

Good Friday Sermon

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Preacher: Eric Tully

[0 : 00] Well, good evening. Tonight we'll take a few minutes to look at John chapter 19, the crucifixion in the Gospel of John. And I want to begin by reading the story of Christ's crucifixion.

If you want to follow along, you can turn your Bibles to John chapter 19, verse 1. It's a lengthy passage, otherwise you're welcome to listen as I read it. It says this, Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.

And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews, and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, See, I am bringing him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in him. So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.

Pilate said to them, Behold the man. When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate said to them, Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.

[1 : 16] The Jews answered him, We have a law. And according to that law, he ought to die because he has made himself the son of God. When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.

He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, Where are you from? But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?

Jesus answered him, You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin. From then on, Pilate sought to release him.

But the Jews cried out, If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar. So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called the stone pavement.

And in Aramaic, Gabbatha. Now it was the day of preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, Behold your king.

[2 : 23] They cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate said to them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and he went out bearing his own cross to the place called the place of the skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

There they crucified him and with him two others, one on either side and Jesus between them.

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.

Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. And it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, Do not write the king of the Jews, but rather, this man said, I am the king of the Jews.

Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also his tunic.

[3 : 28] But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see whose it shall be. This was to fulfill the scripture which says, They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

Now I am going to verse 28. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said, to fulfill the scripture, I thirst. A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, It is finished. And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. So this evening, it's a long passage, but I want to focus our attention on Jesus' last statement in verse 30.

It is finished. In the original language, that is only one word. And it's the same word that we find two verses earlier in 1928, when Jesus knew that all was now finished.

The word finish in English can mean several different things. But in the original Greek, it means to complete a task or to accomplish something.

[4 : 46] It's used throughout the Gospels. Jesus finished speaking to the crowds. Jesus finished instructing his disciples. He finished speaking his parables.

He completed, same word, his baptism. And here in this passage, Jesus is not saying that his life is over, although it is. He means that he has finished his task.

That he has done what he set out to do. That he has completed his job. It's an incredibly important statement, and I want to look at it from three different angles tonight.

First, the irony that it is finished. Second, the claim that it is finished. And third, the invitation to what is finished. First of all, the irony.

The irony means that we say one thing or do one thing when the opposite is really true. It's used sometimes for comedy, sometimes to emphasize something, sometimes an author will use it to surprise us or to make sure that we notice something, to kind of surprise us into seeing what's there.

[5 : 56] In this passage that I just read, it's full of irony. Let me just give you a couple of examples. First, they mock him and call him king. In verse 3, the soldiers put a crown of thorns on his head, a painful crown of thorns, and they say, Hail, king of the Jews.

And in verse 19, Pilate puts a sign above Jesus on the cross that reads, Jesus, king of the Jews. They're mocking him.

But the irony is, he really is the king of the Jews. He is the long-awaited Davidic messianic king promised in the Old Testament.

And in the book of John, it emphasizes this. In John 1.49, Nathaniel says to Jesus, You are the king of the Jews. And in chapter 3, Jesus says, I am bringing in the kingdom.

And in 1836, Jesus says, My kingdom is not of this world. They're mocking him by calling him the king, but ironically, they're speaking better than they know, because he really is the king of the Jews.

[7 : 07] A second irony is that the Jewish leaders went to kill him because he claims to be the son of God. They say in verse 7 to Pilate, We have a law. Look, we're not just dragging this guy before you because we've had a bad day.

We have a law. And according to that law, he ought to die because he has made himself the son of God. They want to kill him because he's claiming to be God's son.

But the irony is obvious. He is God's son. It says in John 1.14, He is the only son from the Father. In 1.34, John the Baptist says, This is the son of God. And in that most famous verse in John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

The third irony is that the Jewish leaders claim to be model Roman citizens. The Jews hated the Roman Empire. It levied oppressive taxes on them.

[8 : 15] It murdered them. It enslaved them. It restricted their worship of God. And they hated Caesar, who conquered and oppressed them.

But in verse 15, they say, Jesus is not our king. We have no king but Caesar. Wow.

They would rather have an oppressive Roman Caesar as their king, a murderous Gentile pagan, than Jesus. And the irony is that they are rejecting God's promised salvation and all that that entails by claiming allegiance to the enemy that oppresses them and whom they hate.

Jesus is the whole basis and goal of their faith. He alone brings God's grace and forgiveness. And they're not just rejecting Jesus as king either.

They say, We have no king but Caesar. In some ways, they're rejecting any messianic king. They are trading away all of God's promises and plan of salvation just to get rid of Jesus.

[9 : 25] But the greatest irony comes in verse 30. That's our statement. Jesus has been mocked and beaten and nailed to wood.

And as his body shuts down and he breathes his last, he says, It is finished. It is accomplished.

It looks like his ultimate defeat. But the irony is that it is his ultimate victory. Think about this for a minute. Imagine a man who builds a house and it takes him three years.

