

Good Friday

April 14, 2017

John 19:17-30 (EHV) – ¹⁷Carrying his own cross, he went out to what is called the Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸There they crucified him with two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the middle. ¹⁹Pilate also had a notice written and fastened on the cross. It read, “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.” ²⁰Many of the Jews read this notice, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. ²¹So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that ‘this man said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’”” ²²Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.” ²³When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took his tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ²⁴So they said to one another, “Let’s not tear it. Instead, let’s cast lots to see who gets it.” This was so that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. So the soldiers did these things. ²⁵Jesus’ mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were standing near the cross. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son!” ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother!” And from that time this disciple took her into his own home. ²⁸After this, knowing that everything had now been finished, and to fulfill the Scripture, Jesus said, “I thirst.” ²⁹A jar full of sour wine was sitting there. So they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. ³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished!” Then, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

Introduction

We yearn for the finish lines of life! When we were young, we wanted to be all grown up. After dating for a few years, a couple looks forward to the day when they finally hear, “I now pronounce you husband and wife.” We long to make the final car or mortgage payments. After two days in the car with the kids, it’s a magical feeling to finally catch a glimpse of the Magic Kingdom! We yearn for the finish line to finally arrive – to be done.

Sometimes we so yearn to be finished that we sometimes fool ourselves into thinking that we are. A basketball team may have a great first half, but it needs to keep its foot on the gas in the second half because the game isn’t finished until the final buzzer sounds. People may stand and applaud at various times during a concert, but it’s not over until the final chord dies away. You just got an A on a semester exam. Excellent! But school isn’t finished until you open your diploma on graduation day and find it signed.

Theme: Repent – Turn to Jesus; He and He Alone Finished Your Salvation

“It is finished!” Those are perhaps the most famous words that Jesus spoke from the cross. But was he really finished? What did he just finish? What do those words really mean? Today, let’s listen carefully as Jesus proclaims salvation’s grand finale with those precious words from the cross. Let’s all **turn to Jesus in repentance; for he and he alone finished our salvation!**

Sermon Exposition

It certainly seemed like Pontius Pilate was finished. It hadn’t been a good day for him. An angry mob had formed outside his window bright and early. The people were demanding a crucifixion. He tried to give them an opportunity to see a real criminal punished and an innocent man released. They chose poorly, and the rebel Barabbas walked free! He provided them with a good old-fashioned Roman flogging, hoping to satisfy their bloodlust. But that didn’t appease their hatred. This man, Jesus, wasn’t very talkative. He spoke a little about kingdoms that weren’t of this world and something about “the truth.” But Pilate wasn’t up for debating the finer points of philosophy. He had more important concerns. Charges of treason and the real possibility of

a riot had Pilate thinking twice. What would Caesar think if news about this ever got back to Rome? That could kill a career really quick!

With a bowl of water, Pilate thought he'd washed innocent blood from his hands. With a sign on the cross, Pilate was publicly proclaiming the reason for the crucifixion while poking fun at the Jewish leaders. They protested to Pilate: **“Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that ‘this man said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’” Pilate answered, ‘What I have written, I have written.’** Pontius Pilate was certainly finished! Finished with Jesus, finished with priests and people, and finished with this whole frustrating debacle.

By the appearance of things, it looked as if Jesus was finished, too. There he was, nailed to wood and hung out to die. His end was coming; the Romans would make sure of that. But Jesus wasn't finished. Not yet. Jesus wasn't yet finished fulfilling the law with a perfect love. In a shocking act of love, he looked down from the cross and forgave the very soldiers whose hands swung the hammers. In a saving act of love, he looked over to a criminal and assured him that on that same day he'd be with Jesus in heaven. Then in a son's final act of love, he looked down from the cross and made his mother, Mary, the object of his loving concern.

Imagine the privilege of being the human parent of the eternal Son of God! Indeed, Mary was **“highly favored,”** just as the angel had proclaimed. But being Jesus' mother was a blessing that was destined to cause her heartache. Thirty-three years earlier, Simeon said to Mary, **“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel... And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”** That sword was driven home into her heart even as the nails were driven into her son's flesh.

