

GOOD FRIDAY - It is Finished

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- [0 : 0 0] In 1969, over 500 million people watched the space boot of Neil Armstrong leave an imprint on the untouched surface of the moon.
- In 1953, the world waited for news that Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay had become the first men to set foot on the peak of Mount Everest.
- And in 1770, the crew of the Endeavour witnessed the footprint of Captain Cook on the sandy beach of this new yet ancient land of Australia.
- But did anyone notice when almost 2,000 years ago, the sandaled foot of one man from Nazareth stepped away from the carpenter's shop and headed toward the cross.
- Max Liccardo writes, With work apron removed and tools stored, Jesus stepped from the shadow of the shop into the light of the sun and began his solitary trek.
- [1 : 1 7] Over the next three years, he'd take countless steps and walk many roads. But follow his footprints through the sands of Galilee or down the streets of Jerusalem and you'll note one compelling truth.
- Every step he took, took him closer to the cross. Every setting of the sun found him one day closer to the cross.
- The garden of prayer, the streets of service, the rooms of instruction, the places of healing, all mattered to his ministry. But none were the aim of his ministry.
- They all fell short of a higher call. The call that Jesus himself described in Mark 10.45. For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.
- The calling of Christ was the cross. He left the Nazareth carpentry shop with one ultimate aim.
- [2 : 3 2] Six hours, one Friday, on the hill of Calvary. He left for the cross.
- As I read some of these words this week in Max Licato's book, Six Hours, One Friday, I was struck again by the bookends of Jesus' life.
- Born into a carpenter's family to do carpenter's work. And yet the most significant wooden objects in his life would be the two beams that made up the cross of his execution.
- Many were the hours of toil with his father and his mother. Many the hours of ministry in Galilee and Jerusalem. Yet it would be those six hours, one Friday, that ultimately achieved his goal.
- Holman Hunt, the 19th century painter, depicted these truths in his painting called The Shadow of Death, which you might be able to make out on the screen there.
- [3 : 4 0] The pre-Raphaelite style makes Jesus look a little sentimental. But the message is clear, isn't it? As the carpenter Jesus stretches from his work and the shadow cast across his beam of tools is the shadow of the cross.
- Jesus' most significant work was never going to be in the carpenter's shop. His greatest work would be accomplished on the cross of Calvary. And the shadow of that cross would stand over his entire life until he said those words that we heard this morning, it is finished.

It is finished. Three small words in our translations of the Bible. One single word for Jesus in the original Greek language.

Teteleste. It is finished. To the crowds who had called for his death, perhaps these words would have brought satisfaction.

The trouble he had caused was over. For the religious leaders, maybe these words brought relief.

[5 : 03] The threat to their hypocritical power was gone. For the Roman soldiers, for those who mocked him, these words would have confirmed what they already believed.

The life of a madman had come to its rightful end in foolishness and humiliation. For the disciples, some standing close, some standing far away, these words would have resonated with a growing emptiness inside them.

They had placed so much hope in this man, in his mission. They had so looked forward to the inauguration of the new age that this Messiah would bring, this King of Israel.

But now those plans were finished. It was over. It had ended. All that was left was futility, frustration, failure, and fear.

Perhaps for some of you here this morning, those words, it is finished, still ring of a wasted life. Perhaps you see Jesus as, at best, a revolutionary who died a martyr's death, or at worst, a deluded do-gooder who was simply too naive to navigate the politics and powers of this world.

[6 : 49] Perhaps you want to believe, but you just can't see how an event or a life that ended thousands of years ago can hope to influence your 21st century existence.

It's over. It's finished, you want to say. And we're simply left to muddle through this life as best we can. But what if Jesus had meant something altogether different when he spoke that word, Teteleste?

What if, as he aimed towards the cross, he had the greatest rescue plan, the greatest victory ever to be won in his sights?

What if, as John records these final moments of Jesus' life, we are actually hearing the most powerful and important word ever spoken?

So let's hear these words once more from John chapter 19, verses 28 to 30. After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, that same word, Teteleste, he said, in order to fulfill the scripture, I am thirsty.

[8 : 13] A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, it is finished. Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. The first thing that strikes me, and I hope it strikes you this morning, is the amazing and surprising sense of control that is evidenced in these words, in these moments of Jesus' death.

And in fact, if you were listening as the story was read during our service this morning, you would have seen that control all the way through the events leading to the cross.

