

It Is Finished

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[0 : 00] All right, well as we turn to God's Word, we're picking up where we left off in John's Gospel. If you have your Bible with you, you can turn there.

If the screen stops working, the Bibles are in the seats in front of you. We have been having a little bit of technical difficulties this morning. Hopefully it all goes smoothly.

So we're in John chapter 19. And last Sunday we observed Jesus' trial before Pilate, the Roman governor. We saw how the chief priests sought to have Jesus executed by crucifixion. We watched as Pilate wrestled with this, finding Jesus to be not guilty, not deserving of that verdict. And we watched the religious leaders of the Jews stir up the people so much that they demanded Jesus' execution.

And finally we saw how Pilate gave in. We continue now with the story as witnessed and recorded by John the Apostle in John chapter 19 verse 16.

[1 : 09] Finally, Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

There they crucified him. And with him, two others, one on each side and Jesus in the middle. So the Roman soldiers marched Jesus out of the city.

And Jesus is made to carry the wooden cross on which he will be crucified. We notice here that John doesn't linger too much over this like the other three gospel writers do.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke give us other details. John says Jesus carried his cross. Some of those gospels tell us that he was only able to make it as far as the city gate.

And at that point there was a man named Simon from Cyrene who was just on his way into the city. And the soldiers took that man named Simon and forced him to carry Jesus' cross for him.

[2 : 18] We assume because he was too weak, unable to carry it himself. Likely because the flogging he received was so severe. And there's interactions that Jesus had with some of the people as he was proceeding out of the city that Luke tells us about.

Jesus speaks to them and tells them in Luke's gospel, Don't cry for me. Cry for yourselves. Weep for yourselves and for your children. And basically tells them that judgment is coming because of the wickedness of the people.

Verse 18. There they crucified him and with him two others. One on each side and Jesus in the middle. Similar to the other gospel writers, John doesn't go into detail about how they crucified Jesus.

But simply tells us that they did. They nailed him alive to a wooden cross and hung him up to die.

John takes notice that there were at least two others that were crucified at the same time as Jesus. One on each side. And again, John doesn't linger here. He doesn't tell us about the brief exchanges between Jesus and the men on the cross like we hear about in Luke. So what does John linger over here?

[3 : 49] John makes a point of drawing our attention to the sign that was posted above Jesus' head on the cross. Verse 19.

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this sign.

For the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. And the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate.

Do not write the king of the Jews. But that this man claimed to be the king of the Jews. Pilate answered, what I have written, I have written.

It may seem strange to us that John would spend so much time on this. But John wants us to notice it. He wants us to read what was written on the sign above his head.

[4 : 46] Jesus of Nazareth. The king of the Jews. Matthew tells us that this was the charge that was written against Jesus.

This brings into view the purpose of crucifixion. It was a form of public execution done to criminals. And it was the custom to write the name of the person and what they were guilty of on a sign above their heads.

It was intended to get the attention of people passing by. This is what will be done to people who do such things. Usually people guilty of murder or other heinous crimes.

This is why the sign was written in three languages. They wanted everybody to know that if you defy Roman law, if you commit a capital offense, this will be your fate.

And John tells us that many of the Jews read this sign. Here lies the irony of this whole situation.

Three times prior to this, Pilate has declared Jesus to be innocent and undeserving of punishment.

[5 : 59] As we heard last week, so much of Jesus' interactions with Pilate and Pilate's interactions with the leaders and the people had to do with whether or not Jesus was the king of the Jews.

Let me just remind us again. It was the first question that Pilate asked Jesus. Are you the king of the Jews? It was the subject of their conversation. Jesus said, My kingdom is not from this world.

It was the title that Pilate gave publicly to Jesus. Do you want me to release to you Barabbas or the king of the Jews? Shall I crucify your king?

He said. It's what Jesus was mocked for with the robe and the crown of thorns by the soldiers. Hail, king of the Jews! They said. And finally, it was why the religious leaders said Pilate must condemn him or be no friend of the emperor's.

We have no king but Caesar, they said. Whether Jesus is the king of the Jews is at the heart of all of this.

[7 : 09] So it makes sense that this is what Pilate had written on the sign and yet it's ironic, isn't it? Jesus is being executed for what?

What crime has he committed? The king of the Jews is not a crime. The religious leaders tried to paint Jesus as guilty of sedition.

Guilty of undermining the emperor's authority and rule with his claim to be king. And yet Jesus has not participated in any kind of violent uprising or military action.

