

It is Finished!

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours, from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“It is finished!” I have to imagine something like this was going through the minds of Tony Bennett and the rest of the Virginia basketball team after they won the NCAA basketball tournament in March. From the moment they became the first #1 seed to lose to a #16 seed, they had an uphill battle to fight. All the practice and preparation, mental challenges and criticism from others, all of it was done. They had won a championship. They had proved their haters wrong. The goal was reached, the work was complete. It was finished!

This warm, fuzzy feeling story doesn't really feel like it fits with Good Friday, does it? After all, the suffering and pain that our Savior went through would be more comparable to the end of some awful things that we have seen throughout history. Slavery finally being abolished at the end of the Civil War. Prisoners saved from the work camps in Germany at the end of World War II. The relief the survivors of the Columbine shootings felt when the “all clear” was finally given.

And yet even these situations pale in comparison to what our Savior went through on that first Good Friday. After all, how can we humans even begin to understand what it felt like for the perfect Son of God to take the sins of the world on his shoulders? What it felt to be rejected by those that he loved as he hung there on the cross, taking the punishment that was meant for them? The excruciating, physical pain that he went through being beaten, flogged, and finally nailed to a cross? We hear the pain in his voice as he cries out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Yet even in all this suffering, our Savior never wavered. He offered himself as a willing sacrifice.

Right before he died and gave up his spirit, Jesus uttered three final words of truth, perhaps the most important words ever spoken. **“It is finished.”** It was a shout of triumph, gasped out between labored breaths, they resounded throughout earth and heaven. The battle had been won. Peace between God and man had been restored. They continue to echo in this sin-filled world, offering hope and eternal peace to those who hear and believe **“It is finished.”** But what had our Savior finished? **Revealing how deep God's love is for you, and your salvation from sin!**

I. The depth of the love of the Father is revealed

Above Jesus' head on the cross, Pilate had posted a sign so all who looked on would know who this was. “Jesus of Nazareth.” And Jesus certainly was. Many knew him as the son of Mary and Joseph. They knew where he was from, and even asked, **“Isn't this the carpenter's son?”** But something told them that this Jesus of Nazareth wasn't your typical human being.

That feeling was right. The son of Mary and Joseph was also the son of God. From an early age, it was apparent Jesus already knew this. At age 12, he sat in the temple with leaders of the church, learning about his Father in heaven and his will for his Son. At Jesus' baptism, the Father recognized publicly the holy and perfect life that Jesus had already been living when he proclaimed, **“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”**

Following Jesus' baptism, the will of his Father was even clearer. Led by the Spirit, Jesus left the waters where he was baptized to go into the desert to fight his greatest foe, Satan. After this, he began preaching and teaching words that were not his own, but the words of the one who had sent him. Jesus wasn't doing whatever he pleased. He was following the will of the Father.

But one of the greatest reasons Jesus was on earth was to make his Father known. By nature, we don't have a clear picture of who God is. What we do have is a vague idea he exists, and this is displayed through all the various religions of the world. Born in sin, as we all are, we also have a natural fear, and even terror, of God. We only see a vague shadow of an all-powerful, righteous God. As John records in the first chapter of his

gospel, “**No one has ever seen God...**”

“**But the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.**” (John 1:18) In Jesus, God “stepped out of the shadows” to reveal who he truly is. He is a God of love, comfort and grace. He is a God “**who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.**” (1 Tim. 2:4) He is a warrior who came to destroy and defeat the devil’s work. He wants us to join him in eternal love and fellowship in heaven, as things were before the fall into sin.

We see this love and grace most clearly on display at the cross. Through Scripture, we also stand at the foot of the cross, seeing the love of our Savior, pouring out through the blood that he shed; blood that cleanses us from sin and gives us his righteousness. “**It is finished,**” our Savior cried out. The Father’s work was complete, so that all might know just how much God loves us, that he would go through this to save us.

II. Our eternal salvation is complete!

And on the cross, we see what the power of God is able to do – something that we cannot do! Our human minds struggle to understand this. In fact, our sinful mind does not want us to. Scripture tells us that we are born “**dead in...transgressions and sin.**” (Eph. 2:1) But the greatest displays of sin aren’t hidden, as God is. They’re not confined to the darkest alley, or deepest jail cell. Rebellion against God’s will is all over the place. It’s at work and at home, among the rich and poor. This great sin is to say to God and his plan for salvation, “No thanks. I’ll pay my own way. I’m a good person. I can do it!” The sinful human mind thinks that we’re good enough, that we can do enough to become worthy of God’s grace and praise. After all, that’s the very temptation that Satan gave to Adam and Eve all the way back in the Garden of Eden!

But St. Paul says this about our sinful minds. “**The mind governed by the flesh is death.**” (Rom. 8:6) Our sinful nature just doesn’t understand sin – how serious it is, and the punishment that comes because of it. Sadly, there is no quicker path to eternal death than taking things into our own hands and throwing out God’s plan for salvation.

Thank God that, even in the midst of our stubborn rebellion, he still loved us so much that he was willing to die for us! It truly was the best way, no, the only way, that he could have saved us! Only God could have achieved the goal of our salvation. “**It is finished.**” So much is summarized in just one little phrase. Jesus’ suffering and pain for the sins of the world was no more. It was over. The full payment for sin was complete. God no longer demanded punishment for sin. It was finished! Salvation was fulfilled – fully and completely. Satan’s accusations aimed to drive us to despair? They do not reach that goal. Death’s power? We all die on earth, but death cannot reach its goal of holding us forever.

But Jesus did reach his goal. Through his death, we are at peace with God. Jesus has washed us clean of our sin with his blood, shed on the cross. Through our baptism we are clothed with Christ’s perfection. God says to each of us, “These are my sons and daughters. With them I am well pleased!”

Because of this peace, and these three words of truth, we can also face the end of our days with the same quiet confidence that our Savior displayed on the cross. At the end of our earthly journey, we bow our head, and entrust ourselves into the loving hands of our Father. Doubt and fear are finished. They have no power, for we know that our Father will take us to be with him in heaven. You know what isn’t finished? Life. Life isn’t finished. It’s just beginning! We’ll celebrate the proof of this this coming Sunday as we celebrate Easter.

Yes, there is sadness today, as we see the awful suffering our Savior went through. But it is not a day of defeat, for we know that our Savior reached his goal. As we walk away from the foot of the cross, we hear the tomb as its sealed shut. We walk away in anticipation, knowing that all has been completed, and what will happen early on Easter morning. Jesus has revealed just how deep his love is for us. We see him clearly on the cross, through the Word, as a God who truly loves us and wants us close to him. His plan for salvation was finished as Jesus let out his final breath on the cross. May the God of all mercy and grace be with us, as we eagerly await the resurrection of his Son. Amen.