

St Mary's, Hambleden

**The Last Words – Good Friday 2007**

*'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'*

**Luke 23. 33&34**

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, *'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'*

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Even in the agony of crucifixion, Jesus was able to pray for forgiveness for those who were responsible for his suffering. 'Don't hold this against them, Father, they don't know what they are doing.'

Psychologists tell us two things about forgiveness. Firstly, that we can only forgive what has happened to us; we cannot forgive on behalf of someone else. Jesus forgave his persecutors the pain, the betrayal, and the drawn-out death that he was suffering. I wonder if his mother and his friends, hearing his words, were able to forgive those same persecutors for the emotional distress they suffered as they watched Jesus die.

Secondly, we are told that forgiveness, if it is possible, sets us free from being trapped by the burden of hurt. Forgiveness moves us from being a victim of the past into someone facing a future.

Jesus was able, because of the great love he felt for humanity, to forgive those who had abused him. Forgiveness is costly, but it can be liberating.

Can we pray that we are given the gift of being able to forgive?

(Let us pray)

O God, on the cross Jesus forgave those who crucified him.  
By your great love, grace us with the gift of forgiveness,  
that we may leave behind hurts and sorrows  
and move forward with you into new life.

Lord, in your mercy, **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**