Jesus is in control in his arrest in the garden. Jesus is in control in his trial, in his interview with Pilate.

Jesus is in control as he provides care for his mother by giving her to the beloved disciple and him to her.

[9 : 33] And now, John says, Jesus knows what time it is theologically. He knows what hour has come.

He is purposeful in fulfilling scripture by his actions and then and only then as we read in verse 30, he chooses to give up his spirit and die.

just as Pilate had no power over him except what had been given to him from above, from God, neither did death have any power over the Son of God except the power that he himself had given to it.

Those who mocked Jesus, and we hear in other gospel accounts, those who called him to save himself and come down from the cross, had absolutely no idea of the power and control of this man.

John Dixon tells a story of three schoolboys who sat at the back of a bus and began to taunt a man who was sitting there by himself.

[10 : 47] They started insulting him and when he didn't respond, they increased their abuse, increased their threats, their name calling, and yet the man still sat silently.

It wasn't until he got up to get off at his stop and handed them his business card that they realised the situation that they had been in.

For the name on the business card was Joe Lewis, professional boxer. they had been in the presence of greatness and trying to pick a fight with a boxing champion.

They thought that they were the ones in control of that situation and yet of course as soon as they saw that name they knew that it was Joe Lewis the boxer who had held all the cards.

They believed they were the ones in control. Just like death looks like it's getting its own way, the religious leaders look like they're in control. But as we read Jesus' thoughts and hear his words, we know that death itself is simply a servant in the presence of greatness.

[12 : 12] Yet in the midst of this control and choice and power we see something extraordinary that moves us. We see Jesus express a very human need.

He says I am thirsty. Crucifixion led to severe dehydration as I'm sure you could imagine from the blood loss, from the flogging and the wounds, the exposure to the heat of the sun, the sweating caused by the agony of the cross.

Thirst was an inseparable part of this terrible way to die. Jesus' choice to die, his control did not make the event any less horrific.

He still writhed as the nails were driven in. He still fought for every breath. He still thirsted. So why would John record these words?

Why would these normal expected words be linked to the fulfillment of scripture? scripture? In this cry, I am thirsty, Jesus points us back to the Old Testament, especially to the times when the authors of the Psalms had spoken of their own thirst.

[13 : 44] Psalm 42 verses 2 and 3, verse 3, my soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?

My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, where is your God? Psalm 22 is even more places of resonance with the crucifixion.

in it, King David, in describing his own situation, actually prophetically points to the suffering that would come for the Messiah.

He writes in verse 15, my strength is dried up like a fragment of clay pottery. With thirst, my tongue cleaves to my jaws, and you have brought me into the dust of death.

Jesus thirsted. He thirsted for God. He thirsted in the dust of death.

[14 : 54] Just like the cry of dereliction that we hear recorded in the other gospel accounts that, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? This cry of thirst speaks to the abandonment that Jesus suffered on the cross to his longing for reconnection with the Father.

Jesus is taking upon himself the sins of the world, and it's more than terrible. It is the wrenching apart of the Father and the Son.

God's God's need to hear. Jesus had a practical physical need that had to be dealt with before he could make his final declaration.

He needed moisture on his lips and in his parched throat so he could cry out in a loud voice the word that all the world needed to hear.

And so he is given the wine vinegar from the jar that is set aside at the crucifixion for that purpose. And as he drinks it in his last moments he is now able to declare in a loud voice the completion, the fulfillment, the accomplishment of his mission.

[16 : 25] But what was finished? What was accomplished? The passage tells us simply that all, all was finished, all was now accomplished, all things, all that God the Father had in mind when he sent his son to earth was finished.

All God's purpose, all God's plan, all God's will have been done in this climactic moment, not of defeat but of victory on the cross.

Let's just focus on three things that are included in that all. Firstly, the guilt that humanity bore for its rebellion in big and small ways against the creator of the universe, that guilt and its necessary punishment, that is finished.

St. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, the wages of sin is death and that there is no one who gets out of this charge. There's no one that hasn't earned this wage since all has sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

all. But the death of Jesus on the cross was not the death of an ordinary sinful man. And so this guilt, this punishment is not the last word.

[18 : 01] Jesus' death, the death of the innocent, obedient son of God, God himself in Christ was what Paul calls a sacrifice of atonement.

God himself was appeasing his own holy, righteous anger against sin, fulfilling his own righteous requirements that sin be paid for on the cross.

