

Luke 23:46 ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

We have now come to the final word. This is the end of words, the end of a heart beating and lungs breathing, the end of a life. Jesus will say nothing more and will do nothing more. The final words that he speaks to us tonight will echo within us this evening and tomorrow as Jesus lies in the tomb. "Into your hands I commend my Spirit." This phrase that Jesus cries with a loud voice is a verse from Psalm 31, actually a half verse. The whole is, "Into your hands I commend my spirit, for you have redeemed me, O Lord, O God of truth." Was this cry a one time event, something one says solely at one's death? Not at all. Praying the psalms was an everyday occurrence in Jesus' day. Jesus himself would have been accustomed to praying this psalm, perhaps on a daily basis. **We** have associated this phrase with the giving up of one's spirit at the **end** of our earthly days. What if we were to pray this, as Jesus did, not at only in death, but in life?

I think, "Well, that's fine for others who have time for that sort of thing". I'll do that later when I'm not so busy. But right now we have more important things to do.... make a living, pay off the car loan, clean the house, file the taxes, support the kids (check all that apply). I'll put myself in God's hands later when I've got more time.

We can imagine that down the road we'll have the luxury to sit by a stream, cut daffodils from the garden, or read a good book. **Then** we can give ourselves into God's care. But maybe what I need to learn from Jesus, maybe you too(?) is that **now** is the time that in the midst of a maelstrom to commend ourselves to God. You're late, the car is out of gas, the printer won't print, there's no money in the checking account, and the doctor is on the phone with your test results. Can we commend our lives and our Spirit to God in these circumstances? Can you give the anxieties, fears, anger and resentments we carry to God ...today? If we call ourselves

Christians, if we believe in the God who holds us, redeems us and guides us we **must** , on a daily basis, do so.

Later....tomorrow..., next week.... Good Friday is not about later. There is no later. This is where all the “laters” end. This is the end of the road for Jesus. There is no more time for procrastination for us. Jesus has commended himself to his Father for the last time. It’s over. The cross that has been the instrument of death for our Savior is now placed squarely in front of us. We have the choice, we always have the choice, of sidestepping that cross and walking around it without changing a thing in our lives; continuing to live with the things that worry and trouble us without asking for help, orwe can look squarely at that cross, commend ourselves to God’s care and let go of all that keeps us from living our lives fully.

Today is the day when we come up against the wall, and that wall is the death of Jesus. And when someone you love hits that wall, it makes you re-evaluate your life too. Even in his death Jesus is showing us how to live.

Jesus longs to teach us that we must commend ourselves into God’s hands every day, so that we will be able to commend ourselves to God’s hands at the end of our earthly days.

The death of Jesus can be for us a wake up call... to not just survive, not just to get through the work week again, but to live every single day full of life that can be ours by commending ourselves and our spirit to God.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, we pray you to set your passion, cross and death in front of our whole selves, now and in the hour of our death. Give mercy and grace to the living; pardon and rest to the dead; to your holy Church peace and concord; and to us here gathered tonight the will to begin life anew by commending ourselves to God’s care; for with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, one God, now and for ever. Amen.