

Bible Fellowship Teaching Plan for John 19:17-37 (August 30, 2026)
“It Is Finished!”

Central Truth: At the cross, Jesus willingly gave His life to accomplish completely and finally God’s plan of salvation so that our salvation rests--not on what we can do for God--but on what Christ has already finished for us.

John’s purpose (20:31): “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Key Passage (30): “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

Opening Question: When you hear Jesus say, “It is finished,” what do you think He meant was finished?

Lesson Objectives

- 1) Describe what Jesus endured on the cross and recognize the physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering involved
- 2) Explain the significance of the inscription, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”
- 3) Identify the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the events surrounding the crucifixion
- 4) Understand the meaning of Jesus’ words, “It is finished”
- 5) Explain why Christ's death was necessary for our salvation and why human good works cannot accomplish what Christ accomplished
- 6) Respond personally to the finished work of Christ with faith, gratitude, confidence, and hope.

I. The Crucifixion (17-22)

- A. Jesus was forced carried His own cross. The prominent place where He was crucified was called “Golgotha” (Greek for “skull) or Calvary (Latin for “skull”) either because of the appearance of the landscape or so named because of the skeletal remains on the hill.
- B. Jesus was crucified between two criminals
 - 1. The placement between the two other condemned men may have been intended to mock the Jews and their King.
 - 2. From the perspective of salvation, the three represent all of humanity:
 - a. The sinless Savior
 - b. The repentant sinner who was saved
 - c. The condemned sinner who remained unrepentant
- C. The sign Pilate had attached to Jesus’ cross read, “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews”
 - 1. Pilate may have intended the inscription to mock the Jews and their religion.
 - 2. The inscription was written in three languages--Hebrew--the national language of the Jews; Greek--the common language of international trade and commerce; and Latin--the official language of Roman laws and decrees. Pilate intended to mock Jesus but publicly proclaimed His worldwide kingship.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Why is it significant that Jesus was crucified between two criminals?
- 2. Why do you think the Jewish leaders were so determined to have the inscription changed?
- 3. What does Pilate's statement, “What I have written I have written,” show us about Pilates regard for the people he ruled?
- 4. How does Pilate's inscription show that God can accomplish His purposes even through people who do not believe in Him?

II. The Cross Fulfilled God's Word (23-24)

- A. It was common practice for those carrying out a crucifixion to take the clothes of the victim.

- B. The soldiers divided Jesus' garments and cast lots for His seamless tunic, a fulfillment of Psalm 22:18.

Key Truth: The cross was not an accident. Throughout his gospel, John has repeatedly directed our attention to the fact that Jesus' suffering and death occurred according to God's purpose revealed in scripture.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the fulfillment of Psalm 22 tell us about God's sovereignty?
2. Why is it important that seemingly insignificant details surrounding Jesus' death fulfilled Scripture?
3. How does fulfilled prophecy strengthen your confidence in God's Word?

III. Jesus Cared for Others Even From the Cross (25-27)

- A. Jesus entrusted the care of His mother to John
- B. Speaking of Mary as “woman,” Jesus honored His mother as He had done at Cana and perhaps to protect her.
- C. John probably took her to Ephesus where he died.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Jesus' concern for Mary tell us about His character?
2. Why is it significant that Jesus continued to care for others while experiencing unimaginable suffering Himself?
3. How might we follow Christ's example when we are experiencing our own difficulties?

IV. Jesus' Final Words Were Words of Fulfillment (28-30). John records two of the seven last words of Christ from the cross.

A. “I thirst.”

1. His thirst was genuine. Crucifixion produced extreme thirst, and John's account connects Jesus' words with the fulfillment of Scripture, including Psalm 69.

2. The One who is the Fountain of living water experienced thirst so that those who thirst spiritually might come to Him and live.