And Jesus knew it. Jesus dealt with the sword in Mary's soul with his perfect love for her – love that looked down from the cross and took care of his mother's future needs: **“When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother!’ And from that time this disciple took her into his own home.”**

Jesus provided for his mother's physical and emotional well-being. But he provided the world with much more! In showing perfect love for his earthly mother, he also perfectly fulfilled the law of his heavenly Father. In showing his love to his mother, he was also showing his love to us – winning for us a place in the home of the heavenly Father.

But Jesus still wasn't finished! His love went to work on the cross so that he could be the pure Savior. While on the cross, we see Jesus still actively fulfilling the prophecies of Scripture so that we can have 100% certainty that he's the true Savior.

The first fulfillment of Scripture was done to Jesus by the soldiers. For them, this wasn't a good Friday, but a workday. They'd been assigned to this execution squad – not a very pleasant duty. But why not take the opportunity to profit a little from it? **“When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took his tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, ‘Let's not tear it. Instead, let's cast lots to see who gets it.’”**

What these soldiers didn't know is that this was the most special paycheck they'd ever bring home! As a matter of fact, **“This was so that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. So the soldiers did these things.”** These very garments had been sung about in Psalm 22 one thousand years before the soldiers ever tossed the dice. The Lord used the soldiers' greed and cruelty to provide us with proof and surety that Jesus was the long-promised Savior!

The first fulfillment of Scripture was done *to* Jesus. The second fulfillment of Scripture was done *by* Jesus: **“After this, knowing that everything had now been finished, and to fulfill the Scripture, Jesus said, ‘I thirst.’ A jar full of sour wine was sitting there. So they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.”**

Jesus' thirst was a terrible result of his crucifixion. The loss of blood by whips, thorns, and nails had created a dreadful thirst. He was desperate for a drink. **"I thirst"** is powerful proof that Jesus' suffering was real. Even more, it's powerful proof that Jesus fulfilled Scripture down to the tiniest letter! Psalm 69 had foretold: **"They gave me vinegar for my thirst."**

Jesus wasn't finished until he'd fulfilled every single prophecy of Scripture in minutest detail, from the toss of Roman dice for a piece of his clothing, down to the very vinegar that was offered to him to drink. Jesus fulfilled Scripture 100% so that we might have 100% confidence that our salvation has been accomplished! **"I thirst."** And drink the vinegar Jesus did, because he had something else he needed to say, something else we desperately need to hear!

Jesus wasn't finished until he was finished fulfilling every letter of the law. Jesus wasn't finished until he was finished fulfilling every prophecy of Scripture. Then and only then was Jesus truly finished: **"When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished!' Then, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit."**

Jesus' word **"it is finished"** is the "final word" on the FACT of your forgiveness! Greek shopkeepers of Jesus' day would write that very same word on the bottom of bills – once the bill had been paid in full.

What a thought! Our sin was a hopeless debt. There's nothing we can give, say, think, or do to pay off a single sin – let alone a whole life of them. Our sin, our debt, is paid for – paid in full. There's no small balance of sin remaining that we're supposed to pay down. There is no installment plan when it comes to our salvation. It is, simply put, FINISHED. The whole Bible is summed up in this one word: FINISHED. The Son of God who cannot lie said it: the debt of your sin has been paid in full!

If there's anything that our Lenten journey has proclaimed loudly and clearly, it's that Jesus, and Jesus alone, finished our salvation. Nothing or no one dare take the place of Jesus. No human work, no matter how right or "holy" it feels, dare turn Jesus' finished into a "to be continued" or "maybe." There's no "But if I just feel bad enough about my sin and just promise to do better next time." Your resolutions to do better don't finish your salvation. Jesus alone finished your salvation. There's no "But if I just make sure that I'm really, truly, surely sorry over my sin, then Jesus will surely forgive me." Your sorrow doesn't finish your salvation. Jesus alone finished your salvation! There's no "But all I have to do is make certain that I truly believe in Jesus; then Jesus will forgive me." Your faith didn't die on the cross for you. Jesus alone finished your salvation!

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, let there be no "ifs, ands, or buts" this Good Friday. Instead, be still. And in simple faith turn once again to Jesus; he, and he alone, finished your salvation. Salvation is accomplished always and forever through Jesus. Salvation is yours only and solely through Jesus. It is finished! Amen.