

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

03.29.2024 | "It Is Finished" | John 19:30 | Good Friday 2024 | Ben Day, Senior Pastor

It's been so good to be able to look into God's word throughout this week and consider some of the sayings of Jesus on the cross. We didn't look at all of them as Pastor Clark mentioned, there's usually seven that people identify, but starting on Palm Sunday, looking into Matthew's account, we saw Jesus say, "My God, my God, "why have you forsaken me?" And then over Monday and Tuesday, we looked at sayings from Jesus that are recorded in Luke's gospel, as you heard read today, this evening. And then on Wednesday and Thursday, we looked into two that were from John's gospel, as you just heard read. Now we will look at one final saying from Jesus in John chapter 19. We read it in John 19.30, it'll be on the screen for you. John writes that when Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished." And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

I think it's often important to remind ourselves that the core of what we believe as Christians, the gospel, is good news. I think a lot of times people think about Christianity as a religion, and so they would assume that the core of what we have is a philosophy or a belief system or a worldview or a set of ethics. And some of those things are true when it comes to Christianity, but at the core of what we believe as Christians is the gospel and that is good news. It's not just a good belief or a good philosophy that we have. We have good news, meaning something has happened. This is proclaimed from the very beginning of Jesus' birth as the angels appear to the shepherds and they say, "Behold, we bring you good news of great joy."(...) And we see it here on the cross, that as Jesus says, "It is finished," he is saying that what we hope for as Christians, what we place our faith in is grounded in a historical reality. Something has happened. What Jesus says here is that it is finished.

There's a really simple statement, three words in the English language, but it's actually just one word in the Greek. Now I'm going to do something that's kind of risky tonight. I want to spend just a few moments telling you what this Greek word is and actually do a little bit of parsing this word out for you. Now say this is risky because I run the risk of, committing one of a preacher's greatest sins, which is being boring. I hope not to be boring tonight, but I really think it's not often I get to preach on one word. So I want you to consider this word and I think it will be helpful for you to consider this saying of Jesus. We'll have it up on the screen for you. The Greek word that John records here for us is to tetelestai. It comes from a root word of telos, that's the noun form. It really means a goal or an aim, whatever your purpose would be, whatever your mission is focused on. It's the victory for you. It's the win, it's the mission complete. That's actually what the verb form means, to accomplish a mission. So it's this Greek word that means to accomplish something, to complete a task. And specifically, here's what we're getting into some grammar and I hope not to bore you, it's just a few minutes. It is a third person singular, perfect, passive, indicative.

All right, so you're going to learn a little bit of a seminary education here as we dig into the Greek. The third person singular. So just think about what that means. A couple of the statements that we just heard read were first person singular. Jesus said, "I thirst." That is first person singular, he's speaking about himself. Or what we heard read on Sunday when Jesus says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" First person. But if Jesus would have used a first person verb here, he would have said, "I am finished." That's not what Jesus said. Sadly, that's the way some people have thought about this. They think that Jesus' statement here is almost a cry of despair, a cry of kind of being killed, giving up his life. But really, what one theologian put really helpful for me is that while the other statements might make it seem that Jesus is a victim, as he is experiencing suffering, as he thirsts, as he is being forsaken. Maybe let's keep it up on the screen, sorry, as we continue to parse this verb. What Jesus is saying here is that he is not a victim on the cross. Jesus is a victor on the cross.(...) Jesus is accomplishing something. What is being said here is not a cry of despair, it is a proclamation that the mission has been complete. Jesus is not saying, "I am finished," in a first person way. He is saying, "It," in a third person, "It is finished."