B. "It is finished."

1. The single word translated "It is finished" conveys completion. Jesus was not saying:
 - a. "I am finished."
 - b. "My life is finished."
 - c. "I have been defeated."
 - d. "There is nothing more I can do."
2. Instead, He was proclaiming that the work the Father had given Him to accomplish was totally, wholly, and entirely completed. It was an emphatic declaration of victory, not defeat.

C. The cross fulfilled what God had promised throughout Scripture concerning.

1. The Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15)
2. The Passover Lamb (Exodus 12)
3. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)
4. Everything prophesied about the promised Messiah

D. Through Christ's death on the cross, the penalty for sin was paid in full.

1. God's justice was not ignored.
2. God's righteousness was not compromised.
3. God's law was honored.
4. God's mercy was made available to everyone.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think John specifically calls attention to Jesus' thirst and connects it with Scripture?
2. How does "It is finished" change the way we should understand the cross from a tragedy to a triumph?
3. Why couldn't our good works pay the penalty for our sin?
4. What does the cross teach us about how God views the seriousness of sin?
5. What does the cross teach us about the righteousness and justice of God?
6. What does the cross teach us about the depth of God's mercy?

The Gospel in one sentence: “Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves.” Our response is not to add something to Christ's finished work, but to receive His salvation through faith, turning from sin and placing our lives in His hands.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between trying to earn salvation and receiving salvation?
2. Why is it impossible to add our good works to Christ's finished work?
3. If Christ has finished the work of salvation, what should our response to Him be?
4. How should the finished work of Christ affect the way we view our failures and our guilt?

E. Jesus gave His life willingly. John concludes: “He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”

1. Jesus’ life was not taken from Him; He voluntarily gave it up just as He had said in John 10:18.
2. The cross was not something that happened to Jesus against His will; it was the willing sacrifice of the Son of God for sinners as the supreme demonstration of divine love.

Discussion Questions

1. What difference does it make to know that Jesus willingly gave His life?
2. How does His willingness deepen your understanding of His love?
3. If Christ willingly gave everything for us, how should we respond to Him?

V. The Final Scene at the Cross (31-37)

- A. A soldier pierced His side with a spear to confirm He was no longer alive.
- B. John records these events “so that you may also believe.”

- C. Because He had given up His spirit, there was no need to break His legs--another fulfillment of scripture (Psalm 34:20).
- D. The sight of those gawking at Jesus was yet another fulfillment of scripture (Psalm 22:16).

Questions for Personal Reflection

1. If Jesus has truly finished everything necessary for your salvation, are you living as though you must still earn God's acceptance—or are you resting by faith in what Christ has already accomplished for you?
2. Take a moment to ask
 - “What am I still trying to accomplish that Christ has already finished?”
 - “Where am I trusting my own goodness rather than Christ's righteousness?”
 - “How should the finished work of Christ change the way I face guilt, failure, suffering, and death?”
 - “What would it look like for me to live this week with greater confidence in the words, ‘It is finished?’”

Summary:

At Golgotha, what appeared to be the defeat of Jesus was actually His victory.

He was mocked as a king, but He truly is King.

He was crucified as a criminal, but He was the sinless Lamb of God.

His garments were divided, but Scripture was being fulfilled.

He experienced thirst, but He is the source of living water.

He bowed His head and gave up His spirit, but His life was freely given.

And when He cried, “It is finished,” He announced that the work of redemption had been completed.

The cross was not the end of Jesus’ mission. It was the completion of the work necessary for our salvation.

Friday looked like the end—but Sunday was coming!

Sunday School Lesson for August 30, 2026
John 19:17-37

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, in our current study, we've been discovering how John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, reveals the life and ministry of the Lord "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

On this last Sunday in August, as we see that purpose played out in every word on every page of this precious book, John has invited us to join him as he follows the Lord Jesus from the Upper Room where He shared His last meal with His disciples all the way to a hill called Mount Calvary where He shows us how the Lord Jesus fulfilled His promise to become the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep. In today's study from chapter eighteen, Pastor Trey will speak to the first sixteen verses where Jesus is subjected to the judgment of the Roman governor and delivered over to the soldiers who crucified Him; and, in our study today, John recounts for us some of the dismal details of our Lord's crucifixion and death in verses seventeen through 37.