And over the course of that three years, he lays the foundation, he puts up the studs, he puts in the electrical, he runs the plumbing, he puts in the HVAC, he puts on the drywall, he paints, he puts in the trim, he puts in the windows and doors and the roof.

He works and works and works for three years. And then he stands back and he looks upon his creation and he spent three years of toil building and he says to his friend, And just then, just then the house collapses.

[10:36] Right in front of his eyes, it just collapses in a pile of rubble. It's all been for nothing. And then he turns to his friend and he says, I have completed my task. What?

That's crazy. That's not finishing. That's failing. And here's Jesus. He has lived a sinless life. He teaches the people all over Israel and promises them God's salvation.

He does great miracles, examples what it will look like when he reigns as king. He feeds people and heals people. He gives sight to the blind and he makes the lame walk.

He raises people from the dead. He argues with the religious leaders. He calls his disciples to follow him and promises them an everlasting inheritance in heaven. He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God who has come to save the world.

And then suddenly, he is arrested. And his followers scatter. And now here he is, hanging on a wooden cross, naked. His limbs are nailed to pieces of wood and all around him, instead of a crowd of worshipers, there are people laughing at him.

[11:49] And as he dies, he says, I have completed my work. I mean, how could it look any more like a failure than that?

He is being executed. His enemies have killed him. And in his last moments, he dares to say that he has accomplished what he set out to do.

But that is the irony. Because he has completed his task. His kingdom does not come by political maneuvers or whether he's been able to achieve a 50% in the polling.

It's not about the biggest crowd. He has come to die. That was his task. It's a mission of sacrifice and humiliation and weakness.

And when he says from the cross, it is finished, it's not a cry of defeat. It's not an announcement that he's finally dying. He is not a victim.

[12:49] He is doing something here. He's not only doing something purposefully, but he's accomplishing it. He has completed the job that he set out to do even though it looks like the opposite.

And what is that job? Well, that's the second angle that I want to look at. The claim. The claim that it is finished. All great stories have a climax.

And the Bible, even though it's very long and very varied, has one grand story from start to finish, from Genesis to Revelation, one grand story of God's salvation.

And Jesus' work is the climax of that story. And in the whole story of Jesus' work in the Gospels, his death and resurrection are the climax of that story.

So that means that everything in the Bible is in orbit around this point right here. Everything in the Bible that happened before this point is looking forward to it.

[13:54] And everything after this is looking back. So when Jesus says, I have accomplished what I set out to do, that is an incredibly important statement because he's not saying I finished my work today.

And he's not even saying I finished my life's work. He's making a much bigger statement than that. He's saying he has finished the work that God has been doing since the beginning of time. When God created the world, it was good.

There was peace. And people lived in a good relationship with God and with each other. But when they disobeyed God, they sinned and rebelled against him and everything was broken.

Not only for them, but for all of us. Our relationship with God is broken. We were made to be with him and to have clear consciences, to enjoy his friendship and kindness, to be gently led by him. But now we hide from him. We fear him. We sense this guilt and we try to compensate for it by ignoring God or by distracting ourselves with everything that this life has to offer.

[15:15] But God said, I can fix that. I'll fix our relationship. And our relationship with each other is broken.

We have hearts that are not right. We're selfish and greedy and we disrespect each other and we look out for ourselves.

We hate each other. We are racist. We are unjust. We divorce our husbands and wives. We mistreat our children. We bully each other.

We fight and we steal and we go to war and we make a wreckage of human lives. We are corrupt and we are addicted to all kinds of things that harm us.

And we're afraid and we're weak and our lives, our inner lives are just disordered. But God said, I can fix that. I can fix that too.

[16:15] I'll fix it. I'll give you a new heart. I'll make you a new person and I'll give you a new community of brothers and sisters. And creation is broken. Everything is broken in the world.

There are terrible diseases and terrible pain. There are natural disasters and hurricanes and earthquakes and then we die. God didn't make us to die originally but we do now.

We grow old and parts of our bodies quit working and we die and we leave behind our friends and family. And then pretty soon they die and they leave behind their friends and family and then no one remembers us at all.

But God said, I can fix that too. I can fix it all. I can cure everything that is wrong and make all things new and so he sent his son Jesus. And Jesus is not a savior who storms in and forces his will on everyone.

He is a savior who fixes what is wrong by taking it upon himself. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, God made Jesus who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[17:29] It was a task that only he could do. It was the payment for the remaking of the world and the human heart. And Jesus hung on that cross and he said, I did it.

I did that. And that brings us to the invitation. An invitation to it is finished.

We have a yard at my house that takes a long time to cut. It takes a long time to cut the grass.