It's in the indicative mood, as you'll see there at the end. It's really particular in the Greek. Jesus could have used other moods in the verb forms that could have given some idea that maybe it would be finished, or it should be finished and kind of wait and see, but in the indicative, that's really a statement of fact.(...) It's really what you would say when you know something is reality.(...) What Jesus is saying here is not that it should be finished or hopefully it's finished. He is saying, "It is a fact that the mission has been complete, that it is finished."(...) And lastly, I'll just draw your attention to the fact that it is a perfect verb. The way that it was explained to me in my Greek class was that the perfect verb in the

Greek meant a completed action with continuous results, a completed action with continuous results. It's different from a past tense verb. That's just something that happened in the past, a completed action, but it doesn't really have any much implication on the future. Like you might say, "I went to work today," or, "I went to school today." That's in the past. It doesn't really have much bearing on the future. But you see, a perfect verb is a completed action. Something has been finished, it is done, but yet it has ongoing results. It would be like saying, "I got a promotion at work today. I graduated today." Something has been finalized, something has been done, but yet it has a major impact on the future. When Jesus says, "It is finished," He's not just talking about something that happens in the past. He is saying that it is something that has ongoing effects. It has ongoing effects for each one of us.

In fact, we're talking about the Greek for just a few minutes here. You know, when people used to find manuscripts of the Bible and read it, they found that the Greek that it was written in was a bit different than the classical Greek. So they thought maybe there was this kind of sacred, holy Greek that the Bible, the New Testament had been written in. Actually, they thought that until about the 1800s when they started to find an archeological dig, some kind of common pieces of parchment, they would find just normal everyday things and they found it was written in the same language as the New Testament. What they found was that the New Testament was actually written in what they now call Koine Greek or common Greek.(...) And the reason I find that interesting is because some of the first documents they found actually had this word, tetelestai. What they were were completed bills of sale, completed transactions. That something was finalized and done and it had ongoing effects. And this is what Jesus is saying here on the cross, that it is finished.

Well, let's move on from the Greek now and consider, well, what is it? If Jesus is not finished, but it is finished, well, the question is, well, what was finished? Well, I think in some ways we could say that all that Jesus had planned to do or been tasked to do in carrying out the plan of redemption was we've been reading about, even in that last reading of I Thirst, Jesus said he knew all of the plan of redemption, all that was to take place was being fulfilled. Now in this moment, Jesus recognizes that what he came to do, as he told his disciples, he came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. What he came to do in paying the price of the ransom, in being the Lamb of God that we've been singing about, that that work was finished. His sacrifice was complete. His drinking of the cup of the wrath of God was complete. Jesus was saying that all that the Father had tasked him to do in being the obedient and suffering servant was now complete. In fact, in John 17, when Jesus is praying to the Father, he uses the same word. He says that I have accomplished everything that you have given me. Jesus is saying my work to be the savior of all those who will trust in me is now finished.

And as his sacrificial work comes to an end, it does bring an ending to a number of things. A few that I just want you to consider tonight. What was finished as Jesus came to a place where he says it is finished? One thing that was finished was the laws requirements. All that had been spoken of in the Old Testament, prophecies and types and pictures all being fulfilled, but now even the law itself is being fulfilled. You remember Jesus said he did not come to abolish the law. He didn't come to set aside anything that God had said, but rather he came to fulfill the law in perfectly upholding it, but also being the perfect sacrifice. In fact, we read in the New Testament in Romans chapter eight, verse three, for God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do. By sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh. Bible says that we could not fulfill the law as we were weakened by the flesh, but Jesus when he died on the cross fulfilled all that the law required, all that God required of us, a perfect life, a perfect sacrifice, which means that another thing that is finished is the payment for our sin.

When Jesus says it is finished, he is saying that he has perfectly fulfilled the law and he is saying that he has perfectly paid for our sin. As we've been thinking about it and throughout these readings, as we've been singing these songs, we've been recognizing that it is our sin that he bears on the cross. And I want you to know that it is each and every sin that you have committed. Maybe even now you would begin to think of sins that you have committed. Maybe now the spirit would even draw to your mind sins that you've committed in your life in the past week, maybe even today, to know that Jesus fully paid for those sins. The prophet Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 53, verse six, all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. All of your sin laid on Jesus. Paul writes in Colossians chapter two, and you who are dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. Jesus says, excuse me, Paul says, whatever

debt that you owed, Jesus has paid for in full. Your pride, your lust, your greed, your anger, your hatred, the gossip and lies that you have spoken, paid in full.