After Pilate released Barabbas to the people, he had Jesus whipped again. Then he brought Him out before the people to show them that Jesus bled just like any other person would and that the beating He had received should have been sufficient to satisfy their sickening desire to see Him disgraced and dishonored. As the Lord Jesus was brought out before the crowds, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe they had put on Him in order to mock Him, Pilate said, "Behold, the Man."

John writes in chapter nineteen, verse six, "As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify! Crucify!' But Pilate answered, 'You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against

him.’ [But] the Jews insisted, ‘We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.’” From Pilate’s perspective, Jesus was being crucified for sedition--inciting the people to rebel against Caesar and Roman rule. But, from the perspective of the Jewish religious leaders, He was being charged with blasphemy, and His examination before the chief priest showed that. The Jewish leaders clearly didn’t expect the Messiah to be the Divine Son of God in the proper sense. And that’s why it wasn’t for claiming to be the Messiah that Jesus was condemned by the Jews; it was when He declared Himself to be the Son of God that the high priest tore His garments and declared Him guilty of blasphemy.

Apparently, this was the first time Pilate had heard of this claim. At some point during Jesus’ interrogation by Pilate, the governor had received a word from his wife. Matthew tells us in chapter 27, verse nineteen: “While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: ‘Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.’”

Now, the Jewish leaders are telling him that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. Perhaps at this point Pilate put together Jesus’ previous words about His Kingdom not being of this world and how He had come to testify about the truth. So, John tells us that Pilate went back into his palace and asked Jesus, “Where do you come from?” but Jesus didn’t answer him. So Pilate threatened Him: “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” Jesus simply answered, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.” “From then on,” John tells us, “Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, ‘If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.’” As much as Pilate would have liked to have set Jesus free, this latest claim by the Jewish leaders placed him in a very precarious position. If he lets Jesus go, the Jews could have sent word to

Caesar that he had set free a challenger to the emperor's throne, which could have resulted in a charge of treason. So Pilate takes the easy way out.

"Finally," John writes in verse sixteen, "Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified."

Our focal text for today then begins in verse seventeen: "So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews," but rather, "This man said, I am King of the Jews."' Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written'."

John carefully chooses his words as he describes the agonizing moments of our Lord's crucifixion, and he adds details not found in the other gospels; for example, in John, we read about the attempt on the part of the Jewish leaders to have the writing on the sign changed, how Jesus entrusted the care of His mother to John, and the two declarations, "I thirst," and "It is Finished." Because he was present at the crucifixion, John tells us about the soldiers casting lots for His clothes and why they didn't tear His cloak into pieces. He tells us that Jesus carried His own cross, and we know that He carried it at least part of the way. The other gospel writers tell us that the soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross for Him, presumably because He had been so weakened by the extreme loss of blood.

The place of the crucifixion was probably situated north of the city. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews tells us that it was outside the city as was required by the Mosaic Law as we read in the Book of Numbers, chapter fifteen, verse 35. This was a law among the Romans as well as the Jews.

If you visit Jerusalem today, your guide will probably take you to two places believed to be the site of the crucifixion--Gordon's Calvary and the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. In John's day, the place was called "the place of a Skull," probably descriptive of the shape of the mountain which is why Gordon's Calvary appears to fit the description. Origen, an early third century church father, says that Adam was believed to have been buried on the site, but there's no evidence to support the idea.

John tells us that it was called in Hebrew, "Golgotha"--meaning "skull." Luke calls it "Calvary" which is the Latin translation of the original word from which we get the word, "cranium." It would have been a well-known location, for the Romans were accustomed to executing their criminals in some prominent location, along a well-traveled road, so that those passing by might know and learn how lawbreakers were dealt with.

