

Famous Last Words: Triumph

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my privilege to be the lead pastor here at Bramard Baptist Church. Over the past few weeks here at Bramard, we've been in a series called Famous Last Words, and that series has focused on the last words or phrases that Jesus said from the cross as recorded in the Bible.

And these are powerful words, both because of who said them and all that he means to us, but also because of where he said them from, the cross.

We've looked at the concepts of forgiveness, salvation, relationship, abandonment, and distress, reflected in the words of Jesus that are recorded in the four Gospels.

We've explored together through those phrases how they help see us into the heart of God and his great love for us. Particularly through the work accomplished by Jesus at the cross.

And last Sunday, we focused on John 19, 28, and 29 with the words of Jesus, I am thirsty. In that phrase, we saw the first deeply personal and human cry of Jesus, as he experienced both the very real physical agony of dehydration, but also the great spiritual weight of the sins of the world that he took upon himself at Golgotha that day.

[1 : 36] And if Golgotha is an unfamiliar term to you, it's the name of the place where people were crucified and where Jesus was crucified on that day.

It's just outside of Jerusalem or inside the walls, based on some studies. But this Good Friday morning, our sermon is titled Triumph.

Triumph.

Triumph. It is finished. It's one of my favorite pictures, artist's rendition of Jesus.

The first time I saw it, I'm going to try and keep it together. My people know I'm bad at keeping it together. First time I saw this picture, it spoke directly into my heart, and I honestly believe this is about as close to what Jesus looks like as we've seen yet.

[2 : 57] This is a picture of Jesus probably around the time of the prime of his ministry, when he was in his 30s. And so our 30s are usually seen as a time when life is just beginning.

We move forward with new experiences and new directions in our lives. And certainly when I was in my 30s, I rode a dinosaur to school, but when I was in my 30s, in many ways I saw my life as just beginning.

I was relatively newly married to a beautiful, kind and godly woman. I had two young children. I was in a great career that provided well for our family.

And yet this morning we reflect that Jesus, who was also in his early 30s, was facing not only the end of his ministry and his earthly human relationships, but also his life.

On that dark afternoon more than 2,000 years ago at Golgotha, a hill near Jerusalem, Jesus was nailed to a cross. In a very real way, life as he had known it on earth was drawing to a close.

[4 : 18] It is finished. Triumph. Our sermon title this morning may seem odd to you, especially as you consider the apparent sadness and defeat that Good Friday can often represent to us.

But we have the advantage of the awesome perspective that became clear to the people of that day, and indeed people of all time, three days later.

And as we consider this idea of triumph this morning, I want us to recognize something as we reflect on Good Friday, and the words of Jesus as recorded by John.

Think about it. Jesus did not say, I am finished. Although he certainly could have.

His earthly ministry was finished. His friends, his followers, and family members were crushed that day. Their friend, their son, their brother and nephew, their rabbi and master, their savior, was dying right before their eyes.

[5 : 43] I believe as Christians, we are often quick to rush past the horror of the cross. And certainly through this series here at Braemar, I've unpacked it probably in a way that made a few folks uncomfortable, but it is reality.

The humiliation, the torture, the great physical, spiritual, and emotional pain that Jesus experienced that day.

Many historians still recognize crucifixion as the most brutal means of capital punishment ever created by men. And I believe that Catholic Christians can have a tendency at times to lean into the suffering and torture of the crucifixion.

But I also believe that Protestant Christians tend to rush awkwardly past the stark reality of the cross to get to the empty tomb.

We're just too uncomfortable to rest there. But this morning we focus there. Because, my friends, the reality of Jesus, his sacrifice, his deep love for us, and the fullness of our restored relationship with God lies somewhere in between.

[7 : 07] It is finished. It was not a cry of defeat from Jesus that day, but a shout of victory. In the Greek language in which John wrote, this statement was one word with ten letters.

Tetelestai. And that may be a new word for you this morning. By definition, tetelestai means it is finished.

It stands finished. And it always will be finished. Do you hear that this morning? The word may be unfamiliar to us, but it was definitely familiar to the people of Jesus' time.

It was familiar to servants when they reported back to their masters to let them know that they had finished the work that they had been given to do. Tetelestai. It was familiar to priests who examined offerings and concluded that the offering that had been made was perfect and fulfilled the need. Artists used it to reflect that their painting or sculpture was finished. Complete. Merchants used it to express the idea that a transaction was done.

[8 : 30] A debt or bill had been paid. Tetelestai. As his earthly human life and his mission at the cross drew to a close that afternoon, Jesus was declaring victory.

Not only over the torture and humiliation of the cross, but also over his own death and the power that death could hold over all humanity.

He was declaring that victory that day for all time. Tetelestai. It is finished.

The work is done. The sacrifice is perfect. The debt has been paid. As author Warren Wiersbe says, you and I as sinners are in debt before God and we cannot pay this debt.

We have broken God's law and we are bankrupt. The wages of sin is death.

[9 : 42] But Jesus came and paid that debt for us. That is what tetelestai means. The servant had finished the work.

The perfect sacrifice had been offered. The picture had been completed. the debt had been paid.

My friends, there is only one way to salvation and restored relationship with God and that is through tetelestai, the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

The words of the well-known hymn written in 1875 to me say it so beautifully. Lifted up was he to die. It is finished was his cry.

Now in heaven exalted high. Hallelujah. What a savior. Is Jesus your savior this morning?

If you're here this morning and you don't know Jesus personally or you don't know what it means for him to be your savior, I'd invite you to speak with me or any of the lovely people in pastor's row here up front this morning.

[11 : 00] They would love to have that conversation with you as would I. We'd love to hear your story. We'd love to talk with you personally about that life-changing freedom that will come through a personal relationship with the savior that we are worshiping and speaking about this morning.

Hallelujah. What a savior. Let's pray. Lord God, Jesus cried out to you on the cross, why have you forsaken me?

you seemed so far from his cry and from his distress. Those who stood at the foot of the cross wondered where you were as they saw Jesus mocked and shamed and killed.

Where were you then? Lord God, we too ask where you are when there is trouble and suffering and death and we cry out to you for help.

Be near to us and save us so that we may praise you for your deliverance. Lord God, we wait on Friday for the resurrection of Sunday and sometimes our lives seem like a succession of Fridays.

[12 : 34] And sometimes we cannot see what is good. Teach us to call your name as Jesus did.
Make us to trust in you like little children.
And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.