He hasn't promoted any kind of rebellion against Caesar. So we have to think about what this charge against Jesus meant to those involved.

John tells us that the religious leaders objected to what Pilate had written for the sign. They protested. Do not write the king of the Jews but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.

[8 : 14] They wanted it to be clear that Jesus was not their king. Not their Messiah. But Pilate refused to change the sign.

I don't think he's too happy with these chief priests. He's been working a good part of his day to figure all this out and how he can release Jesus since it's obvious that Jesus doesn't deserve this. But these chief priests, they've been stirring up the people and it's getting out of hand. They've been posturing. Trying to manipulate Pilate into having Jesus killed.

Like, if you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar's. So I think Pilate is quite happy to stick it to them and to write on there the opposite of what they are saying.

What he knows will offend them. And we did see that Pilate was somewhat sympathetic even to Jesus. Possibly, maybe, we don't know. He thought that Jesus should be their king at least under the Roman government.

[9 : 21] Finally, there's what God meant by the sign posted above his head. In the providence of God, in the sovereign working and orchestrating of God, the truth of who Jesus was and is came to be written on the sign above his head.

Remember what the angel declared to Mary. The angel said, You will conceive and give birth to a son and you are to call him Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David. And he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever.

His kingdom will never end. He was the king of the Jews. He was God's chosen king for his people. The promised Messiah.

This is at the heart of why he was crucified. Yet as we heard last Sunday, they rejected him as their Messiah, as their king.

[10:32] It's a powerful detail of Jesus' death that John wants us to see. Why did they kill him? Not because he had done anything wrong or was a criminal.

They executed him because of who he really was. The king of the Jews. It was a blatant and clear rejection of him as Messiah.

As the one God had sent. The next thing John tells us about at Jesus' crucifixion is what they did with Jesus' clothing. Verse 23.

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

Let's not tear it, they said to one another. Let's decide by lot who will get it. This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, they divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

[11:41] So this is what the soldiers did. When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes. Let's pause for a moment before we get to what they did with his clothes.

Consider first that they took his clothes away from him. Crucifixion was not only excruciating, it was utterly humiliating.

At the same time, they took his clothes. They stripped him naked, right there in front of everybody, and then they nailed his body to the cross.

Most depictions of the crucifixion in art or film have Jesus wearing some sort of undergarment while on the cross. Perhaps we just assume that they still had some sense of decency back then, which they afforded to criminals at their execution.

Much more likely, though, is that artists today and filmmakers today are being sensitive to their audiences. The whole point of this was to publicly shame the criminal for his actions.

[12:55] Stripping them naked was part of how they achieved that. And the Roman soldiers, as we heard last Sunday, they treated people on death row with brutality.

They mocked Jesus. They spit on him. They beat him. They tortured him with the crown of thorns. And so we can be pretty confident that they took all of his clothes, stripped him completely naked before executing him.

John remembered this part of the crucifixion. They took his clothes. Now here's what they did with them. They divided them up like plunder, says John.

Now we might have to wonder here, why would they even want the clothes of Jesus? They would have likely been covered in blood from when Jesus was flogged.

Truth be told, we don't know what was going on in the minds of these soldiers. Could it be that Jesus had been such a popular figure that they thought of having an article of his clothes as a sick sort of souvenir?

[14:08] Something to be able to brag about to others. I was there. I was one of the ones who executed Jesus. We don't know. But evidently, they wanted his under tunic enough to cast lots for it, to roll dice for it.

It must have been absolutely heart-wrenching for John to watch this. But as John reflected on all this, he remembered the words of Psalm 22, a psalm written by King David almost a thousand years before all this.

John remembered a part of that psalm where God's chosen king, David, said, They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

Here John is watching as that very thing is happening. As the word of God spoken long ago through David is fulfilled. It's happening right in front of his eyes.

They divided Jesus' clothes, plural, and cast lots for his garment, singular. Just as King David described, so it was happening now with the son of David.

[15:28] God's ancient words of prophecy being fulfilled. Now we come to a very unique part of this account, something we only see through John's eyes.

Verse 25. Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, Woman, here is your son.

And to the disciple, here is your mother. From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

So John tells us that there were some women standing near the cross where Jesus was hanging. He mentions four women, one of whom was Jesus' own mother, Mary.

And standing nearby to Jesus' mother was this disciple whom Jesus loved. Now, I'm not going to get into all this this morning, but a good biblical case can be made that the disciple whom Jesus loved was John, the author of this account.

[16:47] The later writings of history affirm that. Tradition agrees. This is likely John the apostle referring to himself in a way that keeps himself anonymous.