Do you believe that? That it is finished on your behalf? I was reading from a theologian named A.W. Pink, who wrote a pretty great description on these last seven sayings of Jesus. And under this saying about it is finished, he said this, and I felt like I couldn't put it better than him, so I'll just read it for you. It'll be up on the screen. "It is finished. Reader, do you believe it? Or are you trying to add something of your own to the finished work of Christ to secure the favor of God? All you have to do is accept the pardon which he purchased. God is satisfied with the work of Christ. Why are not you? Sinner, the moment you believe God's testimony concerning his beloved son, that moment every sin you have committed is blotted out and you stand accepted in Christ. Oh, would you not like to possess the assurance that there is nothing between your soul and God? Would you not like to know that every sin has been atoned for and put away?(...) Then believe what God's word says about Christ's death. Rest not on your own feelings and experiences, but on the written word. There is only one way of finding peace, and that is through faith in the shed blood of God's lamb. Do you believe that it is finished on your behalf?" This pushes against our culture, which tells us we need to look inside to create our own identity or find ourselves or define ourselves. We don't find ourselves by looking within, but by looking to the cross. Our identity is secure because Jesus has accomplished his work. This pushes against a culture that tells us we need to hustle a little bit harder and work even more so that we can prove who we are. Notice in humility that we look to Jesus and say, our value and our worth is wrapped up in what he has done. He has accomplished it all. It is finished. There's nothing else that I need to do. Do you believe that this is on your behalf?

And lastly, I just want you to know that when he says it is finished, it also means the power and the authority of the enemy. When Jesus says it is finished, it was the crushing of the serpent's head. That he took away the power of Satan. Now don't get me wrong, the Bible says that Satan is still prowling around like a lion. He is still looking to destroy, but Jesus has defanged this lion. Jesus has taken away the power of the enemy. Satan is the great accuser. And if you trusted in fact that Jesus has finished it on your behalf, Satan has nothing to accuse you of. In fact, we were just reading in Colossians two. It says in verse 15 that Jesus disarm the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. Or as the writer of Hebrews says it in chapter two, verse 14. Since therefore children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things that through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death that is the devil. When Jesus says it is finished, he also is saying the devil is finished. That he can prowl around and he can tempt and he can try. The only thing that he can do to the Christian is to move them along in their sanctification process. The only thing that he can do is to bring you into the presence of the Lord through your suffering and even through your death. It is all finished.

This is what we profess as we come tonight to take of the bread and the cup. We're professing that our hope and our faith is in the fact that it is finished. When you come to eat of the bread and drink of the cup this evening, you are not putting your hope in a ritualistic act to cover your sins, to give you the grace. You are saying, I believe that the grace has been fully provided in what Jesus has done. I'm trusting in his statement that it is finished on my behalf. This is our hope and this is what we proclaim as we take the Lord's Supper tonight. But I just want to leave you with this reminder that on the cross, it was finished, but he was not finished. And that means neither are we. And as Jesus fulfilled what he had been called to do as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, it was not the end of his work. Sunday was still to come. Jesus was still going to get up from the grave. He was still going to ascend to the Father and send his spirit to us. He was still going to reign as king and put every enemy under his feet. He is still going to return and make all things new. Jesus says it is finished, but he was not finished. And so neither are we. We come to a place of rest as we trust in the completed work of Jesus.

But as we find our rest in him, it gives us the ability to do what he has called us to do, to follow him each and every day, to glorify him in all that we do, to push back sin in our own lives and to push back darkness in our world, to go out and to make disciples of all people, teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Our work still continues, but we work not for victory, but from victory. We fight battles knowing that the war has already been won. We write our stories knowing that the great story has already been written. Even as we come to the table this evening, the Apostle Paul says, as we do this, we are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes again. We are looking back to the fact that it is finished, but we are also looking forward to the day when he returns, we will be with him forever. Brothers and sisters, this evening, I want you to be able to find the rest of

knowing that Jesus has finished it on your behalf. But from that place of rest, I want you to be able to carry out what he has called us to do.