

**Good Friday
April 6, 2007**

St. Paul's, Red Wing, MN
Pastor Kristen Schlauderaff

Seven Moods in Dying

By Merle Frank (adapted)

Forgiveness
Promise
Concern
Despair
Agony
Fulfillment
Surrender

Most people die
Resentfully,
Even at best;
And though they know
The day must come,
And though their faith
Be deep and strong,
They hold a grudge
That God should nudge them
Past the line.

Someone turned the hands of time,
The whistle blows – too soon!
The game is done,
And the person resents
That there is no overtime –
The best plays are still in mind,
Unplayed!
With sagging shoulders
The person leaves the field
And takes a shower.

FORGIVENESS

But One who died
Made of dying an event,
Not of joy or gaiety,
But of remembrance.
As he hung upon a cross,
He told us something of himself
Reflected in seven
Tortured moods
It is not that his
Was less a death
Than any other,

Nor that it came with ease
Because he knew its hour.
A nasty, cruel death it was,
Not of natural cause
Or accident
But by hatred
 Fully spent.

Yet his mood was not the same
As those who hung him there;
And the first soft rays of light
Shone from his death – as
“Forgive,” he asked.
“Forgive –
For they know not
What they do.”
Thus the dying prisoner absolved
The jury, judge, and jailer
In one word
 “Forgive.”

PROMISE

"But, just a minute,
Death,
I cannot be leaving yet;
I have one more soul to save,
One more heart to heal" –
Or so he seemed to say.
On a nearby cross was
Another man,
Like this One – a man.
He, too, was ripped and torn
By pain too intense
 For even the worst of humans.

But, then, whose fault
Was that!?
It was not hatred
Or envy
Or tampered scales
That brought him here!
But his own doing,

We could have told him so,
That nothing good could come
From running with
That crummy crowd.
So don't tell me
Your troubles, friend!
Or beg to be relieved
By one last word
And give the same reward
To you
As to the faithful!
 -- That is what I would have said...

But the mood in Him
Whose heart forgave

The scourge,
The spit,
The spear –
In Him the mood was promise.
“Today,” he said,
“Today,
You will join me friend,
 In paradise.”

From the hell
On a cross
To the heaven of paradise
Jesus walks
With the scum of the earth.
And his mood of promise
Lowers not himself,
But elevates the person forgiven
Even as his death
Upon the cross
Brought no insult to his name,
But raised the cross
From ugly death
 To eternal fame.

CONCERN

What kind of heart
Had he?
Whose love walked tenderly
Over hate,
And promised life
to one
Who never really lived –
That now should show
Concern
For mother and friend,
In their sorrowing tears,
 For the years ahead.

Surely their loneliness and grief
Would never match,
In pain
His suffering now.
Yet in him
So sensitive to others' pain,
Their sorrow and remorse
Were as nails
Driven through again.
Thus his charge to
Friend and mother
"Woman, behold your son,
Son, behold your mother."
Was his way of saying,
"Shed no tears for me,"
But for those
 Who still remain.

DESPAIR

"Behold the man."
Pilate had said,
The man,
Genuine man,
Authentic man.
No ghost was he
With superimposed face
Or mask
Or carbon likeness
Of man –
He was a man!
 Make no mistake of that.

And as a man.
He suffered.
And his suffering

Was not confined
To physical torment,
The unspeakable torture
Of the flesh.
No, it was also
In the mind.
Thus for one awful moment
Jesus, the human
Believed himself to be
Forgotten,
Forsake, alone.
Pleading in vain
To a silent,
Unanswering God,
He asked the question,
Not so much to gain an answer
As to make his protest –
“Why have you forsaken me?”
Why?

It is said that hell
Is not so much
A burning
As a yearning
To be remembered,
Acknowledged,
Known – having once been forgotten.
It is the separation,
The forgottenness,
The silent treatment,
That – in life or in death –
Constitutes hell.

In that moment
The Son of God
Cried out,
And his broken-hearted voice
Pealed and rang through

The empty universe,
In anguished tone,
Echoing and re-echoing,
"Forsaken;
Forgotten,
 Alone."

AGONY

As though to prove
Beyond a shade
That he was surely human
His agony took no rest,
But continued,
Swell on swell
Squeezing every labored cell
'Til life should cease.
Thus his parched
And dying body
Craved
A drink.
So simple a desire
To cool the raging fire
In those final
Moments of dying.
So ironic, too,
That he who
Once declared himself
To be
The water of life,
 Should now be thirsty.

But he WAS a human
In every way like we.
Except for sin,
But certainly
Including agony,

And bloody sweat
And tears.
"Whosoever comes to me
Shall never thirst,"
He had said,
Yet thirsted he:
Not alone for his hot flesh
But for the souls of humanity
 Unsaved, untouched.

He thirsted
For the dry and arid desert
Called humankind,
That streams of living water
Might fill their
Empty flagons,
Wet their seed,
Fill their need.
For people –
Dying in a desert sun –
He spoke the words
That lay on every tongue,
 "I thirst."

FULFILLMENT

A million angels weep,
And God reveals
Tear-stained eyes;
As stormy skies
Scream their protest
In angry peals
Of frustrated thunder;
Creation groans
And earth shudders
At the vast blackness
Of the human heart.

The Son of God
Is dying,
A lone voice crying
 "It is finished."

Not just the dying done,
But the task,
The mission's won!
The tyrant, death,
Is met face to face;
The simmering hate of humans
So resentful of his place
As creature, rather than Creator,
All has come together
In one place
 Called Calvary.

The painful steps
To Calvary
Started far beyond
This week.
Tracing back one sees
Their origin sin
Beyond the mind's horizon;
For the steps to Calvary
Began in Adam
And Christ, the Son,
Knew every step
Along the way,
The hurt, the sorrow,
The anguish.
And raised, outstretched,
Upon a tree;
He sees
The debt is paid,
God's people are free.

SURRENDER

Who can surrender
In peace,
Except the One
Who obeyed his Father's will?
The perfect peace
Of knowing
All he'd been assigned,
In life, in mission, in death,
All was complete.

Yet not he alone,
But all who look to him
In faith,
And all who clutch
With feeble grasp
His garment hem,
Likewise may surrender.
And hoist the banner of
A style,
A life,
A way,
And find his or her peace
In their surrender.

Seven moods portrayed:

Forgiveness

Promise

Concern

Despair

Agony

Fulfillment

Surrender

And then he breathed his last,
The light went out.