When Jesus, the soldiers, and the crowds that followed arrived at the site, John writes, "There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between." Crucifixion, as you probably know, was the most brutal form of execution practiced by the Romans. One commentator describes it in this way: "After the criminal had carried the cross, attended with every possible [jeer] and insult, to the place of execution, a hole was dug in the earth to receive the foot of it. The cross was laid on the ground; the person condemned to suffer was stripped [of his clothing] and [stretched out] on it, and the soldiers fastened the hands and feet either by nails or thongs. After they had driven the nails deeply [into] the wood, they elevated the cross with the agonizing sufferer on it, and, in order to fix it more firmly in the earth, they let it fall violently into the hole which they had dug to receive it. This sudden fall gave to the person that was nailed to it a violent and convulsive shock, and greatly increased his sufferings."

"Death followed slowly from loss of blood, thirst, and hunger, gradual exhaustion, and stiffening of the muscles, veins, and nerves. The loss of blood, however, was small, since the wounds in the hands and feet did not lacerate

any large vessels, and were nearly closed by the nails. The sufferers lingered generally twelve hours,--sometimes, according to [their] strength [and endurance], to the second or third day. The bodies were left hanging on the cross until they decayed or were devoured by ravenous beasts and birds.”

We know nothing about the charges that resulted in the other two men being crucified with Jesus--Matthew and Mark call them “robbers” while Luke calls them “criminals.” Jesus was crucified between them. It’s likely that Pilate gave the instructions for the arrangement of the crosses, either to identify Jesus with the worst criminals or to mock the Jews and their King. One commentator notes that “The whole of humanity was represented there: the sinless Saviour, the saved penitent, the condemned impenitent,” for we know that, according to the gospel of Luke, one of the men crucified with Jesus asked to be remembered when Jesus came into His Kingdom. “Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.’”

In order to heap mockery onto the shame of Jesus’ crucifixion--verse nineteen: “Pilate also wrote 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.”

With the word, “also,” John seems to indicate that, not only did Pilate order the placement of the crosses with Jesus in the middle, he “also” made a sign as well. It was commonplace to make the person being crucified carry a sign round his neck that bore his name and the crime for which he was being executed, then affixing that sign to the cross. All the gospel writers include this detail in their accounts, but John alone tells us it was Pilate’s doing. With the wording on the sign, Pilate probably wanted everyone to know that here was Jesus, the King of the Jewish rabble he ruled Who was being crucified in the midst of these worthless vagrants, rabble who should all be executed in the same way, and would be if they didn’t stay in line.

It's likely that Pilate thought he was making a final jab at the priests without realizing that what he meant as a bitter joke was actually the truth. He wrote the words in three languages--Hebrew--the national language of the Jews; Greek--the common language of international trade and commerce; and Latin--the official language of Roman laws and decrees. One commentator notes, "[Pilate] did not know that he was proclaiming the universal dominion of Jesus, and prophesying that wisdom as represented by Greece, law and imperial power as represented by Rome, and all previous revelation as represented by Israel, would yet bow before the Crucified, and recognise that His Cross was His throne."

Of course, when the Jewish leaders read the sign, they took exception to it--verse 21: "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."'" These "chief priests of the Jews" objected to Jesus being called "the King of the Jews." He wasn't *their* King, and they objected to Him being described in that way. One commentator writes, "It was the coarse retaliation of a proud man who found himself helpless in the hands of people he despised and hated. There was some relish to [Pilate] in the crucifixion of Jesus when by his inscription he had turned it into an insult to the nation. A gleam of savage satisfaction for a moment lit up his gloomy face when he found that his taunt had [had its desired effect], and the chief priests came begging him to change what he had written." Even though they had finally gotten Pilate to do what they wanted, *he* would have the final say. With this wording, he added insult to injury and made a public spectacle of the Jews since so many people would have passed by and read what was written on the plaque.