God was in Christ dealing with the guilt of our sin. It is finished. Secondly, because of this, on the cross, our relationship with God was restored.

We are not simply set free to go, no charges longer laid against us. In fact, we are welcomed home with open arms.

Paul writes again in Romans 5, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son. Because of the cross, because of Jesus' work finished, we can be friends with God.

[19 : 23] And that rolls off the tongue pretty easily, especially in our, you know, more casual age. But the truth of it, the truth that we can be friends with God ought to stir your heart, ought to uplift you, ought to just lift your eyes heavenward this morning.

Let it sink into your heart again today. If you are, if you become a person of the cross, you are a friend of God.

through faith in his blood shed for you, you can know his presence, his friendship in times of grief, in times of celebration.

You can pour out your heart to him, you can rely on his help. He will value you and care for you and share his own heart with you.

And all this because on the cross, it is finished. Our enmity against God is finished.

[20 : 38] Our broken relationship with God is finished. We are reconciled. We are friends. Peter, the one who was right there on that night, denying his Lord.

It makes us cringe whenever we hear it, doesn't it? Those lies, that betrayal in the courtyard. This same Peter was transformed by the reconciling power of the cross.

And so years later was able to write, Jesus himself bore our sins in his body on the cross so that free from sins we might live for righteousness.

By his wounds you have been healed. What would it have taken for that man, Peter, to have such a change of heart, for him not to sit in his betrayal and his total and utter disappointment?

What would it have taken? well, only the explanation by the risen Lord Jesus of what was finished that day on the cross.

[22 : 02] His betrayal was finished. His sin was finished. He had forgiveness. He had friendship deeper than he ever had in those three years spending time with Jesus as they ministered together.

And there was a new type of life on offer. A life of righteousness. A life lived out of a whole and healed spirit.

Well, thirdly and finally on the cross, our alienation from other people is finished. Ephesians 2, 13 and 14 says, But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace. In his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

Now Paul's speaking here specifically about Jews and Gentiles, but we know that in the worldview of the Bible, if Jews and Gentiles, these so separate groups, can now be at peace, can now meet at the cross, then it is possible for all of us, all races, our fractured families, those who have difficulties in their marriage, all can meet at the cross because he himself is our peace.

[23 : 28] We are humbled there. We become brothers and sisters with one heavenly father and one saviour. That is the power of the cross. Broken human relationships are finished at the cross.

well, I could go on. In fact, John Piper has recently written a book called 50 Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die. So you'll be pleased that I wasn't listing all 50 of them.

But you can explore those if you'd like to in his book and Wayne or I can give you the details of that. We've got a few copies here if you're really desperate to get a hold of it.

but the cross is a powerful place, isn't it? It is the place where the most important word we will ever hear was spoken.

It is finished. It is the place where all things that are wrong have begun to be set right and we will know the fulfillment of that righting of all wrongs when we come to the new heavens and the new earth.

[24 : 39] Jesus' life was a life focused on the cross and that's what he longs for his people to be. He wants us to be people of the cross, people who let the cross fill our vision, who let the cross reorder our priorities, who let the cross cast a shadow, if you like, over our selfish ambitions.

Let the cross call us forward to a new and living way of relating to God and to each other. For you see, when you're a person of the cross, Jesus declares his word over you.

It is finished. All that striving to be loved, to be worthy before God, it is finished. All that guilt, nagging feeling that you'll never measure up, that God will punish you, it is finished.

All that fear of death, all that sense of loneliness, it is finished. That desire to belong, that pain of rejection, it is finished.

All is finished. accomplished. All has been accomplished. All is dealt with on the cross. Because as it says at the end of Psalm 22, God has done it.

[26 : 12] Well, if something has stirred in you this morning, if you want to know more about being a person of the cross, if you want to explore how that is working itself out in your life, if you've been a believer for many years, please do come and talk to me or Paul or Wayne.

Before you leave, make a time to have a coffee with us sometime in the next week or so. Carve out some time in your diary to do Christianity Explored. There's too much at stake, isn't there, for us to stay in our familiar comfort zones.

When we could hear that word, it is finished, spoken over us and truly know its deepest meaning in our hearts.

There's too much at stake to stay where we are. Jesus stepped out of the carpenter's shop and towards the cross.

Will you step out of your familiar surroundings and walk towards his cross today? Go to ■
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