

The Seven Last Words

a hymn cycle for Good Friday

by Micheal Hickerson

The First Word

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Tune: BABYLON'S STREAMS (88.88)

The soldiers crucify my King;
They pierce the hands that healed my soul.
How can I stand? How can I sing?
God save this one who made me whole.

The soldiers crucify my King,
Divide his clothes, deride his name.
The mockers all around him ring,
The very men for whom he came.

They pierce the hands that healed my soul,
That mended broken lives like mine.
I live, no more in death's control;
Can death destroy the living vine?

How can I stand? How can I sing?
How can I watch them crucify?
My Lord endures each spiteful sting,
Forgives the men who God defy.

God save the one who made me whole,
Who health and life to sinners gave.
My Saviour dies; so dies my soul.
Can I forgive as he forgave?

The Second Word: The Song of the Thief

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

Tune: HYFRYDOL (87.87 D)

1. Dying dreams are easy making;
Harder made is Roman rule.
Crucifixion joins our futures –
Me a rebel, you a fool.
Give your words a solid substance:
Rescue me and raise the sword.
Blessings, honor, power, and glory!
Take your throne and rule as Lord.

2. What Messiah dies so weakly,
Losing all for abstract gain?
Have our hopes become so empty?
Where is God within such pain?
One mere word can change creation,
Heal, and work in mighty deeds.
Strength renounced, exchanged for suffering:
Is this where your gospel leads?

3. Paradise retreats from sinners,
Cursed, condemned, then crucified.
Jew and Gentile mock your mercy.
Can your hope be justified?
Lord, remember me tomorrow,
If your words are more than breath.
Claim, redeem, reveal your kingdom
From the silent tomb of death.

The Third Word

Behold your son...Behold your mother:

Tune: MOSCOW (664.6664)

MARY: Behold God's mercy mild: *women only*
Death for a widow's child
At Roman hands.
See how the world receives
Christ a handmaid conceived.
How can I still believe
God understands?

JESUS: Mother, my love, behold *all*
God's care for His own fold,
The holy way.
The meek and humble One
By death shall overcome
All death beneath the sun,
Bringing new day.

JOHN: Jesus, my Lord my all, *men only*
Can death be God's true call?
You are the Life.
Keep your good presence here,
Banishing pain and fear.
Chosen of God, stay near
To heal our strife.

JESUS: Behold, dear John, my pain, *all*
And see God's love made plain:
I die for you.
Love one another, then,
Showing God's love to men.
Die yourself, die to sin,
A servant true.

The Fourth Word

My God, my God, where have you gone?

Tune: BURFORD (86.86)

1. My God, my God, where have you gone?
All day and night I cry.
Salvation seems so far away.
My God, where have you gone?
2. I know the stories of your love;
I've heard about your grace.
Are they just tales that old men tell?
My God, where have you gone?
3. The cynics laugh and mock your name,
"Can't God protect his own?"
My mouth is dry. What can I say?
My God, where have you gone?
4. But, God, you said that life would live,
That sin and death would die.
For your name's sake I still believe.
My God, where have you gone?
5. So now I wait, so now I wait,
And hope that you'll return.
I can endure, if you come soon.
My God, where have you gone?

The Fifth Word

I thirst.

Tune: LOVE UNKNOWN (66.66.4444)

1. He thirsts and soon will die
 Upon this bitter throne.
No drink can satisfy:
 He thirsts for God alone.
 His suffering,
 Our misery:
 How can he be
 Our holy king?

2. Forsaken by his friends
 Before his greatest need,
A single soldier lends
 Some wine – small grace indeed.
 Is God near by
 Or far away?
 How could we pray
 If he should die?

3. Where can he find relief?
 He sees just hateful eyes.
Acquainted with all grief,
 The man of sorrows dies.
 How can this be?
 What has he done?
 Does anyone
 Win victory?

4. This is our Lord and King,
 In weakness glorified.
In weakness therefore sing
 Because with him we died.
 Let us take up
 Our Saviour's cross,
 And through our loss
 Partake his cup.

The Sixth Word

It is finished.

Tune: VENI EMMANUEL (88.88 with chorus)

1. Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Has come and died for Israel.
The Shepherd who would heal our loss
Now hangs a traitor on that cross.

Chorus: *O come! O come, all Israel,
And mourn for dead Emmanuel.*

THE MOURNERS Rejoice: the darkness hides his face, *women only*
The bleeding mouth that once spoke grace,
And blackened eyes that showed us light.
O let the darkness keep this sight!

THE MOCKERS Rejoice: the fool deserves his shame. *men only*
The Lord preserves his holy name.
You peasants who believed his lies,
See how your great Messiah dies.

4. Rejoice: Jerusalem still stands,
Secured within the Lord's own hands.
The cross proclaims the death and reign
Of Jesus, Christ and Lord of Pain.

The Seventh Word

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Tune: Unknown (10.10.10, with coda on last verse)

1. My Lord has died. What more can God demand?
He persevered, yet suffered cruel defeat.
He put his spirit in the Father's hands.
2. His sacred blood has poured out on the sand.
Is this the end my Savior chose to meet?
My Lord has died. What more can God demand?
3. Behold his faith, much more than God commands;
Behold his love, who washed disciples' feet
And put his spirit in the Father's hands.
4. Poor thieves, poor women, poor of every land
Found paradise and found their lives complete.
Their Lord has died. What more can God demand?
5. He gave himself to this vicarious plan:
His life for ours upon the mercy seat.
He put his spirit in the Father's hands.
6. Beside his cross, we faithful still will stand
And pray his death is victory, not defeat.
Our Lord has died. What more can God demand?
We put our spirits in the Father's hands.