Pilate, unmoved by their complaint simply answered, "What I have written I have written." Pilate had just authored an official document. He was responsible for the wording, and, once placed on the cross, it was the expression of a binding, legal decision that he would by no means change. There may have been in Pilate's determination the intention to lay the guilt for

Jesus' death on their consciences. Since he had declared Jesus to be innocent three times, he now absolves himself of any fault and lays the blame completely on the Jews and their leaders.

While Pilate and the Jewish leaders argued in the palace, the tragedy continued at Golgotha, and John brings us back to the scene in verse 23: "When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.' This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, 'They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.' So the soldiers did these things."

In all four gospels we read the account that the soldiers who crucified Jesus took His garments and divided them amongst themselves according to the custom followed at executions. It was a standard practice to crucify a person naked, the clothes of the person being crucified becoming the property of the soldiers who carried out the sentence. John says that they divided his garments into four parts--typically a head scarf, sandals, an outer garment, and a belt, and one part was given to each of the four soldiers. Since the relative value of each piece of clothing differed, they cast lots with the winner taking the most prized item. It's shocking to think that people would show such callous indifference, casting lots for a robe at the very foot of the cross, at a time when the Son of God was taking upon Himself the sins of the world.

John uniquely adds that the tunic Jesus wore "was seamless, woven in one piece," so the soldiers decided not to divide it. This would have been a linen or wool smock worn close to the skin. Because this garment was of great value and its destruction would have made it useless, the soldiers chose not to divide it between them. However, their decision not to tear it, John says, "This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, 'They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.'" The scripture John refers to is Psalm 22, a Psalm of David that has several references to Jesus' crucifixion that reflect an

amazing accuracy. In verse eighteen, David wrote, “They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

The verse concludes with John observing: “Therefore the soldiers did these things.” Since the soldiers knew nothing of the Psalm or its prophecy, their fulfillment of what it foretold should remind us of the reality of the divine inspiration of the Word of God. One commentator observes: “While Pilate had announced to the world that Jesus of Nazareth was ‘King of the Jews,’ and Caiaphas had declared that ‘it was expedient that one man should die for the people,’ the Roman soldiers, without any knowledge of Hebrew oracles, had all unconsciously filled up the features of the suffering Messiah in literal harmony with the ancient prediction.”

Then, in the second half of verse 25, John draws our attention to a very special group of people who have braved the taunts and jeers of the crowd to stand at the foot of the cross. On the one hand, there were four soldiers who haggled for Jesus’ clothes standing with the centurion; on the other, John points out four women who stood there, faithfully doing what they could to minister to Him in His final moments along with the beloved disciple: “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 saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.”

The women are familiar to us. Mary, His mother, was there / as was Mary Magdalene. The other women are difficult to identify. The Greek, like the English translation, leaves us in doubt whether John is speaking of two other women or just one. From John’s style of writing, we know that he is fond of using parallel expressions so that Mary and His mother’s sister would have been one pair of women and Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene would be the other pair. Mark mentions Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. Mary, the mother

of James the younger is the Mary who was married to Clopas, so Salome would have been the name of Jesus' aunt. This would also make James and John Jesus' cousins. As John has done before, Mary Magdalene apparently needs no introduction because she was already so familiar to the readers of John's gospel.

