

“IT IS FINISHED.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

April 4, 2021, 9 and 10:30 AM

Scripture Texts: John 19:28-30

Prayer: Holy Father, glorify your Son in our hearts and minds through the proclamation of your holy Word. Preach the truth of the Gospel to us so clearly that we are changed, transformed, conformed to the image and likeness of our risen Savior, whom we worship and adore, glorify your name, exalt your Son and feed your sheep, Amen.

Introduction.

It is finished. Three simple words that can be taken in opposite directions, good or bad. You seniors will soon say it is finished at the a graduation ceremony. School is finished, tests and papers are finished. It can be said at the end of running a marathon. It can be said at the end of some long difficult journey, at the end of a year of chemo and radiation, finally, it is finished. In these moments it is finished is said with a sense of joy and relief.

But they can also be said with the opposite meaning. A student who has just failed an exam, a farmer who looks at a crop just wiped out by a storm, a sports fan watching a season ending defeat, a businessman declaring bankruptcy. In these moments it is finished is said with a sense of dejection, depression, misery, it's over, I am done for.

It is finished. How many of us are good starters, but have trouble finishing? How many of us have unfinished projects around the house? Things that just don't seem to get done? Books unfinished, letters unfinished, unfinished business, unfinished resolutions?

It is finished in our text has all kinds of layers of meaning. To the Pharisees it was a great relief, the troublemaker was gone. To the disciples it was a disaster, all their hopes and dreams were crushed. To the soldiers it was just the cry of a dying man. To Satan and all his forces of evil this was a victory cry, God was defeated, His plan failed.

The reason “it is finished” makes for a good Easter Sermon is because it is only on Easter that the true meaning of the words, the depth of their meaning comes into full light.. It is finished is not defeat, failure, life is over, hope is gone. It is finished is success, victory, exam passed, enemy defeated, the work is accomplished, everything is changed, different, new.

It Is finished.

In the Greek it is one word that is translated with three words (Tetelestai – tetel es tai). It might be best translated just, “Finished!” The word means to accomplish, to complete, to bring to an end.

It is a comprehensive word that contains an ocean of meaning. It holds the difference between our life and our death, between our going to heaven and our going to hell.

That little word it is what brought Jesus from heaven to earth. It is what made Jesus condescend to lay aside His glory, to become one of us. One word that sums up the greatest work ever done.

As one pastor put it, "Such a word, spoken on such an occasion, by such a person, at such a moment, just before death, contains depths which no one has ever completely fathomed" (J.C. Ryle).

This is one of those deep wells you can return to a thousand times and never drain it dry. Such are the depths, riches, treasures of the Word of God and the mind of God.

What is finished? What does "it" mean?

It is finished means Jesus' long and intense suffering is finished.

He drained the cup of suffering to the very last drop. His enemies have gone as far as they can go, there is nothing more they can do than to kill the Son of God. Their work is finished.

It means His dying is over, it has come to an end. Everything that He endured as fully man, hunger, thirst, agonizing pain from beatings and whips. No one has suffered as He did, and now it is finished.

No enemies will spit on Him, no priests will mock Him, no soldiers will whip Him, Judas will not betray Him with a kiss. No mobs will yell crucify Him.

His suffering is over, for both soul and body. It is finished.

It is finished means He was obedient even unto death.

Philippians 2:8 Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

This is not Jesus admitting defeat, giving in or surrendering to death. This is the voice of one who is victorious, faithful to the end, obedient even unto death. This is the cry of one who has completed a tremendous labor.

But that is just the very beginning of what it is finished means. This is important to understand. We are not just saved by the physical dying and death of Jesus. We are saved by all that His death means, by all that it accomplishes and completes.

It is finished means the will and work of God is done.

Jesus has finished what the Father gave Him to do. The task has been carried out and is now completed.

John 4:34 My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

John 17:4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

Specifically that work that is accomplished is:

It is finished means Jesus finished the great work of redemption and has made full atonement for all our sins.

John 1:29 Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

I Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

This is His greatest work, His central work, the main thing. He came to seek and save the lost, to take away our sin. Jesus did all, paid all, preformed all, suffered all that was necessary and needed to save sinners. It is finished.

It is finished means the justice and wrath of God is fully satisfied.

Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

He drained the cup of God's wrath to the last drop. Jesus drank an eternity of wrath to spare us from an eternity of wrath. Jesus became the enemy of God, so we would not be.

The swift sword of God's justice is now back in its sheath. It is finished.

It is finished means sin is finished, the debt is paid, the guilt atoned for.

I Peter 1:18-19 you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ.

II Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

We owed a debt we could never pay. Our salvation cost a man his life, cost the Son of God His life. We are bought with a price. God had laid upon him the iniquity of us all.

The word tetelestai was written on business documents or receipts in New Testament times to show a bill had been paid in full.

Colossians 2:13-14 ... having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

The wages of sin is death and that debt has been paid in full. It is finished.