I think that John doesn't want to do anything to draw attention to himself at this moment. He wants to keep the spotlight on Jesus. Look up to the man on the cross.

Don't look at me down on the ground here. So John was there near the cross. He was right there witnessing all of this with his own eyes.

And something happened in that moment that John just had to tell us. As Jesus was suffering on the cross, Jesus looked down and saw his mother.

And he saw John and he spoke to each of them. To his mom, take John as your son.

[17:53] And to John, take my mom as your own mother. father. This is a sweet moment. In the midst of Jesus' suffering, his agony, he is still thinking of others.

He's still caring for others. He's thinking of his dear mother and what it's like for her to be losing her son in this moment. And so, take this beloved disciple of mine, John, as your son.

And John, take my mom as your own mom. Look after her. Take care of her. We don't know where Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, has been.

He's not mentioned in the gospel accounts after the beginning. Did he die? Was Jesus' mother a widow? John tells us that from this moment on, this disciple took Jesus' mom into his home.

And so, history and tradition probably has it right. They could have just verified this after John's writing. Who is Mary living with today?

[19:10] You know, as I read this, I'm just blown away at how truly loving Jesus is. His own pain and his own suffering cannot keep him from thinking of others and caring for others.

Even as he dies, he's making arrangements for his mom to be cared for. It's amazing. John now fast-forward a little bit and time passes on as Jesus hangs there on the cross.

Verse 28, later, knowing that everything had now been finished and so that scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I'm thirsty. A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, it is finished. With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

So John tells us about Jesus' final moments leading up to his death. John remembered that Jesus was thirsty, and after saying so, a drink of wine vinegar was given to him.

[20:34] This word refers to an inexpensive, a cheap, sour wine that people in the lower ranks of society would often drink in those days.

And they lifted this up on the stalk of a hyssop plant to his lips, and this seems to prepare Jesus for his last words from the cross. It is finished.

Could be that these were the words that Jesus spoke with the loud cry mentioned by Mark before breathing his last. It is finished.

finished. These are rich and meaningful words. And we know from how Jesus has been speaking that he doesn't just mean finally my suffering is over.

This word for finished he has already been using the previous night in his prayer. John 17 verse 4, he was praying to his father. He said, I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.

[21:40] It's the same word. It is finished. It is accomplished is what Jesus means. Mission completed.

My work is done. And upon saying this Jesus bows his head and gives up his spirit. I know I've said this many times.

So many times I've lost count. But what a thing to say in this moment. we don't think of death as the completion of our work.

We think of that as kind of, you know, it's tragedy. It's the loss of our opportunity to live and to work. But Jesus, knowing that he's about to die, claims his own death as the accomplishment, the completion of his work.

he knew he came to do this. He knew he was here to offer his life as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of people.

[22 : 48] And so staring his own death in the face, knowing what it will achieve, he embraces it and declares, mission accomplished. I mean, what a holy thing.

such a unique thing about Jesus as he dies. It's a sign that he really was sent from heaven.

Notice the way that John describes Jesus dying. With that, he bowed his head and death overtook him. No.

With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Literally, handed over his spirit. I don't think this is coincidence.

Death did not overtake Jesus like a greater power overtaking a lesser power. No. Jesus handed over and gave up his spirit.

[23 : 51] He allowed death, the lesser power, to have his body and surrendered his spirit to the hands of his father.

Remember what Jesus said back in John chapter 10 verse 14 and 15. I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for the sheep.

No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.

Just like Jesus said in the garden of Gethsemane at his arrest, he could have called upon his father in this moment, come down from the cross, healed his wounds, struck down his enemies.

They couldn't take his life from him. But just like in Gethsemane, shall I not drink the cup the father has given me. And so Jesus willingly, voluntarily surrenders his life to death and hands over his spirit from his body to God.

[25 : 12] Now John has more to tell us about that day. We're going to save it for next Sunday. In the time we have left, let's linger, let's reflect a little on this suffering and this death of Jesus.

what's the meaning of all this? Well, John's already shared some of that. To recap, this is the true king of the Jews, chosen and sent by God, yet rejected by his people.

And this isn't happening outside the great plan of God. John tells us twice in this account, this happened so that the scriptures might be fulfilled.

So that what God declared long ago would be completed. And we heard also from Jesus himself in the moment just before he died that the death he's about to die is his work now finished.

But what is that work? Why did he have to die like this? what I want to do here now is to just simply quickly go back through a couple pieces of John's gospel and just read a few verses to you that explain the significance of his death.

