

It Is Finished!

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[0 : 00] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, toward God, face to face with God, and the Word was God.

All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him, nothing has come into being that has come into being. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.

He went forth, carrying His cross to the place called Golgotha, the place of the skull. There they crucified Him with two others, one on either side and Jesus in the middle.

And He said, It is finished. Before we read the text that has been selected for this fifth Sunday of Lent, entering again into what we have been calling the theater of glory, let us prepare to see what the Apostle John sees and wants us to see by looking at the cross without the perspective He gives us in His gospel.

Imagine that you had been there on that Friday afternoon. Imagine that you were standing near the cross where Jesus of Nazareth was being tortured, suffering the worst form of punishment humans had yet devised.

[1 : 33] What would you conclude was happening there? What would you see? If you had never heard of Jesus, you had never heard of His healing works, what would you see?

If you had heard bits and pieces of His teaching, if you had had rumors that He healed people, what would you see? If you had heard Him and come to love Him, what would you see?

Oliver, would you come and read the text that takes us all the way inside the theater of glory?

Our text today is taken from the Gospel of John, chapter 19, verses 17 to 37.

Would you please stand with me as we read and hear the word? They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha.

[2 : 52] There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side and Jesus in between. Pilate also wrote in an inscription and put it on the cross.

It was written, Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews. Therefore, many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city.

And it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, Do not write the King of the Jews, but that He said, I am King of the Jews.

Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier, and also the tunic.

Now, the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. So they said to one another, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be.

[4 : 03] This was to fulfill the scripture. They divided my outer garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

Therefore, the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, Woman, behold your son. Then He said to His disciple, Behold your mother.

From that hour, the disciple took her into His own household. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the scripture, said, I am thirsty.

A jar full of sour wine was standing there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop, and brought it to His mouth.

[5 : 11] Therefore, when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, It is finished. And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.

Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for that Sabbath was a high day, asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other one who was crucified with Him. By coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And He who has seen has testified, and His testimony is true, and He knows that He is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.

For these things came to pass, to fulfill the scripture. Not a bone of Him shall be broken. And again, another scripture says, they shall look on Him whom they pierced.

[6 : 27] This is the word of the Lord. Be to God. Thanks be to God. We believe that You inspired this text, O Lord, and now we trust in Your mercy and grace that You will take us into the reality these words are addressing as never before.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. The writer of the words we just read was there. The apostle John was there, standing near the cross.

The beloved disciple, as he is called, was there, along with four soldiers gambling for Jesus' tunic, and four women who, like John, had become Jesus' disciples and who, like John, loved Jesus.

The apostle John was there on that awful Friday afternoon, an eyewitness to the events. And in the text we just read, he tells us what he saw.

He bears witness to what he sees. And here is what I want to emphasize this morning. At the heart of what John sees and wants us to see is what he hears.

[7 : 47] At the heart of what John sees and wants us to see is what he hears. In fact, it's because of what he hears that he's able to see.

At the heart of what John sees is what he hears. And what he hears is, it is finished. John chapter 19, verse 30.

When Jesus, therefore, received the sour wine, he said, it is finished. The verb is in the perfect tense. Finished and still finished.

Done. Nothing more needs to be done ever. What is finished? As I've suggested many times, it is not just a nice theological question.

For it turns out that we need what happened at the cross to happen. And either we believe it happened, that it is finished, or because we so desperately need it to happen, we will spend the rest of our lives trying to make it happen ourselves.

[8 : 57] It is finished, he says as he dies. What is finished? Did you notice that when Jesus makes his great declaration, John tells us the Sabbath was about to begin?

Jesus bowed his head at the ninth hour, 3 p.m. The Sabbath would begin around sunset at 6 p.m. Jesus speaks his words, it is finished in the shadow of the Sabbath, so to speak.

Now, as a way to welcome the Sabbath, a particular text of Scripture was always read. Do you happen to know what it is?

Genesis 2, verses 1 to 3. The seventh stanza of the Song of Creation, as we have it in the opening chapters of the Bible.

