

## “Father, Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit.”

Luke 23:44-46

As we have now heard all of Jesus’ words from the cross during this Lenten season, once again we hear Jesus praying the Psalms. You may recall from our mid-week service a few weeks ago that when Jesus prayed, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” that He was praying Psalm 22.

Now we hear Jesus praying Psalm 31, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Like Psalm 22, Psalm 31 is a Psalm of David. Jesus uses David’s words as His dying prayer. Likewise, Stephen, the first Christian martyr of whom we read of in the book of Acts, as he was being stoned to death, prayed the same prayer.

Jan Huss, the church reformer who was burned at the stake 100 years before Martin Luther led his Reformation, he used David’s words as his dying prayer. Martin Luther, on the night he died, prayed these words over and over again. Philip Melanchthon, Luther’s protege and the author of the Augsburg Confession, prayed the same dying prayer, “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.”

Not everyone has the opportunity to lie on their death bed or face surety or near surety of death with a clear and active mind. But making these words from Psalm 31 your dying prayer would put you in pretty good company. It is a bold and confident prayer. It is not a prayer in which you are really asking for anything.

You are simply saying to God, "I trust You, Father. I know that You will take good care of my spirit when it comes out of my body. And I am confident of the resurrection."

As I said before, not everyone has the chance to offer that dying prayer. Therefore, we spend our days within Christ's church preparing ourselves and praying along with Christ our Lord, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit."

We call this day "Good Friday" with good reason. God our Father sent His Son to give up His spirit so that our spirits can be welcomed into heaven and will one day join in the resurrection of the body.

In the Lord's Prayer, we pray, "But deliver us from evil." Luther says in his catechism that "We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven."

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, just like when we pray Psalm 31, we pray for God to prepare us for our death, and we pray with confidence that our exit from this life will be a blessed end.

As we pause and ponder the suffering of our Lord upon the cross – the nails driven through His hands and feet, the crown of thorns, the lingering pain of the whipping and beating that He took at the hands of the Romans – His death, His exit from this life was certainly not the “blessed end” that we imagine for ourselves.

However, the manner or apparent ease with which a person can exit this life is not what makes it a “blessed end.” It is our Father in heaven gathering and caring for the souls of His children that brings a blessed end.

It was His confidence in the resurrection that caused Jesus to speak the words of David in His dying breathe. “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” It is our confidence in the resurrection that allows us to call this otherwise bleak and bloody day, Good Friday. Amen.