[26 : 35] Because Jesus has been talking about it all the way through. Why did Jesus die on the cross? Hear the words of John the baptizer again.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Hear again what Jesus said to Nicodemus.

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness on the wooden pole, so the Son of Man must be lifted up that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Hear again what Jesus said to his disciples in Samaria. John chapter 4 verse 34. My food, he said, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

[27 : 39] Don't you have a saying? It's still four months until harvest. I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life.

Hear again what Jesus said to the crowd at Capernaum. He declared to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness yet they died. but here is the bread that comes down from heaven which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise them up at the last day.

hear again his words to the Pharisees. John chapter 10 verse 11. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

[28 : 57] I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me and I lay down my life for the sheep. Hear what Jesus said to his disciples.

John chapter 12 verse 23. The hour has come for the son of man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains only a single seed.

But if it dies it produces many seeds. Now my soul is troubled and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour?

No. It was for this very reason I came. to this hour. Here again how John describes this final day leading up to Jesus' death.

John chapter 13 verse 1. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

[30 : 03] Having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end. hear again what Jesus said to his disciples later that night.

John 15 verse 13. Greater love has no one than this to lay down one's life for one's friends.

And finally hear again Jesus' words to his Father in his prayer. John 17 verse 19. for them my disciples I set myself apart that they too may be truly set apart.

All along God has been speaking preparing us telling us the meaning of what would happen with Jesus at the cross. he died as a sacrificial lamb to atone for sins to secure eternal life for all who will believe.

He laid down his life for his people to protect them to save them to bring about a great harvest a great ingathering of people set apart specially for God and again and again and again we hear of how his love is why he is doing this work for God so loved the world having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end greater love has no man than this to lay down his life for his friends so again I want to call all of you to see him there hanging on the cross dying because he loves you to atone for your sins do you know do you believe that he did it out of that deep strong love for you it is finished salvation has been secured for all who will put their trust and hope and faith in the

[32 : 22] Lord Jesus have you done that if not I urge you do it today for those of us who have done it already hear this wonderful news again for every sin for every failure of this past week this past month this past year Jesus died and made full atonement it's finished it was finished at the cross you're free your guilt is gone the Lamb of God Jesus died to make it so you're forgiven praise the Lord give thanks to the Lord for he is good his love endures forever are you walking in that freedom in that forgiveness that was accomplished for you at the cross the cross is where that great burden of our guilt and sins was dealt with permanently once for all are you still carrying that burden around with you or have you let it fall to the ground trusting

Christ's work for you is finished I want to end this morning by reading an excerpt from John Bunyan's allegory Pilgrim's Progress if you know the story there comes a moment when the main character a man named Christian arrives at the cross and I'll read it for you there's a couple old words here one of them is sepulchre which means a burial place or tomb and the other is raiment which means clothing Christian ran dust till he came at a place somewhat ascending and upon that place stood a cross and a little below in the bottom a sepulchre so I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up to the cross his burden loosed from his shoulders and fell from off his back and began to tumble and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre where it fell in and I saw it no more then was

Christian glad and lightsome and said with a merry heart he has given me rest by his sorrow and life by his death then he stood still a while to look and wonder for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should ease him of his burden he looked therefore and looked again even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks now as he stood looking and weeping behold three shining ones came to him and saluted him with peace be to you so the first said to him your sins are forgiven the second stripped him of his rags and clothed him with change of raiment the third also set a mark on his forehead and gave him a roll with a seal upon it which bid him look on as he ran and that he should give it in at the celestial gate so they went their way then Christian gave three leaps of joy and went on singing thus far did I come laden with my sin nor could ought ease the grief that I was in till I came hither what a place is this must hear be the beginning of my bliss must hear the burden fall from off my back must hear the strings that bound

me crack blessed cross blessed sepulcher blessed rather be the man that there was put to shame for me amen look to the cross and look again keep on looking to the cross never stop looking to the cross it's there the burden of our guilt and sins was dealt with forever by
Jesus blessed cross blessed sepulcher blessed rather be the man that there was put to shame for me let's pray what a holy moment you have given us to look at father through the eyes of john who stood near the cross i pray that you wouldn't let us pass this by as just a thing written in a book but i pray that the truth of what happened there would fill our souls that your love would pour into us and that we would know it to its depths and that we would know with great assurance that yes we are forgiven our sins are gone and we have life forever now with you thank you for the cross to
[38 : 43] Jesus be the glory amen