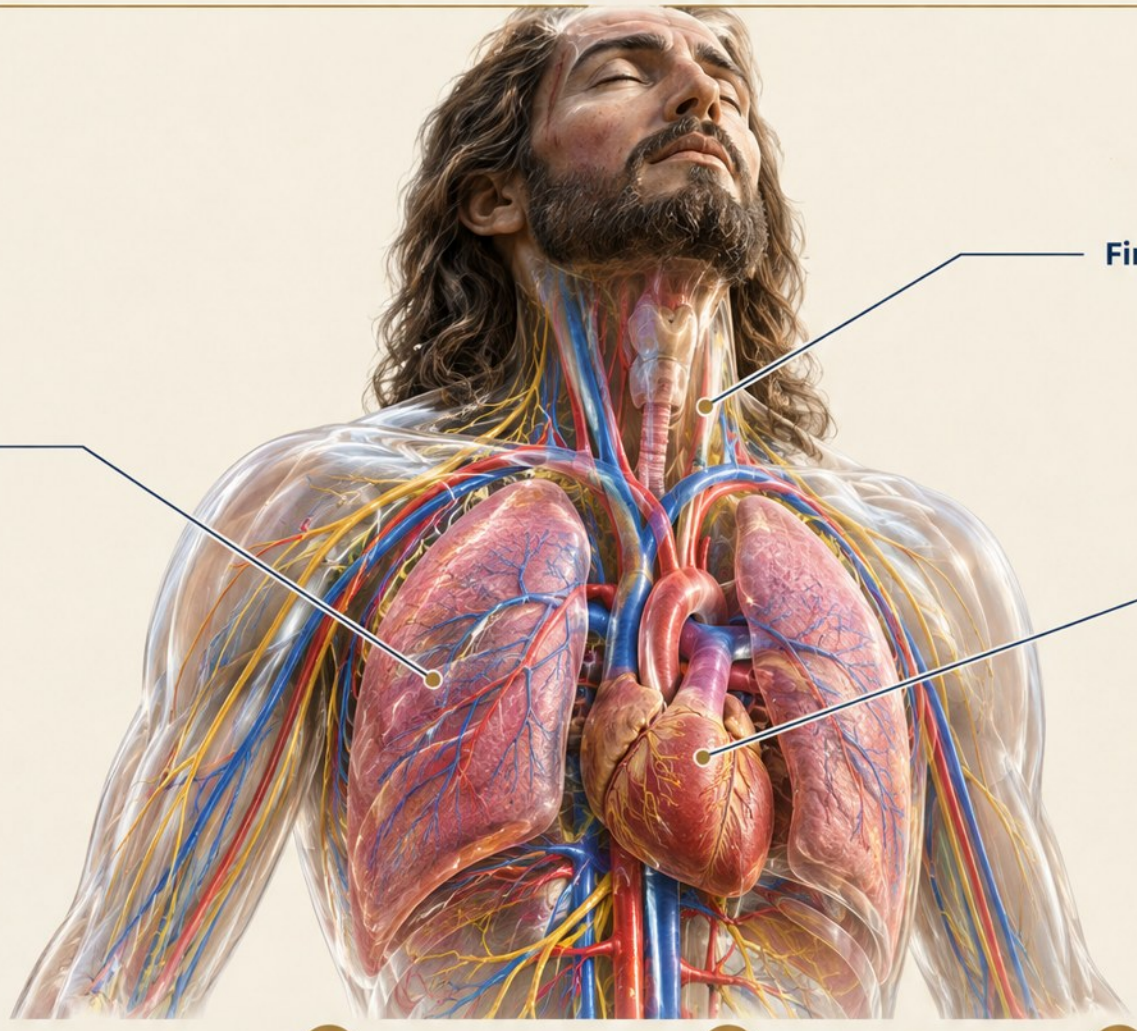
DISCUSS

What am I still trying to add to his finished work?
How does tetelestai bring rest?

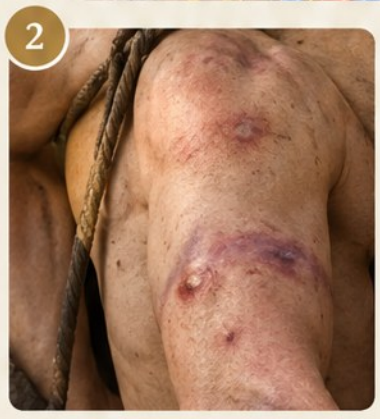
THE SEVENTH WORD

Into Thy Hands

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.




