

## **It is Finished**

**Now when Jesus had received the wine, He cried out with a loud voice, “It is finished.”**

**Midweek of Lent V  
March 29, 2023**

**Dear Friends in Christ,**

The kingdom of God is like an elderly couple who made it through the depression years, they made it through World War II years, they made it through the raising their kids and making land payments and paying their bills years, and then the day came when they sent in their final land payment, and all of their debts were paid, they dished up a huge bowl of ice cream, they sat down in their easy chairs, they looked at one another, they smiled, and declared, “We did it.”

The kingdom of God is like a man and his wife not too far away who raised up four beautiful daughters, they worked hard, they traveled the road of cancer including surgeries and long hospitalizations and treatments and more long hospitalizations, the months dragged into years, and as he approached his last days here on earth, he had one item on his bucket list, he wanted ever so much to hold his first grandchild in his arms, God answered their prayers, the day came when he in fact held his precious granddaughter in his arms, this family gave thanks and praise to God, not too long after, he breathed his last, his pastors and loved ones commended him into the hands of God, it was finished.

Tonight I invite you to come one more time to the cross of your Savior. Come with every one of your wishes, your dreams, and the items on your own bucket list. Come with your failures, your faults, and your frailties. Come with your anxieties, your frustrations, and your pent up bitterness. Come with your feelings of wanting to give up, with every last bit of confusion, and with a thousand and one questions you might have for God. Questions like, “Why is there such a nasty war being waged in this day and age? Why so much crime and homelessness and poverty? Why such a lack of good medical care and clean water and decent sewage systems in so many parts of the world? In our own little worlds, why such a turning away from your word and your church, dear Lord? Jesus, are you really sitting at the right hand of the Father and ruling all of heaven and earth with authority on behalf of your church? Are you? You say on the cross, “It is finished!” Is it?

Two parts to our sermon tonight, under the theme, “It is finished.” Two questions, in fact, *1) What is finished? 2) So what if it is finished?*

## **What is finished?**

Before we get to that question, we simply acknowledge what is not finished. Wars and rumors of wars are not finished. Pandemics and famines and droughts are not finished. Marriage problems and family heartache and societal decline are not finished. The ravages of sin and the nastiness of Satan and the disappointments of the real world are not finished. The battle between the Light of the world and the forces of darkness seem far from over.

Back to the sixth of seven words of our Savior from the cross - the word *tetelestai*, one Greek word translated into our three English words, “It is finished.” The simple answer, of course, to tonight’s question is that the salvation of mankind has been accomplished. The cup of a righteous God’s wrath has been consumed. Payment for the sins of all generations has been submitted and accepted. Once and for all the Old Testament sacrificial system has ended.

A review of Old Testament history reveals that when Adam and Eve sinned, God promised that their Descendant would crush the devil’s head. At the cross, Jesus did exactly that. God promised Abraham and Isaac and Jacob that one of their descendants would in fact be a blessing to all the families of the world. By suffering under Pontius Pilate and being crucified until he was dead and buried, Jesus did exactly that.

The devil did his best to stop Jesus, but Jesus would not quit. The devil and the forces of darkness threw everything including the kitchen sink at Jesus, but they couldn’t stop Him. Herod made sure all the babies of Bethlehem would be slaughtered, but in dramatic fashion, the holy family escaped. The devil tempted Jesus in every way possible, but in every case, using the written Word of God, the Son of God resisted.

The Jews tried to stop Him when they lifted up stones against Him. Religious leaders meant to stop Him when they insisted on crucifixion. False witnesses lied through their teeth trying to trip him up, soldiers spit and slapped and beat the you know what out of him, but Jesus kept on going. Enemies mocked and ridiculed and insulted, but Jesus kept on putting one foot in front of the other. One disciple betrayed, another denied three times before the rooster crowed twice, and others ran for their lives, but Jesus persisted. He ran the straight race none of us could

ever hope to run, he fought the perfect fight none of us could get close to fighting. While we were yet in our sins, he went like a lamb to the slaughter, and when all was said and done, he cried out in a loud voice that his assignment was completed / his mission was accomplished. And in the very moment that he commended his spirit into the hands of the Father, the curtain in the temple ripped, the earth quaked, the bodies of many saints were resurrected, and the centurion put into words what we all want to declare again tonight, “Surely this was the Son of God.”

Tonight, Jesus would look you in the eyes one more time and say, (and I’d like to think with a bit of a smile on his lips), mission is accomplished. Your father in heaven isn’t angry with you, he took all of that anger out on Jesus. You don’t have to carry around the guilt of your sins, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the guilt of your sins, he takes away the power of your sins, he takes away the eternal consequences of your sins, praise be to God. It is finished.

Dear friends in Christ, in the waters of Holy Baptism and in the bread and the wine of the Holy Supper and in the preaching and teaching and remembering of God’s Word, all that Jesus Christ has accomplished in life and in death and in resurrection is delivered into your very soul, into your hearts, and into minds. Again and again the benefits of Word and Sacrament are given, to be received and not only to be received but to be enjoyed and not only to be enjoyed but to be treasured and not only to be treasured, but to be shared and passed along to anyone at all interested in having the peace and the joy that only the one true God can provide. Which brings us to our second question.

Question #2 tonight is “So what if it is finished.” (Dr. Eggold, our homiletics prof, always asked this question after we had examined, dissected, interpreted, explained, and analyzed any portion of Scripture - so what?) So what if our sins are forgiven? So what if our salvation is accomplished? So what if we know that when all the dust of earthly life settles, we have a mansion on reserve in heaven? Luther answers “that we might be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

Or to say it another way, it means that we would live as the forgiven and redeemed and precious and on our way to heaven people that we are. That we would know we have been saved, and we would be glad about it in a way that would attract others to join in on the victorious Christian living.

We would admit tonight that whenever we doubt the promises or the goodness of our God, whenever we try to be saved in part by our own good efforts, whenever

we pray and cry and struggle as though we are yet in our sins, we are in effect living as if it isn't finished. We know better than to try and meet Jesus half way. He is, in fact **the** way. We are by no means saved in part by Jesus and in part by our own efforts, God is to get all of the glory in all the circumstances of life for all of the calling and all of the gathering and all of the enlightening and all of the sanctifying us into his family.

Dear friends, there is so much that we don't know about the days in which we are living and what the future holds. What we do know is that God has been with us in the past, He is with us tonight, and He will be with us tomorrow. Not only is He with us, He is for us, He is above us, He is alongside of us, He is out in front of us, and He is following behind us, ready to help us pick up the pieces of our broken lives.

The kingdom of God is like a congregation of believers living their lives in the church militant on their way to the church triumphant. On the one hand, they are afraid, and on the other hand, they fear not, for the Lord is their shepherd, he keeps on leading them into green pastures and near the still waters. On the one hand there is so much to do, there are people to see and tasks to perform, but on the other hand, this evening, they lay their heads down on their pillows, they hear Jesus crying out with a loud cry, "it is finished," they hear him commending himself into his father's hands, and they see him bow his head and give up his spirit. They close their eyes, their minds are at peace, they are certain that God neither slumbers nor sleeps. Amen