The Sabbath was welcomed by reading Genesis 2, verses 1 to 3. Let me read Genesis 2, 1 to 2. Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their hosts.

[10 : 14] And by the seventh day, God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had done. The Sabbath is welcomed with the words, finished.

And as you know from Genesis 1, the work that God had finished was work that God did by his word. Let there be, seven times, let there be, let there be, let there be.

Creation coming into being by the word. The universe coming into being by the word. Humanity formed by the word. In the beginning was the word. And on the seventh day, God finished his work by the word.

Is Jesus, as a good Jew, even in excruciating pain, doing what he would have done every Friday afternoon for 33 years?

Is Jesus anticipating Sabbath? And is he welcoming Sabbath by reciting to himself the words that welcome Sabbath?

[11 : 20] We do know that Jesus prayed many scriptures from the cross. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Psalm 22. I thirst. Psalm 69.

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. Psalm 31. As the Sabbath closes in, is Jesus' heart and mind also filled with scriptures about Sabbath?

God finished the work which he had done and rested on the seventh day. It is finished. I did it, Dad. I finished the work. In his book, Jesus and his story, Ethelbert Stouffer observes that what God began by the word, God completes by the word.

What God had begun by the word in the day of creation, God finished by the word in the day of redemption. And then he rested. Jesus, the word made flesh, rested from all his work in the grave.

[12 : 28] He rested because it is finished. What is finished? The answer or part of the answer is what John is describing in the text we just read.

John 19, 17 to 37. In the details he remembers, and there were many more details, but in the details that he remembers, John is helping us understand what is finished.

John points to soldiers gambling for Jesus' tunic. He points to sour wine being lifted up on a hyssop branch.

He points to soldiers not breaking Jesus' legs. He points to a soldier piercing Jesus' side. And he points to blood and water oozing from Jesus' wounds.

Details that help us understand what is finished. Now, the fact is, John has been preparing us to see what he sees and wants us to see in everything he has told us up to this point.

[13 : 33] So too Jesus. Jesus has been preparing his disciples to see what he wants us to see. Throughout his gospel, John has spoken of Jesus' hour.

A number of times, he said, Jesus' hour had not yet come. And each time John makes this observation, he speaks of angry, violent men seizing Jesus.

The hour is the hour of being seized. Throughout his gospel, John has spoken of Jesus knowing all things that were coming upon him.

And each time John makes that observation, the clear reference is to acts of violence that are going to be committed against Jesus. And John has prepared us to see what he sees by reporting prophetic words spoken by unlikely voices.

In the meeting of the council, where it was finally decided that Jesus must be brought down, Caiaphas, the high priest, says, It is expedient that one man die for the nation.

[14 : 34] He is speaking of socio-political expediency, but unknown to himself, he is speaking a prophetic word, one for the nation.

In Jesus' trial before the Roman governor, Pilate speaks prophetic words. Pilate wants to release Jesus, but he does not succeed. He's afraid to act on his convictions, but in the process, Pilate speaks words that prepare us to understand the cross.

I find no guilt in this man. Jesus is innocent of any crime deserving this kind of punishment. Behold the man. Pilate realizes that Jesus is not just any man, but the man.

Humanity as humanity was designed to be. Behold your king. When the religious leaders commit blasphemy by declaring we have no king but Caesar, Pilate declares the kingship of Jesus.

We do not know how far he went with that, but the fact is he speaks the truth. Jesus is a king. And so Pilate writes over the cross, Jesus of Nazarene, king of the Jews.

[15 : 37] In three languages, because Jesus draws all people to himself. Through the voice of a struggling politician, we are being prepared to understand that on Friday afternoon, a king is being tortured.

On Friday afternoon, as the Sabbath is about to arrive, the king of kings is, as he dies, paradoxically being lifted up on his throne.

And throughout the gospel of John, Jesus has been preparing his disciples to see what he wants us to see. You remember, when he cleansed the temple for the first time, he says, destroy this temple. In three days, I will build it. John helps us understand Jesus is referring to his own body. Jesus is telling his disciples that his body is going to be destroyed in some way.

