

Balance Due
Small Group Discussion
John 19:28-30

Warm-up question: Share about a project or accomplishment in recent history that you have finished, when you felt a great sense of relief.

We're in a sermon series that's spanning the academic year, called "The Big Story." We've been walking through the Bible, seeing the ways that it's one big story of redemption. Between now and Easter we're looking at some of the key elements of how Jesus went about the rescue that he came to accomplish.

Review: Background

There's a dark cloud of debt that has been hanging over all of humanity since the beginning of our existence as a race. Ever since the first man and woman believed the lie that God did not have their best interest in mind, and took things into their own hands, everything has been broken. Their sin put the human race in debt to our Creator, and every one of us has felt the effects of that debt. We talked about this moment when everything fell apart when we began our series last September, called The Big Story. God had created people as the pinnacle of his creation, he had made the world as our perfect, eternal home, and he had made us for relationship with himself. But when Adam and Eve sinned, the curse of sin would leave its mark on every corner of human life. Every one of us has inherited a propensity to distrust God, and take things into our own hands. But we also saw that in the very next moment, in Gen. 3:15, God made a promise. Speaking to Satan, the Tempter, God said, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (seed) and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Theologians call this promise the protoevangelium, or "First Gospel." God promised that he would send someone, a rescuer, a descendant of the first woman, who would crush the head of Satan and restore what had been broken. Today we're looking at the moment when Satan's head was crushed and the curse broken.

Read John 19:12-27, to get a sense for the context. Discuss:

- Does any observation jump out at you in this scene? Is anything puzzling to you?

Read John 19:28-30

- How do you tend to view Jesus in this scene? More as a helpless, pitiable victim, or as someone who is in control of his own destiny?
- Pastor Josh reviewed some previous scenes from John's Gospel, having to do with the lead-up to Jesus's "hour." Review the following (take turns reading):
 - John 2:4
 - John 7:3-6
 - John 7:30
 - John 8:20
 - John 12:23
 - John 12:27
 - John 13:1
 - John 17:1
- How do these verses, and Jesus's references to his "time," affect the way you view him on the cross? What is important about the fact that he was in control of his destiny?
- In relation to the Big Story of redemption, what does it say to you that Jesus was concerned "that Scripture would be fulfilled" in his dying moments?
 - What does that say about the significance of this moment?
 - What does it say about how he saw himself in relation to the Old Testament Scriptures?

- What is Jesus referring to when he says, “It is finished?”
 - Mark, Matthew, and Luke all tell us in their Gospels that Jesus let out a “loud cry” just before he died. How does that description—applied to this phrase, “It is finished,” help us to understand what Jesus meant? (This was not the defeated moan of a helpless victim, but the victorious cry of someone who had just crossed the finish line of a grueling race.)
 - What does it mean that we had a “balance due” before God?
 - What might lead you to believe that Jesus realized the necessity of being crucified as a payment for our debt of sin?
 - How does this concept relate to the promise of Genesis 3:15 (and the curse of sin)?
 - How do Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 shed light on what Jesus experienced on the cross? How do these words indicate what he accomplished for us? “We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
 - It is because of these last words of Jesus that we often speak of the “finished work of Christ.” What are the implications of his “finished work” for us?
 - Pastor Josh said that we might use the following phrase to understand what Jesus meant when he said, “It is finished.” **PAID IN FULL**. How is this an accurate description of what he did?

Application:

- Can you identify with the following line from singer John Mayer’s new song? He says, “And what about the feeling that I’m never good enough? Will it wash out in the water or is it always in the blood?” How does this sentiment have to do with what we’ve studied today?
- Pastor Josh discussed two particular ways that this passage has a bearing on our lives. They are described below. Does one of them seem to apply more to you than the other? If so, how?
 - Some of us live with a huge sense of guilt, even a sense of terror, as if we still owe God and the other shoe is going to drop at any moment. The fact that Jesus finished the work—paid our debt in full—means that God has accepted Jesus’s sacrifice for us, and we can live with a sense of freedom.
 - Even if we don’t think we owe God, we so often live as if something is still lacking; we treat so many other things in life as if they could be the “completion” of us—parents’ approval, job promotion, romantic partner, etc.
- Pastor Josh stated that our primary task with regard to today’s sermon is to allow the Holy Spirit to apply Jesus’s finished work to our hearts.
 - How do we go about that?
 - How does it help us? (When we let the Holy Spirit apply Jesus’s work to our hearts every day, we realize that our debt is paid in full, and we are made complete in Christ—we have a peace and a completeness that we were trying to get elsewhere, and we can stop ruining relationships and other good things with the pressure to do this for us).

Sharing/Prayer

- As always, take some time to share areas where you need people to pray for you. Spend time praying for one another, and asking the Spirit to “apply” the finished work of Jesus to your hearts.