

Good Friday; April 15, 2022
+ John 19:17-30 +
Jesus Has Finished Your Salvation

Carrying his own cross, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him along with two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the middle.

Pilate also had a notice written and fastened on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazarene, the King of the Jews."

Many of the Jews read this notice, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek.

So, the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that 'this man said, 'I am the King of the Jews.''"

Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took his tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it. Instead, let's cast lots to see who gets it." This was so that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:

They divided my garments among them
and cast lots for my clothing.

So the soldiers did these things.

Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were standing near the cross.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son!" Then he said to the disciples, "Here is your mother!" And from that time this disciple took her into his own home.

After this, knowing that everything had now been finished, and to fulfill the Scripture, Jesus said, "I thirst."

A jar of sour wine was sitting there. So they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished!" Then, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

As soon as we start a thing, we want to reach the finish line. When we were children, we wanted to be done growing up so we could drive and go to R-rated movies and drink beer. As soon as you purchase your first home, you look forward to finishing your payments and burning the mortgage. You pack up the children for the drive to Disney Land, and in between threats to turn the car around, you can't wait to finally reach the Magic Kingdom. As soon as we start, we want to cross the finish lines.

It is also true that we want to be finished with things so badly that we often fool ourselves into thinking we're done before we actually are. A basketball team has a great first half, and comes out for the second half and plays like the game was already over. By the time it actually is, they've lost. The student smiles after seeing A's on his midterm, and then starts to coast through the second half of the semester. By the time the finish line finally arrives, those amazing A's have disintegrated into D's.

"It is finished!" Those are the most famous and important words that our Lord Jesus spoke from the cross. But was he really finished? And if he was really finished, what had he completed?

It certainly seems as if Pontius Pilate was finished. It had not been a good day for him. An angry mob had formed outside his palace windows bright and early. The people were demanding a crucifixion, but Pilate could not find anything wrong with the accused. He offered the people a chance to see a real criminal punished, and the innocent man released. But then charges of treason and the real possibility of a riot had Pilate caving in to their demands. What would Caesar think – what would happen to Pilate's career – if news of this ever got back to Rome?

So with a bowl of water, Pilate tried to wash Jesus' innocent blood off his hands. He was finished with it. To show he was finished with this whole mess, Pilate took a jab at the Jewish people who had demanded Jesus' crucifixion with the sign he wrote above Jesus' cross. When the people complained, Pilate told them just how finished he was: **"What I have written, I have written."**

By all appearances, Jesus looked like he was finished too. The cowardice of Pilate and the bloodthirst of the crowd left him hanging out to die. His finish line was coming up fast. But Jesus was not finished quite yet. He had not yet finished fulfilling the laws of perfect love and submission.

First, the law of perfect love. It's easy to forget that Jesus had a family: a mother named Mary, a stepfather named Joseph, and more than likely quite a few siblings. Jesus' mother Mary was highly favored because she had the privilege of carrying and raising the Son of God. But that high favor was also destined to end in heartache. And from the cross, Jesus saw his dear mother's pain: **When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother!" And from that time this disciple took her into his own home.** In the middle of his own suffering, Jesus cared for his mother's emotional and physical well-being.

What love he showed for her! But he showed much more love for the whole world as he showed it for his mother. With nails in his hands and his end in sight, Jesus was fulfilling his heavenly Father's law of love as he took care of Mary's body and mind. He remained the perfect substitute for us sinners who are so often cold and indifferent to each other's needs. In showing love to his mother, Jesus was also

showing love to us: he was maintaining his perfect love, winning forgiveness for us, and a home with our heavenly Father.

And we see his perfection in another place, too. We see him hold to his life of perfect submission, all the way to the end. Even though the governing authorities were acting unfairly and cruelly, Jesus submitted to their orders. When they ordered his death, he marched. When they ordered him to carry his own cross, he did until his battered no longer could. When they increased his humiliation even more by stealing his clothes, he did not object.

But Jesus still was not finished. Not only did he fulfill the Father's laws of love and submission in our place, but before he was finished he fulfilled the prophecies of Scripture, so that we can hold total certainty that he is the true Savior.

The first fulfilled prophecy was done to Jesus by the soldiers. For them, Good Friday was nothing special. It was another day at the office. They had been assigned to this execution squad, and probably didn't enjoy it. But they weren't afraid to profit from it, either. **When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took his tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it. Instead, let's cast lots to see who gets it."**

What the soldiers didn't realize was that this was the most meaningful bonus they would even take home from a day at work. **This was so that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So the soldiers did these things.** These very garments had been sung about in Psalm 22 for a thousand years before the soldiers even tossed the dice. God used the greed and cruelty of those soldiers to fulfill an ancient prophecy about the Savior. Every prophecy fulfilled provides us with proof that Jesus was the long-promised Savior.

That first fulfilled prophecy was done to Jesus. The second was done by him. **After this, knowing that everything had now been finished, and to fulfill the Scripture, Jesus said, "I thirst." A jar of sour wine was sitting there. So they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.** His thirst was a terrible result of his crucifixion. The bloodletting whips, thorns, and nails had created a dreadful thirst. **"I thirst"** is proof that Jesus' suffering was real. But it's also proof that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of Scripture right down to the tiniest detail. Jesus knew the words of Psalm 69: **They gave me vinegar for my thirst.**

Jesus was not finished until he finished every single prophecy down to the minutest detail, from the toss of dice to vinegar on a sponge. He fulfilled the prophecies 100 percent so that we can have zero percent doubt that our salvation comes from him.

Jesus also drank that vinegar because he had something else to say, something more we desperately need to hear. Jesus was not finished until he was finished – finished fulfilling the law in our place. Jesus was not finished until he was finished – finished fulfilling every prophecy of Scripture. Then and only then was Jesus truly finished: **When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished!" Then, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.**

Jesus' word, "It is finished" is the final word on the fact of your forgiveness. I say "word" because in the Greek language that St. John used to write his Gospel, it is only one single word: *tetelesthai*. Translation: "It is finished." It is the same word that the shopkeepers of Jesus' day wrote on the bottom of invoices, once they had been paid in full and no debt at all remained.

What a thought! Our sin was a hopeless, unpayable debt that we owed to God. There was nothing we could give, say, think, or do to pay off a single sin – let alone a whole life of them. But our sin, our debt, is paid for, and paid in full. There is no balance of sin at all remaining for us to pay. It is, simply put, finished. This is the word the whole Bible revolves around and points to: finished.

And although it can be dangerous in a sermon to get too far into the nuances of Greek grammar, there is a time that's it worth it. And this is one. That word, *telesthai*, is in a tense called the "pluperfect." In the Greek language, a pluperfect indicates that the action is totally complete, but that its effects continue indefinitely into the future. What an amazing thought again! The effects of Jesus' finished work never end. Here we sit, two thousand years after he said that word, and we know that his finished salvation stretches all the way forward to us.

Brothers and sisters, let there be no ifs, ands, or buts this Good Friday in your heart, mind, or life. Instead, be still. And in simple faith turn to Jesus; he, and he alone finished your salvation. It is always accomplished forever through him. Jesus has finished your salvation. And it is finished. Amen.