It's impossible for us to fully appreciate the grief that Jesus' mother must have been experiencing at this moment. One commentator attempts to picture what it might have been like when he writes, "These hours of suffering, as the sword was slowly driven through Mary's soul, according to Simeon's word, who shall measure? Hers was not a hysterical, noisy sorrow, but quiet and silent. ... There was no sign of ... weakness, no outcry, no fainting, no wild gesture of uncontrollable anguish, nothing to show that she was the exceptional mourner and that there was no sorrow like unto her sorrow. Her reverence for the Lord saved her from disturbing His last moments. ... She saw His head lifted in anguish and falling on His breast in weakness, and she could not gently take it in her hands and wipe the sweat of death from His brow. ... She saw Him gasp with pain as cramp seized part after part of His outstretched body, and she could not change His posture nor give liberty to so much as one of His hands. And she had to suffer this in profound desolation of spirit. Her life seemed to be buried at the cross. To the mourning, there often seems nothing left / but to die with the dying. One heart has been the light of life, and now that light is quenched. What significance, what motive, can life have any more? ... But the absorption of common love must have been far surpassed in Mary's case. None had been blessed with such a love as hers. And now none estimated as she did the spotless innocence of the Victim; none could know as she knew the depth of His goodness, the unfathomable and unconquerable love He had for all; and none could estimate as she the ingratitude of those whom He had healed and fed and taught and comforted with such unselfish devotedness. She knew that there was none like Him, and

that if any could have brought blessing to this earth it was He, and there she saw Him nailed to the cross, the end actually reached.”

Although Jesus had four brothers--James, Simon, Joseph, and Jude that are named in Matthew, chapter thirteen--He didn't entrust His mother to their care, perhaps because they had not yet believed He was the Messiah. Instead, it was John, as the beloved disciple and Mary's nephew to whom Jesus entrusted the care of His mother. With these precious words, He gave a mother to His dearest friend, and He gave a son most precious to the bereaved, desolate, and broken heart of his widowed mother. Notice also that Jesus doesn't call Mary, "Mother," but "Woman." We've already seen this in the words He used to speak to her at the wedding in Cana as "Woman" would have been a title of dignity and respect. Some commentators also understand Jesus as not being willing to subject her to further torment by addressing her as His mother.

We don't know when and where John took Mary into his own home. Because John was known to the high-priest--as we know from chapter eighteen, verse fifteen--and that his family had hired servants--Mark, chapter one, verse twenty--it would seem John was a man of position and substance in that day. At some point in his life, John relocated to Ephesus where he lived out his final days. If you were to visit the archaeological site of Ephesus in modern-day Turkey, you could visit the site where John is believed to be buried. You can also visit the house, pictured here, that some believe to be the home where John took Mary to live out her final years.

The story is that, in 1812, a German nun had visions about the house and described it in great detail. When a French clergyman read her account, he went to Ephesus and found the house that matched her description. In 1896, the house became a popular pilgrimage site as the place where Mary lived until she died. According to tradition, she died at the age of 64, some fifteen years after Jesus' crucifixion. But none of this can be confirmed historically.

Now that our Lord has seen to the care of His mother, John brings us back to the agony of the cross. Matthew and Mark tell us of one word from the cross, Luke tells us of three, and John records three others. We shouldn't be surprised at the differences. These independent witnesses honestly and truthfully reported what impressed them most and what best communicated their memories of those horrible moments. As we've already seen in John's account of Jesus' arrest, he focuses on the fact that Jesus voluntarily gave Himself up to those who had come to take Him, and John's report of the words from the cross follow that theme.

Although it may not be possible to precisely arrange Jesus' words from the cross or put them in exact chronological order, scholars have generally followed this arrangement: first, a word of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" second, the promise to the penitent thief, also from Luke: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise;" third, Jesus entrusts the care of his mother to John; fourth, Jesus' cry from the cross at about the ninth hour, recorded by Matthew and Mark, where Jesus grieved over His separation from the Father as He bore the sins of the world: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" fifth, Jesus' cry of thirst; sixth, His victorious pronouncement, "It is finished," that was quickly followed by the seventh and last word, recorded by Luke: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

John's description of our Lord's final moments on the cross is brief and concise. Beginning in verse 28, we read, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), 'I thirst.' A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished,' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

Apparently, some time had passed since Jesus spoke to His mother and to John. "After this" doesn't necessarily mean "immediately after." In fact, Luke tells us that darkness fell over the land from the sixth hour to the ninth

hour--from noon to three in the afternoon. John has told us several times that Jesus was always aware of the time. He's told us when Jesus said His "hour" had not yet come and when His "hour" had finally come. Now, the final moments of that hour were upon Him, and John tells us that Jesus knew "that all things had already been accomplished" or "that all was now finished." As John is writing his gospel so that his readers would believe that Jesus is the Christ, he doesn't want to miss any opportunity to remind us that the events he records were foreordained from before the foundation of the world, and that Jesus was always aware of this.