There have been a few times when my wife is at home during the day and I've been at work and she goes out there and she takes an hour and a half or whatever it takes to cut that grass and I come home from work, I drive home and I'm stressed and I've had a busy day, a full day and I'm thinking, oh, I've got to cut the grass tonight and it's going to take me an hour and a half and I'm already tired and there's so many other things I could be doing.

Then as I round the corner and I look at the lawn, it's done. And relief just washes over me. I can do other things now.

I got an hour and a half of time bonus. I can rest, I can do other work that I have to do. But imagine if I go inside and I change into my work clothes and then I go out into the garage and I start up the lawn mower and I start going around the yard and my wife comes out to me and she says, what are you doing?

[18:53] That's a pretty good question because I'm not actually accomplishing anything. I can't do that work. There's nothing to cut because she has already done it and not only that but not only can't I do it but I'm missing out on the benefit of her having done it for me.

I could be doing something else. I could be resting but instead I'm wearing myself out doing a job that has already been finished. No one would do that. It's a ridiculous story.

But so often we are tempted to do exactly the same thing when it comes to our salvation. The salvation that Christ has already finished. because Christ has finished the work because he has completed the job I think there's three things that we need to do.

Number one we must believe that his work was effective. The Bible says that if we want to be forgiven and cleansed and brought back into relationship with God then we must believe that Jesus Christ Jesus Christ's death on the cross worked.

In the book of Acts when people ask what must I do to be saved the answer is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

[20:16] And it says in Romans 10 if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved. And that doesn't seem like enough does it?

It's too big of a job. It's too big of a task for that to be it. That's all I have to do to participate in this work that Christ has done for me is simply believe and the answer is yes.

Yes that's all that has to be done because he has already done it. There's no more work left to finish. He has finished everything. The second we not only need to believe but the second we need to accept that the job is already done.

When there's a big job to do it is so tempting to try and jump in there and help in some way. Go out to the garage and fire up a lawnmower maybe I can help.

When it comes to our sins and brokenness we come up with all kinds of ways to kind of pay that off. Fix our problems with God. We know that they're deep and significant.

[21 : 23] We try to do the right things. We try to live pretty good lives. We keep up our faithful religious rituals to keep God happy. The right political views.

But that is exhausting. It's so tiring and exhausting. It wears us out and there's so much pressure on us. And not only that but it does not work. It doesn't work.

Do we honestly think that living a pretty good life and giving money to the red cross and voting the right way and keeping up some religious rituals do we honestly think that that is going to cure the darkness that we sense in our own hearts?

And that that's going to fix the brokenness that we see all around us? It says in Ephesians 2 that we are dead in our sins. We are lost.

We are cut off from God. You can't bring someone back to life by being pretty good. It doesn't work that way. There's nothing that we can do to get rid of our sin and to make things right with God.

[22 : 40] But fortunately Christ hangs on that cross and he says I've already finished that job. I've already paid for those sins and completed that work of salvation and there's really nothing left for you to do.

So just take it easy. And so third we need to rest. We need to rest. Because now that Christ has said it is finished we can have peace.

We can have a clear conscience. Some of the things we know this some of the things that we do are so wrong. we do we do some pretty bad things.

We hurt people. We say awful things. We think awful things. We do things that are deviant. And it's so easy to torment ourselves over that and to think about how shocking it is that we would do that thing, that we would look at that thing, that we would think that thing.

we're embarrassed. We feel the shame burning on our faces and we beat ourselves up with self-loathing and guilt. But if we have accepted that Christ has finished the work, if we have let him finish the task for us, then it's taken care of.

[24 : 07] If we have confessed our sins and turned away from our sins then they are finished. Christ has finished them. And so we go to Christ and we say, my sin is so terrible, how can you ever stand to look at me?

You may be surprised at what I've done. And it's as though Christ says to us, what are you talking about? What sin are you talking about?

I took care of that. My job was to take care of your sin and I finished that job. It's done now. I once heard a pastor tell a simple story that I love so much.

A man goes to his pastor and he says, Pastor, I've sinned and I feel terrible about it and nothing will ease my conscience. I have confessed a thousand times and I still don't feel better.

And the pastor says to him, well, there's your problem right there. You should have confessed it one time and praised him a thousand times. when Christ had received the sour wine, he said, it is finished.

[25 : 15] And then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. We must believe that and be saved from our sins. We must accept it instead of wearing ourselves out, trying to do his job over and over again ourselves.

and we must rest because our sins are gone and we are now free. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift.

Amen. Let's pray together. Father, what a joy it is to read this passage in this holy week and remind ourselves of what you accomplished on the cross.

This is not the way that we're geared. We're geared to do these things ourselves, to try and maintain our own control over the situation. We are not geared to let go of these things and let you handle it.

But I pray that you would help us to believe in what you have done, to believe in you, to accept that that work has been completed and then to have the joy of our salvation, of walking with you,

knowing that we are in Christ and that you have brought us near to yourself through him.
[26 : 39] We praise you for your work on the cross. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.