It is finished means Satan is defeated.

Jesus came to Jerusalem to defeat a much bigger enemy than the Romans.

I John 3:8 The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

The seed of woman has crushed the head of the serpent.

Hebrews 2:14 ... through death he [destroyed] the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

Colossians 2:15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Satan did his very worst, he shot his very best shot. Sin and Satan did all they possibly could.

I Corinthians 15:55-56 “Death is swallowed up in victory.” 55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:18 I have the keys of Death and Hades.

Satan is a defeated enemy. We can resist him and he will flee. It is finished.

It is finished means Jesus finished keeping the Holy Law of God.

He fulfilled all righteousness, all the righteous requirements of the Law. Jesus fulfilled perfect obedience.

He was tempted in every way as we are, and by Satan himself, yet He remained without sin. The last temptations of Satan were the worst and they failed. In the garden sweating drops of blood, Jesus resisted and obeyed. His righteousness was perfect.

And His perfect righteousness becomes ours. It is what He gives us when we give Him our sin.

It is finished means Jesus fulfilled all the foreshadowing in the OT ceremonial law.

It is finished means that up until now it was not finished. Up until now everything that had been done in the OT with all the rituals, all the feasts, all the sacrifices, everything that had been done according to the Law, was not enough.

Everything in the OT was like a shadow, not the real thing. There was nothing done in the OT that could or did atone for sins, appease the wrath of God, and obtain justification with God.

All the blood of all the animals was not enough.

Hebrews 10:12, 14 When Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ... 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Jesus was the perfect High Priest, the perfect Lamb, the perfect and complete sacrifice. After Jesus' sacrifice there was no need for any other sacrifices or offerings for atonement for sin.

Hebrews 9:26 He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

He fulfilled all of the old covenant and made a new covenant in His blood. It is finished.

It is finished means Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies of the OT.

Beginning with the very first, that the seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent.

Every single prophecy that pointed to the Messiah from Moses to Malachi has been fulfilled.

A virgin shall conceive, He will be born of a woman, born under the Law, born in Bethlehem, born of the line of David, enter Jerusalem on a donkey, be rejected by men, had His clothes divided by lots, and on and on.

This is why Jesus said, "I thirst." That was the last of the prophecies to be fulfilled on the cross.

The final evidence of completion is in the last phrase, "he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

Not one of the Gospels records that Jesus died.

Matthew says, "Jesus cried out in a loud voice and yielded up His Spirit."

Mark says, "Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last."

Luke says, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. And ... He breathed His last."

John says, "He gave up His Spirit."

What is the point? It was a voluntary act of His will. His death was not like our death.

John 10:17-18 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again."

His life was not taken from Him by the Romans or the Jews. He didn't just succumb to the torture. Jesus died when He had finished what He came to finish, only then did He simply bow His head, breathe His last breath and give up His spirit to the Father.

Here is the final proof that it is finished.

First, the veil was torn in two, showing the way is now open to God.

Second, God raised Jesus from the dead, showing He accepted Christ's sacrifice.

Third, God raised Jesus to His own right hand in heaven, showing the value of Christ's work and the Father's delight in Him.

Fourth, God sent His Holy Spirit to earth, to apply to our hearts all the blessings and benefits of Christ's finished work.

So what, that it is finished?

Isaiah 64:4 From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who *acts (works)* for those who wait for him.

There is no other God who works for His people like our God does.

Of all the words Jesus spoke on the cross, this is the only one for us.

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” is for sinners, not for saints.

“I thirst,” is for himself; so is that bitter cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

“Woman, behold thy son!” is for Mary.

“Today you will be with me in paradise,” is for the penitent thief.

“Into your hands I commit my spirit,” is for the Father.

It is finished is for us, for those He came to rescue and redeem and save. The Son of God came to accomplish and complete and finish the greatest work every done for anyone. It is finished is one of the greatest words every spoken by Jesus.

Your sin is atoned for and forgiven and washed in the blood of Jesus.

Acts 4:12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

It is finished.

Do you believe it?

Do you live in the light of it?

Have you made His finished work your own? Do you have unfinished business with Jesus?

Do you believe that once you confess Christ and repent of your sins, you are accepted by God?

Or are you still trying to add something to Christ’s perfect finished work?

Do you begin each day before an empty cross and an empty tomb confident that whatever you are called to do each day, you do in the strength and hope of a Savior who has done everything for you?

Romans 8:31-34 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

It is finished. Christ is risen.

Prayer: Holy Father, you have destroyed the last enemy death, you have defeated Satan, you have vanquished hell, you have raised to life your Son whom you crucified. Enable us, to live and to love in the light and truth and promise of the resurrection. Reorder and reorient our lives around this one center, around this one central truth, the reality of Jesus’ final and decisive triumph over death. Make this reality real and practical in all our daily lives, in all our daily interactions and relationships and conversations, to the glory of Jesus Christ, in whose mighty name we pray, Amen.