In completely accomplishing every detail of everything that was foretold in scripture, Jesus cried out, "I thirst." Only when He knew that all things had been accomplished did our Lord speak of His own, physical pain. His cry was the expression of a very real need, for thirst was one of the most tormenting effects of crucifixion. John recognizes the fulfillment of scripture in His plea. Among the other descriptions of the pain that David wrote of in Psalm 69, he said in verse three: "my throat is parched," and, in verse 21: "They gave me vinegar for my thirst."

Alexander MacLaren writes, "Infinitely pathetic in itself, that cry becomes almost awful in its appeal to us when we remember who uttered it, and why He bore these pangs. The very 'Fountain of living water' knew the pang of thirst that every one [who thirsts] might come to the waters, and might drink, not water only, but 'wine and milk, without money or price.'"

In response, someone--none of the gospel writers identifies who--someone attached a sponge to a hyssop branch, dipped it in a jar of sour wine, and offered it to Jesus. This was not the same incident recorded by Matthew and Mark where Jesus refused the drugged wine that was customarily offered to victims of crucifixion. This sour wine that John tells us about was probably supplied to the soldiers as they stood guard. What actual effect it had on relieving the intense thirst Jesus was experiencing we don't know.

What we do know is what John tells us about what happened next: “When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”

Those standing around the cross heard “finished”--“done for;” “beaten;” “defeated;” “vanquished.” But Jesus’ cry, “It is finished,” was no cry of defeat, disappointment, or failure; it was a declaration of victory as His work was gloriously fulfilled. “It is finished” was not the gasp of an exhausted, worn-out life, but the deliberate utterance from a clear consciousness that every aspect of the work assigned to Him by the Father was accomplished and all God’s purpose of making Himself known to us through His Son to reveal His love for us was fulfilled.

In every way, the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ completed God’s plan for our salvation. The promises of God revealed through the prophets were fulfilled. As He hung on the cross, every mark, every sign, every token of His Messiahship was fulfilled so that He could say, “It is finished”--all the things that were written of Him in the scriptures had been completed. Every “i” dotted and every “t” crossed--not a thing was overlooked or skipped. All the promises of God concerning the One Who would make our salvation possible were completely fulfilled.

The Seed of the woman crushed the serpent’s head when that Seed received the bruise in its own heel. The Passover Lamb was slain. The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world has done just that. The Sun of righteousness arose with healing in His wings. The prince of this world was forever cast out. All of God’s promises spoken through the prophets came to pass when Jesus cried out, “It is finished!”

God’s promises fulfilled and the curse of sin and death broken. When Adam and Eve sinned by eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the consequences of their sin fell upon each of us. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have

willfully broken God's laws and rejected His loving correction. But there came One Who is Himself the Law-giver, and He has taken our human nature upon Himself and in that human nature He has kept the Law perfectly--Jesus was like us in every way except that He was without sin. Even though it was **we** who had broken the law, it was **He** Who took the punishment for our sin, and, in His death, the Lord Jesus Christ vindicated the moral principles of God's Law. With our Lord's cry, "It is finished," God's law was honored, the punishment it required was paid in full, and God's righteousness and His justice were perfectly satisfied.

Now every believer can rejoice in the great fact that we can be saved without compromising the righteousness, the holiness, or the justice of God. The Law of God is kept, and mercy triumphs, too. And, because of our Lord's death, His cry, "It is finished," means that we, like Paul the apostle, can mock death and the power which gives death its potency and say, "O death, where is your sting? O grave where is your victory? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God Who gives us the victory through the One Who cried out from the cross, 'It is finished!'"