In a conversation with the leading disciple, a theologian of the day, a rabbi named Nicodemus, Jesus says, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.

[16 : 46] Lifted up, referring to being lifted up on some kind of pole. During the Feast of Tabernacles, as the dialogue intensifies, Jesus says, when you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am.

Again, Jesus is preparing his disciples for Jesus to be lifted up on some kind of pole. During the Feast of Dedication, he speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd, he says, lays down his life for his sheep, and then, I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one has taken it from me. I lay it down on my own initiative. He's preparing his disciples for some kind of death. On Palm Sunday, after stating that the hour had come, Jesus says, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, he's preparing us for the great surprise that the glory of God is going to be finally manifested in the act of self-sacrifice, in the act of dying for others. On Palm Sunday, he declares, now judgment is upon this world. Justice is now going to finally be done. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. Jesus is now entering into cosmic battle. Evil is going to be unmasked and tackled head on. So, all along the way, John, and more importantly, Jesus, has been preparing us to understand what is happening at the cross. [18:14] Then John tells us the details that he saw. It is finished, he hears. What is finished?

John tells us that the four soldiers are gambling for Jesus' tunic. Men wore garments close to the body, these tunics, and then over them outer garments for more public interaction. The soldiers had torn the outer garments into four pieces. The tunic, though, was too valuable to tear. So they cast lots to see who could keep it. And John sees in this act the fulfillment of Scripture. Fulfillment of what Scripture? Psalm 22. The psalm that Matthew and Mark tell us, Jesus prays from the cross. This is the psalm that begins with, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And ends with, He has performed it. He has done it. He has finished it. The psalm speaks of a righteous sufferer, a sufferer who does not deserve the particular form of suffering that he is suffering.

[19:28] And then right in the middle of the psalm, the psalmist says, a band of evildoers surrounded me. They pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones.

They look and stare at me. They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. In the soldiers gambling for Jesus' tunic, John sees Jesus as the righteous sufferer who is suffering what he does not deserve to suffer.

John sees more, though. John emphasizes that the tunic is seamless. Seamless. Yes, many of those worn by men were seamless, but one person's garment was definitely seamless. Do you know who that would be? The high priest. The high priest clothing was seamless. Is John not saying that this now is the true high priest who is suffering that day?

The Greek word that John uses, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, refers to the seamless garment of the high priest. Is John not saying that the righteous sufferer is the priest who is now making atonement for sin and that Jesus dies not only as a king but as a priest?

[20:54] I think so. What is finished? All that the priestly system was designed to accomplish. This is the one great high priest who in this one act of suffering is offering the one final sacrifice for sin.

He is now entering into the separation sin deserves, absorbing it himself so that we never have to experience it.

It is finished. What is finished? John tells us that Jesus says I am thirsty. And again, this says John is the fulfillment of scripture.

What scripture? Psalm 69. Take some time in the next days to read Psalm 69. It's a psalm that played a major role in the early church's understanding of who Jesus is and what he accomplished. John had earlier quoted from this psalm after Jesus cleansed the temple. John says, And his disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for your house will consume me.

[22:08] Psalm 69.9. During the meal that Jesus had prepared for his disciples on Maundy Thursday, Jesus quotes Psalm 69.4. They hated me without cause.

Now, Psalm 69 begins with the cry, Save me, O God, for the waters have threatened my life. And the psalm ends with the confidence that though I am afflicted and in pain, the Lord hears the needy. Again, John sees in Jesus one who suffers righteously, innocently. Psalm 69 is all about one who does not deserve to suffer as he suffers.

But he suffers, this is what the psalm says, that he suffers because he's so close to God. He does not suffer because he's away from God.

He suffers because he's so close to God. Psalm 69.9 again, speaking to God, the psalmist says, the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

[23:13] John is saying that Jesus experiences in himself the hostility of the world against God. What rebellious humanity wants to do to God, they're now doing to Jesus.

What sin wants to do to God, it is now doing to Jesus. What evil wants to do to God, it is now doing to Jesus. And in the middle of Psalm 69 in verses 20 to 21, the righteous sufferer prays, reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick.

