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

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From
THE SEVEN WORDS ~~OF~~ THE CROSS

THE SEVENTH WORD

Oct. 4

"Father, Into Thy Hands I Commend My Spirit"

This is the last moment on Calvary. Perhaps it was only a whisper unheard by the crowd, but heard by His Father in Heaven: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Men have approached death in various ways. Some have faced the ultimate fact in human life with fear and trembling; others with defiant bravado; still others with calm resignation. Here on Calvary a new approach to the door of death appeared in the history of men. There was no protesting, no crying, no defiance, no resignation. It was the triumphant entry into a greater life. In the ~~great~~ ^{high} halls of Heaven cherubim and seraphim were waiting for this moment. Now He was coming Home, his banners fluttering triumphant in the wind. The tall lilies of heaven bent left and right and the choirs of eternity stood silent. As He came, He brought with Him one poor thief. In the eyes of men it was not much to show for the years of obedience to His Father's will, the agony in the Garden, and the pain of the Cross, but all the angels of Heaven rejoiced because they saw in that human soul the first of a long procession of men and women who would come to the gates of Heaven redeemed by His blood and with His dying cry on their lips: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The world has never seen another Man die like that. When men die, they often leave things unfinished and undone. They are reluctant to go. For Him, however, there was nothing like that. He had come to His own Heaven in God's good time. His work was done; His purposes were accomplished; His task was finished. Quietly and surely He could commend His soul to the hands of His Heavenly Father.

There were hundreds of men and women at Calvary that Good Friday afternoon when these words were first spoken, but only three understood their full meaning. Today, as the message of the dying and living Saviour comes to the hearts of men,

there are undoubtedly millions in all the Churches of Christendom who hear the words but who do not understand them. This is the amazing blindness of the human race to the peace and power of the Cross. It is the blindness of lust, of greed, of ambition. It is the perennial tragic and pitiful blindness of men to God.

We, who have come to this House of God in faith, must see the meaning of His farewell very clearly. He is now at the end of the road. He is turning from earth to Heaven. The cross is becoming the crown. This we must always remember. He died only to live again. He was moved ⁱⁿ from earth to Heaven.

This fact is decisively important because it means that we are facing a living Person tonight. He went away and He will return. Since that first Good Friday empires have risen and fallen, millions have lived and died, and the world has stumbled on its weary way. Over all the ebb and flow of history, shines this one eternal, immutable fact: "He shall return!" Men must face that fact. They can not get away from it. It is the one inevitable thing in life. Face to face with it in unbelief they, like the wandering Jew, can have no rest. Face to face with it in faith they, like the Saviour, can say: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

This great fact takes all fear out of life. We know that He has been here, that He is here today, and that one day He will return visibly to take us to His Heavenly Father. This is the ultimate meaning of history and life!