Good Friday
Rolling Meadows - 1965

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. Luke 23: 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.

THE WORD OF COMMITMENT

When Martin Luther wrote his explanation of the Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, he concluded with this prayer: And finally, when our last hour has come, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Thyself in heaven. When your last hour comes, how will you die? This is important - and you cannot avoid it! I am well aware of the fact that most people today sluff over the subject of death. They don't want to talk about it. A mother once remarked: I never bring my children to a funeral. It makes me shudder every time I have to attend. But tonight you cannot escape it - at the Cross of Christ you come point blank before the reality of death. He alone can teach you how to live and how to die! Listen with ears of faith and understanding: And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said: Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit; and have said thus, He gave up the ghost. Faith can see heaven opened here and know the source of power and strength to endure, to live, and die

Jesus again calls God Father. He is back in the bosom of the Father and is not estranged from the Father, so that He can only cry out to God. This can mean only one thing: God Himself agreed with the previous cry. God is telling us here that it is all finished - that the time of man's forsakenness is all over - that our guilt is pardoned and our iniquity removed. Jesus had gone all alone into the Holy of holies - into the presence of God. It was dark, and He was under the full wrath of God as He became sin for us. This was Christ's hell for us. But He had paid the price, and God did not reject His work. Jesus is now going home, back into the bosmm of the Father, where He had been from all eternity. He could again pray, Father. And, therefore, we too can pray: Our Father who art in heaven. After the dark of Calvary there isn't a single person who cannot so pray through Jesus: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.

What was it that made the darkness of Calvary so awful? Jesus' cry tells us. He was forsaken of God. He looked about for His Father, and His Father

had withdrawn Himself. He reached out for His Father's hand, and His Father's hand only reached out to smite Him and push Him away from His holy presence. But Jesus still clung to God in faith and still held on to His promises as He cried out, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? He couldn't see His Father's hand, but it had to be there. He could only feel it in wrath, but it was still the hand of His Father.

Yet only for a mement does God so deal with His children, expecially with His Son. Only for a moment does God hide Himself in order that He might visit us with loving-kindness and tender mercy forever. This is the interval of faith, when faith holds on because it is faith in God, even though it gets as dark and difficult as Calvary. But hang on it must. God's hand is still the hand of the merciful Father, and the blow from His hand is only to kill the sin which still besets us and plagues us. And we must know that the hand Of God is still reaching out only to help and to save. That is why Jesus could pray after the hell of His God-forsakenness: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit. The hands of God were not evident - but Jesus was sure that those Hands were still there and ready to receive everything that He committed to them. God Himself has promised, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. God does not go back on what He has said. Dare to believe Him as Jesus did out of the dark, and His hands will be there to receive your spirit also.

Learn of Jesus Christ to die. That is how the hymn encourages us. Better if we could sing: Now in Jesus Christ I die. His death was my death because my sin had become His sin. Now there is no sin in me as I am in Christ, because it is all finished. Now there is no death for me because there on the Cross is my death. Now, when my last hour comes, I can commend my spirit into the hands of the Father, putting it where it will be safe forever. So my Lord died in order that He might die for me and prepare a place for me in the mansions of paradise. The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

So Jesus died - so He gave up the ghost. So He confronted the last enemy - death - in order that He might be the death of death, even as He became the sin of sin and the curse of all curse. He died for me in order that I might never die - in order that I might have God always as my Father in Christ. He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.... Whether therefore we live, we live unto the Lord; whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether therefore we live or die, we are the Lord's. We are bought with a price - and what a price - God's only Son. In the great mystery of His love He did go through with it - we are the bought ones - we are the redeemed of God by Christ Jesus. Go in peace! Die in peace! In all of your going and finally in your dying there is nothing but peace because Jesus has prepared your resting place forever. Take it as you pray along with Him now: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of hosts. Peace in the hands of God - peace through the scarred hands of Jesus - this is the meaning of Calvary and the Cross of Christ. This is the ability to rejoice now with aged Simeon: Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace... for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation - or to say with Jesus: Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Amen.