And so God's Word tells us that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because of the weakness of our sinful nature, God did by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering in our behalf." Every believer, Paul says, has now been made free so that we could become servants of righteousness. The curse of sin and death was broken when Jesus cried out, "It is finished."

The promises of God fulfilled, the curse of sin and death broken, and the message of God's love for you and me decisively declared. How do we know that love? The apostle John, writing in the first of his letters, says, "This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. And this is love--not that we loved

God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” Greater love no one has ever seen--love decisively declared when Jesus cried out, “It is finished.”

The great news is that the finished work of our Lord is not some abstract principle detached from the reality of your life and mine, for the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ completed God’s plan for our salvation. By His death on the cross, Jesus did for you and me what we could never do for ourselves. The Law of God and God’s very nature demanded that sin be punished. So God laid on Him the iniquity, the immorality, the wickedness, the rebellion, the sin of us all, so that By His stripes we are healed.

As a result, salvation is now ours through faith in what God has done. Forgiveness was something that you and I could never obtain through our own good works because none of our good works nor all of them together could ever be good enough to pay the infinite penalty for our infinite sin. The great news is that Jesus has paid the penalty in full for your sin and my sin. Now, all we have to do is receive His salvation--it’s a gift that God offers to all who will own up to their rejection of God’s love, repent of their sin, and place their lives in His hands.

Then, with the simplest words, John tells us that Jesus “bowed His head.” It’s important to note that none of the gospel writers uses the words, “He died.” Instead, they say “He breathed forth” or “He sent forth” or, as John writes, “He gave up His Spirit.” His life was not taken from Him, but gave it up--offered it willingly, fulfilling what the Lord Himself said in John, chapter ten and verse eighteen: “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord,” as Paul confirms in his letter to the followers of Christ in Ephesus, chapter five and verse two when he writes: “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” John may also have recalled the words of Isaiah, chapter 53, verse twelve: “he poured out his life unto death”--again signifying the fact that Jesus voluntarily gave up His life in **His** time according to **His** will.

Even as He breathes His last, He cries out “It is finished.” Max Lucado writes, “And then, it’s over. An angel sighs. A star wipes away a tear. ‘Take Me home,’ He says. Take this Prince to His King. Take this Son to His Father. Take this Pilgrim to His home. He deserves a rest. Farewell, Thou infant of Bethlehem’s manger. Bless You, holy ambassador. Go home, slayer of death. Rest well, Sweet Soldier. The battle is over.” And now that He has defeated death, now that He has blazed the trail of faith, He has gone before us to lead us into life everlasting, and we can anchor our hope, our trust, our confidence securely in this Son of God Who died for us on a hill called Mount Calvary.

In the remaining verses of this chapter, John tells about how the soldiers confirmed that Jesus was dead and didn’t break His legs as was typically done to hasten the death of someone who had been crucified. And John points out how even this fulfilled not one, but two, Old Testament prophecies. Then he tells us how Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for Jesus’ body and how he and Nicodemus hastily prepared the body for burial and placed it in Joseph’s tomb. And, for all they knew, that was the end. It was over. But that was Friday, and Sunday was coming, for our Lord’s last words were, “It is finished;” but this end was only the beginning.

Thank you for being a part of our brief overview of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus seen through John’s eyes that’s meant to lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing in Him, you might experience the fullness of life that can only come in Him.

Next week, we fast forward through the Sabbath from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning. John takes us to the tomb where Jesus’ body had been laid, but there’s a great surprise waiting there. Following Trey’s message on the first ten verses of chapter twenty, we’ll weep with Mary as she asks the angels where they’ve taken the body of her Lord and all that happen next in verses eleven through 23.

As always, as it's still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

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