I looked for sympathy, but there were none. They gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. I am thirsty.

The irony of it, during the Feast of Tabernacles, at the great day of the feast, Jesus cries out with a loud voice, if you are thirsty, come to me and drink and out of your innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

And now on the cross, the thirst quencher is thirsty. The word really did become flesh, thirsty, flesh, thirsty because he's drinking the cup.

[24 : 27] The cup the Father has given him to drink. The cup the world should be drinking because of sin. The righteous one drinks this cup for us.

He drinks it all the way down so that no one ever has to drink it. It is finished. What is finished?

John tells us that the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs. The religious leaders did not want the bodies of the crucified to be on the cross for Sabbath, so they asked Pilate to break the legs.

It's an act that is meant for the crucified ones to not be able to breathe much longer, an act that would hasten their deaths. When the soldiers come to Jesus, they see that he is already dead, so they do not break his legs.

And in this act, John sees again the fulfillment of Scripture. What Scripture? Exodus 12, 46. Not a bone of him shall be broken.

[25 : 40] In Exodus 12, the people of God are being prepared for their exodus from Egypt. They are told that the God of justice is about to free them from their bondage, that the God of justice is about to execute judgment against the gods of Egypt, against the spiritual powers holding people captive.

They are told to take an unblemished lamb, kill it, take its blood, spread the blood on the doorpost of their houses, so that when the God of justice moves through Egypt, they would be spared the judgment of death.

I will pass over you, says the Lord. Now, a number of other instructions are given about this lamb, culminating in Exodus 12, 46.

Nor are you to break any of its bones. Do not break the bones of this lamb. But coming to Jesus, John says, when the soldiers saw that he was already dead, they did not break his bones.

Do you see what John sees? Jesus is the Passover lamb who is making possible a new and greater exodus.

[27 : 04] Jesus. John's insight is reinforced by the fact that the soldier who offers Jesus the sour wine puts a sponge with the wine on a branch of hyssop.

In Exodus 12, the people are instructed to spread the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorpost using a branch of hyssop. John sees in the crucified Jesus the great Passover lamb, the lamb who takes away the sin of the world and who therefore frees us from the finality of death.

These things came to pass, says John, that the scripture might be fulfilled. Not a bone of him shall be broken. This, by the way, is why we say what we say at the Lord's table.

We say, this is my body which is given for you. We do not say, this is my body broken for you.

We do not say that. It's not in the scripture. Do not say that if you serve communion. This is my body broken for you. His body was not broken.

[28 : 22] His body was given. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. This is my body given for you.

No one is taking his life from him. He is freely giving his life for the world. Not a bone of him shall be broken. It is finished.

What is finished? And John tells us that when one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side, there came out blood and water.

That is, Jesus really dies. The word became flesh and died. Really died. Already by the time John wrote his gospel, the so-called docetists were denying that the word became a real human being. He only appeared to be a man and he only appeared to die. There came out blood and water.

Jesus really dies.

[29 : 25] He really gives his life away. Now I will leave it to you doctors to explain how both blood and water came out of him. What I want to emphasize is that John points us to a deeper reality.

As Jesus sheds his blood, he is making something else possible. He is making possible the flow of water. The water is a sign of the cleansing power of the blood.

The water is a sign that this blood is washing away sin. The water is a sign that he's doing a great cleansing work.

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me pure within? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is that flow that makes me white as snow. No other flow I know.

[30 : 35] Nothing but the blood of Jesus. And the water is a sign of the gift he gives us as he gives his life away.

I quoted a moment ago Jesus' words on the great day of the feast of tabernacles. If you are thirsty, come to me and drink, and out of your innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

And then John adds his own theological observation. This Jesus spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive. For the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The living water is the Holy Spirit, the very life of the living God. And one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, and there came out blood and water.

As Jesus dies, the water begins to flow out of his wounds, because as Jesus dies, his wounds overcome all the obstacles to the flow of the Spirit into human lives.

