

John 19:28-30 It Is Finished! Good Friday April 19, 2019

By Pastor Kenneth Mellon, Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Pleasant Valley Rd., West Bend, WI
God's grace & peace have been won for us by the suffering & death of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.
We read from John 19:28-30

These are your Words, dear Father. Help us to see Jesus who completed to work to saves us! Your Word

Dear Believers in the crucified Christ,

We've all seen it—the last out of the World Series and the mad rush of players onto the field or we've watched the final seconds tick away in the Super Bowl for our team to win or we've heard the National Anthem played as the American Olympians stand on the podium with their gold medals. Finished -- the life-long training and practice! The hopes and the efforts of a long season are finished!

“But,” you are saying, “you can't compare *that* to the scene on Good Friday.” The scene is more like when the Allies rescued prisoners from concentration camps at the end of World War II and the skeleton-like survivors could scarcely believe they were saved. This is more like when earthquake victims are buried under rubble and lay in darkness for hours, amazed that someone found them, carried them to safety, still in shock and breaking down in tears upon their rescue. They had been pushed to the limits of human endurance, but now it's finished.

Even those situations pale in comparison to what happened on Good Friday. Who can begin to understand the torments of a soul feeling the pains of hell that Jesus endured on the cross? Who can even begin to grasp what He went through as He was despised and rejected by man and forsaken by God His Father—to say nothing of the physical torment of crucifixion? More than that, Jesus didn't make it out of that darkness alive at the end of Good Friday. He wasn't rescued and embraced by family and friends when all was finished. “*He bowed his head and gave up his spirit*” (v.30). On the cross the God/Man died. The soldiers pierced his side to prove it was so. Then He was placed in a nearby tomb.

Just before He died, Jesus spoke three words of truth: “*It is finished.*” The Apostle John heard them and wrote them down for us. We don't know if Jesus shouted them or forced them out between breaths. But, these three words echoed throughout heaven and earth and hell! And they continue to resonate in this sin-wrecked world, giving eternal hope to all who hear them and believe:

“It is finished”!

1. Jesus finished everything for His Father! The sign that Pilate had posted above the cross said, “*Jesus of Nazareth. . .*” And he was! Jesus grew up there, the son of Mary and assumed son of Joseph. Yet something told the people that this wasn't a typical man from Nazareth. They were right. The son of Mary was also the Son of God. Even at the age of 12 Jesus was aware of who He was and that His heavenly Father had sent him to finish His work. When Jesus began His ministry, the Father from heaven publicly approved Jesus' life and said: “*This is my Son... with him I am well pleased*” (Matthew 3:17).

Following Jesus' baptism, the list of things his Father wanted completed became more thorough. Jesus went into the desert to overcome the tempter. Then he began preaching the words that God, His Father, had given Him to say. The same was true of the miracles, which were planned by the Father. Jesus wasn't living as He pleased; He was on a mission to reveal God.

By nature everyone has a vague idea of God. Natural law tells people in the world of God. But, due to our sin, we have a natural terror of God. He looks like huge dark cloud towering above us in a threatening way. And by nature that's all we see. But John wrote that Jesus, “*the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known*” (John 1:18).

In the person of Jesus, God stepped out of the shadows. In Jesus, we see a God's face of deep love. We hear words of incredible comfort. We see a warrior who came to destroy our enemy the devil. We see a God who desires nothing more than that we have an eternal bond with His love and fellowship like that which once existed between God and Adam.

Even on the cross, Jesus revealed His Father. We can only see it with eyes of faith. Who otherwise could look at a cross and say: "Now I see love!" But, when we realize God sent His Son to destroy sin and death with His heart beating and bleeding for our salvation we see love. "*It is finished*"—all the Father's work that He gave Jesus to do so that a world of sinners might truly know Him as the God who saves.

2. Everything was done for our salvation. On the cross, we see the power of God doing what we are unable to do. The human mind (especially self-determined Americans) can't wrap itself around this thought. By nature, we don't want to accept it. We know from Scripture that we are born "*dead in . . . transgressions and sins*" (*Ephesians 2:1*). We can look around our nation and see evidence of people's sin everywhere. Yet the greatest display of sin, the greatest resistance to the will of God, isn't only shown by the breaking news on TV. It is found on our streets; in our workplaces, in rich homes and in poverty-stricken cities. What is this great sin? It is to look at the incredible sacrifice on the cross and say, "No thanks, God; I'll pay my own way. No thanks, God; I've done enough good to make it on my own." It is stubborn human pride that believes that we can with our own sacrifices and good efforts become deserving of heaven. To the sinful mind this makes sense. In every other aspect of life, good works get rewarded. Yet the sinful mind doesn't understand sin: how serious it is and what punishment it deserves from a holy God. There is no quicker path to eternal death, no other way that takes us further from God than choosing to stand on our own goodness.

But, at the cross we see God's way. For on the cross Jesus endured the sins of the world. It is finished: The full payment for sins. "It is finished" God will not punish us for our sins, for He already punished Jesus. And, since God's Son did it all, it was done perfectly. "It is finished"—Satan cannot accuse us anymore. "It is finished"—our sins need not burden our conscience. "It is finished"—death no longer is a haunting fear. "It is finished"—hell has no power over us who believe in Jesus, the Crucified.

After Jesus said "*It is finished*" He said one more phrase from the cross that began with the word "Father." God's face was once again turned to His Son. Jesus' sacrifice was complete and accepted. God is at peace with us. Through faith in his Son, we are clothed in Jesus' holiness; we are dear sons and dear daughters, adopted into God's own family through Baptism. Does God not speak blessing to us each week as we leave His house, reminding us that He turns His face toward us and gives us peace?

And because of His cross and those three words of truth, on the day when each of us has finished our earthly journey, we can gently bow our heads—as Jesus did on the cross—and commend our spirits into our heavenly Father's hands. Life isn't finished at our deaths any more that life was finished for Jesus! For our God of all power and love will rescue us from the disaster of sin and death and bring us into the victory of His eternal joy. Amen.