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# Lenten and Easter Meditation: Voices of the Passion: The Seven Words from the Cross: The Second Word, 1944

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SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS  
The Second Word

Oct. 44

"TODAY THOU SHALT BE WITH ME IN PARADISE"

Many people have been fascinated by the person of the dying thief. He seems to convey certain lessons to the modern mind which our age needs bitterly. We can readily understand that. The story of the ~~dying~~ <sup>on the cross</sup> thief is the greatest example of the ~~brand~~ <sup>the most magnificent action</sup> snatched from the burning in the world's history. It is ~~the greatest example~~ of the all-embracing love of the Divine Savior.

At ~~present~~ <sup>Calvary</sup> our Lord had come to the cross-roads of the world and the meeting place of the ages. Here was the climax of the long years of waiting and preparation. He was concerned with the sins of all time and all men. He was suffering for the first and the last sin. Nowhere else is there a ~~more magnifi-~~ <sup>better</sup> ~~cent~~ demonstration of the love of God for the individual human soul than the fact that under these circumstances He had time to turn to a poor dying thief. This is the ultimate greatness of the Christian religion; <sup>in its last and highest meaning it</sup> ~~essentially~~ it is <sup>plans the individual before God and God before the individual.</sup> ~~God and the individual.~~

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom" - - "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise". A strange conversation! Amid the cursing, jeering and howling of the mob there is suddenly a quiet voice: "Lord, remember me". A dying man asks a dying Man to remember. The answer comes swift and sure, transforming darkness into light and sweeping over into Heaven a soul for whom the gates of Hell were yawning wide: "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise".

Who was the dying thief? We do not know. He is one of the nameless souls whose history is universal. The story of his life was probably very ordinary. Somewhere along the line he had gotten into bad company, chosen an easy life, and succumbed to the philosophy of getting by. Now he was paying for it, drop by drop of blood from his head, <sup>his</sup> hands and his feet. This was the end of the

road for him. ~~It~~ Suddenly like a stroke of lightning came the ~~voice~~<sup>his</sup> of repentance. He knew that the Man on the Cross in the center could save him. There was a way out. ~~The voice came: "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise".~~ <sup>He spoke: "Lord, remember me when, etc"</sup> The moving ~~humility~~<sup>humility</sup> of his prayer. He does not dare to ask for forgiveness. He says nothing about his possible salvation. Only the single word "remember"! This is the ultimate expression of the old, old human cry, the longing never to be stilled, the deep<sup>est</sup> need of the human heart. We want someone to remember us even in another world. We do not want to be forgotten. After we are gone we hope that someone will pay~~us~~ the tribute of a remembering tear and a reminiscent thought.

The tremendous majesty and certainty of the answer! "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise". Our Lord turns to him and seems to say: "There will be no waiting for you. We suffered together here. We shall be glorified together there." There is a constant procession of men and women on the road to Paradise. Hour after hour, day after day, year after year men and women begin the long journey to their last home. That night two figures joined the procession, He Who had built the road and he who had found it at the end of the way of sorrows. The eternal Son of God was coming home now as His day ~~came~~<sup>turned</sup> toward evening. He brought with Him a friend. If you want to see how God works; if you want to realize the tremendous power and scope of the Christian faith, look again at this picture! The first soul purchased with the red coin of redemption and marching as the escort of the King of Kings into Paradise, is a poor thief. The first beneficiary of the accomplished atonement is a man who would be in a prison cell today. This is God in His ultimate power and grace!

"Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise". How often has He whispered