[31 : 38] The shedding of his blood makes possible the flow of living water. The shedding of his blood makes possible the coming of the Holy Spirit to live with and in unholy humans.

Which accounts for John's final reference to Scripture being fulfilled on that Friday afternoon? And again, another Scripture he says, they shall look on him whom they have pierced.

What Scripture? Zechariah 12, 10. Echoes of Zechariah's prophecy are found throughout the New Testament. John quoted from it as he told the Palm Sunday story.

Fear not, daughter of Zion, your king is coming, seated on a donkey. That's Zechariah 9, 9. Now, listen to the full sentence from which John quotes relative to the piercing of Jesus' side.

Zechariah 12, 10. Listen, God is speaking. That's an important thing. God is speaking in what I'm now going to read. Zechariah 12, 10. And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and of supplication so that they will look on me whom they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son.

[33 : 03] They will weep bitterly over him like the bitter weeping for a firstborn. Let me read that again. God is speaking. I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication so they will look on me whom they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son.

They will weep bitterly over him like the bitter weeping over a first son. You see why John is drawn to this scripture? God promises the outpouring of the spirit and makes that promise in the context of God being pierced who in that moment is then spoken of as a son the only son the firstborn son.

And then right after the text that John quotes God says in Zechariah 13 1 in that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a fountain for sin and impurity and right after that text it reads strike the shepherd that the sheep may be scattered you see what John sees in Jesus being pierced in his side the great shepherd the good shepherd is being struck laying down his life for the sheep he's being pierced so that the spirit of grace can flow out of him washing sin and impurity it is finished what is finished let me try to summarize what John who was there that Friday wants us to know put most succinctly the great story of God's salvation of the world has reached its critical turning point the great salvation story of

God's salvation of the world has reached its critical turning point that's why John says four times that the scripture might be fulfilled not just a number of isolated texts but the whole story the whole story that began in the beginning the story that then moved through the election of Israel to be a blessing to all the world and the story that is now being lived out in the word made flesh John wants us to see another plan being worked out on that good Friday the religious leaders had their plan the political leader had his plan sin had its plan evil had plan another plan was being worked out working with and through and over all those other plans God's plan was being fulfilled these things came to pass that scripture might be fulfilled this is why we sing on Easter morning love's redeeming work is done on

Friday on the cross before the resurrection love's redeeming work is done done because the final and sufficient Passover lamb has been offered up by the lamb himself he offered himself up once

and for all there is no need for any more sacrifices say that one again there's no need for any more sacrifices it's been done once and for all you don't have to offer up any more sacrifices and therefore the new and final exodus can begin because the Passover lamb has been offered up we can now move out of bondage to sin and death into a new world into a new world where God has been glorified Jesus greatest passion is to glorify God to reveal the nature and character of God and he did it he did it Friday afternoon was the great moment of glorification

[36 : 53] God's essential nature and character was clearly manifested for the whole world to see in the man hanging from the cross we see God's glorious self-giving self-sacrificing self-emptying love that is his glory if the confession is right the chief end of man is to glorify God then the chief end of man has been accomplished the man has done it the man Jesus Christ has glorified God once and for all that burden doesn't rest on our shoulders Jesus Christ has done it once and for all and a new world in which the king has taken his throne the king who reigns in self-emptying love a very different kind of king the king who in the words of D.A.

Carson is the king of all kings because he turns an obscene instrument of torture into the throne of glory very soon the early church began to use the phrase he reigns from the tree Jesus Christ the king reigns from the tree from the cross Psalm 16 10 say among the nations the Lord reigns soon became in the liturgy say among the nations the Lord reigns from the tree the king of glory has been installed on his throne self sacrificing self emptying love now rules the universe and a new world in which the Holy Spirit is being poured out upon the human race the king the priest the shepherd now pours his spirit on the world and there came from his side blood and water rivers of living water it is finished and now it can begin the new world he died to bring into being the kingdom of God can now happen so come let us with the soldiers and the women and John gather gather around this table set beneath the cross and with the soldiers and the women and John and with Jesus let us celebrate it is finished before and God hoff■■■