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MEDICAL INSIGHT

The exact cause is debated: one leading view combines exhaustion of breathing, shock and heart failure.

WHAT THE BODY ENDURED

A loud voice again, then death. The exact cause is debated: one leading view combines exhaustion of breathing, shock and heart failure.

CONTEXT

His final words echo Psalm 31:5, a Jewish evening prayer. Seeing how he died, the centurion confessed: Truly this was the Son of God (Matthew 27:54).



THE SEVENTH WORD · LUKE 23:46

Sermon & Study Outline

BIG IDEA

Into Thy Hands.

I — A prayer learned as a child

II — Trust in the face of death

III — A pattern for how we can die

Discuss

What would it mean to say these words each night?
How does his trust change my fear of death?



SERIES & SERVICE PLANS

Preaching the Seven Words

1 Lent series

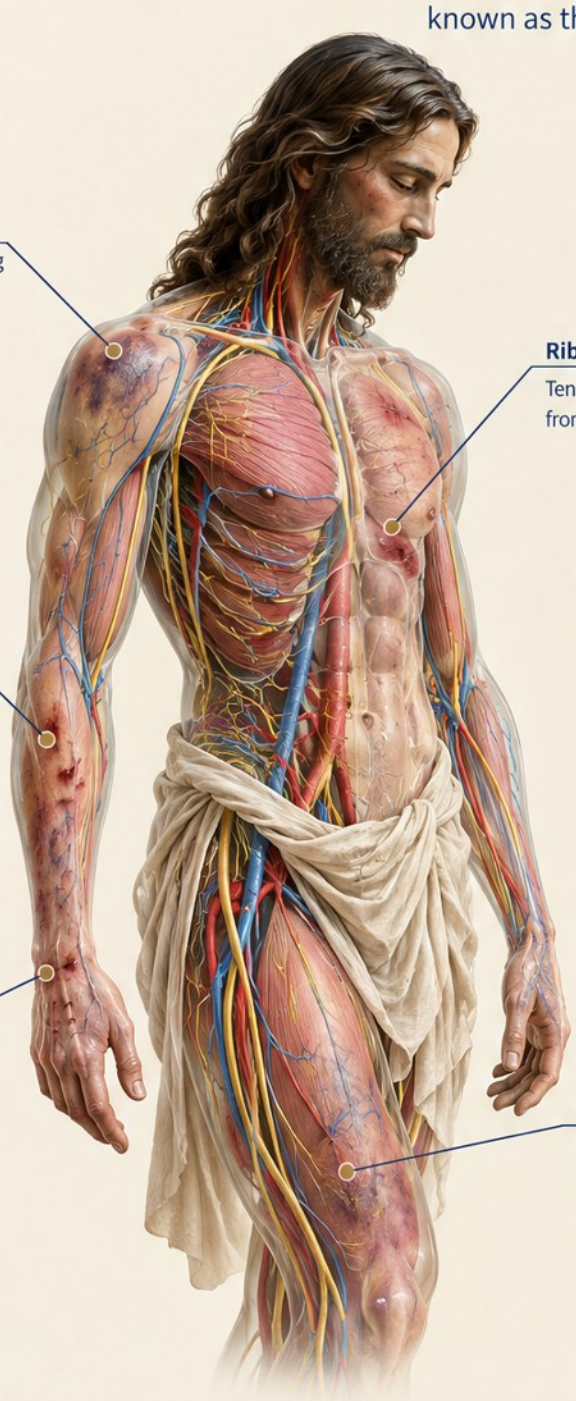
Seven weeks, one word per week, ending on Good Friday with the seventh word and Easter Sunday with the empty tomb.

2 Good Friday service

Noon to 3 pm, the hours of darkness: seven readings, seven short meditations, seven hymns and silence between them, a tradition known as the Three Hours.

3 Small group

One evening: read all seven aloud, then discuss one outline per person.







CLOSING

Looking unto Jesus



Hebrews 12:2 (KJV)

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,

Seven sayings, each spoken at great cost: forgiveness, promise, care, anguish, thirst, victory and trust. Read together, they show us both what he suffered and why.

REFLECT

Which of the seven words do you most need to hear this week?