

## **It Is Finished**

John 19:16b-42

**Call:** Ps 148:1-6; 13 (NIV)

**Scripture:** John 19:16b-42 (ESV)

### **The Crucifixion**

<sup>16b</sup> So they took Jesus, <sup>17</sup> and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. <sup>18</sup> There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. <sup>19</sup> Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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.'" <sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

<sup>23</sup> 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, <sup>24</sup> 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, <sup>25</sup> but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

### **The Death of Jesus**

<sup>28</sup> After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

### **Jesus' Side Is Pierced**

<sup>31</sup> Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. <sup>32</sup> So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. <sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. <sup>35</sup> He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup> For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones

*will be broken.”<sup>37</sup> And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”*

### ***Jesus Is Buried***

*<sup>38</sup> After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. <sup>39</sup> Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. <sup>40</sup> So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup> Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup> So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.*

## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Introduction**

Today we come to the crucifixion text in John. It’s a somber text of course, but as I said last week, any day we spend focusing on Good Friday is time well-spent, because here we see the immensity of God’s love for us.

This morning before we read the text, I want to prepare us for it. I want us to imagine that we were there at Calvary that first Good Friday.

First of all, put yourself in the shoes of someone standing at the crucifixion who had never heard of Jesus. What do you see?

- You likely see a criminal. You probably still notice the suffering. You may see the title above his head and wonder what it means. You probably notice the women at the foot of Jesus’ cross which would be unusual.

Now, put yourself in the shoes of someone standing there who had heard bits and pieces of Jesus’ words, but didn’t understand much of it. What do you see?

- You see a failure.. Here is a another misguided messiah just like all the others. You may feel some disappointment because you know some had placed their hopes in him.

Now, put yourself in the shoes of someone who loved him. What do you see?

- Immense pain, while also experiencing your own pain. You see him very vulnerable. You may feel confused, even betrayed, definitely disbelief. You probably feel the desire to do something too.

Now, I’m going to invite Jeremy Jones up to recite our text, John 16b-42. This is what John wants us to see at Calvary.

### **B. Jeremy recite text**

### C. Sermon Introduction

Thank-you Jeremy! So, what did you hear that John wants you to see? I think at the heart of what John sees, and wants us to see, is Jesus' cry, *"It is finished,"* verse 30. In Greek, it's one word in the perfect tense, meaning it's a completed action that continues on in completion. In other words, it is finished and stays finished. It is done and nothing more needs to be done.

So, what is finished?

This is not just an interesting theological question either. It's a very practical question, because we really need to have happened what happened at Calvary. And either we believe that it has happened – that it is finished – or we will spend the rest of our lives trying to make it happen ourselves (Johnson, 9). So, what is finished?

## II. The Completed Work

### A. Introduction

Let's set the scene. At 3:00 on that first Good Friday, in the shadow of the Sabbath, Jesus says, *"It is finished."*

### B. Jesus' Work

In three hours, the Sabbath would be welcomed in every Jewish house by reading day seven of the song of creation, Genesis 2:1-3: *"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work..."*

Now, fast forward to the Gospel of John:

- In chapter 1, John told us that the work of creation was done by Jesus, *"the Word, who was with God and who was God"* (John 1:1).
- In chapter 5, Jesus said, *"My Father is working until now, and I myself am working."* (John 5:17).
- Then, in Jesus' great prayer of chapter 17, only a few hours before, he says, *"I glorified you [Father] on earth, having finished the work you gave me to do"* (John 17:4).

So, in this moment, is Jesus, even in his agony, looking back over the work of his ministry and thinking, *"It is finished"*?

One scholar says it this way, "What God had begun by the Word, God finished by the Word. What God had begun by the Word in the day of creation, God finished by the Word in the day of redemption" (Stauffer). And, then Jesus *"rested from all his work"* in the grave.

So, Jesus has finished the work his Father has given him to do. So, what is this work he has finished?

### III. Preparation

#### A. Introduction

Now I think John and Jesus have been preparing us throughout this Gospel for this moment. So, let's walk through some of these key texts that prepare us for the crucifixion, first from John's words:

- **John:**
  - **The Caiaphas Prophecy (11:50):** In chapter 11, at the meeting of the Sanhedrin to decide the fate of Jesus, Caiaphas stands up and says, *"It is better for you that one man die for the people, than that the whole nation perish"* (11:50). John then tells us that Caiaphas, in saying those words, had prophesied that *"Jesus would die for the nation"* (11:51). Prophecy means to speak forth the Word of God. Caiaphas, unaware of what he's saying, prophesies that Jesus' death will affect many people.
  - **"Hour" (4:4, 7:6, 7:8, 8:30):** Another way that John has been preparing us is through his repeated use of the term "hour." The term "hour" for John points to the great hour of Jesus' glorification, meaning his crucifixion. Again and again, John tells us that Jesus' hour had not yet come, not yet come, not yet come. Then, on Palm Sunday, *"the hour has come"* (12:23).
  - **"Jesus knew" (13:1, 3):** In the upper room, the night before going to the cross, John tells us twice that Jesus knew what was coming. He knew *"that his hour had come to depart out of the world,"* and he knew *"that he had come from God and was going back to God"* (13:1, 3). So, the reader knows that he is leaving, but as the night continues, an ominous feeling grows as John tells us that Satan enters into Judas as he leaves the upper room. And, so, we know Jesus is departing, but now we get the sense that something very bad is going to happen to make him depart.
- **Jesus:** And, Jesus also has been preparing us:
  - **The Temple Prophecy (Jn 2) (2:19):** In chapter 2, when he cleanses the temple, he says, *"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up..."* John tells us that no one understood it until after the resurrection, but clearly Jesus is speaking of a destructive act to come.
  - **"Lifted up" (3:14, 8:28):** In chapter 3, when Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, he says, *"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up"* (3:14). And, in chapter 8, Jesus says, *"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM"* (8:28). The "lifted up" language emerges from the Old Testament and implies that Jesus will somehow be lifted up publicly for all to see.
  - **The Good Shepherd (10:11, 17-18):** In chapter 10, at the feast of dedication, Jesus says he is the good shepherd who lays his life down for the sheep. He says, *"I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord"* (10:11, 17-18). I can imagine the disciples not

understanding at all what he's saying, but he is preparing them for what is coming. Death is coming in some kind of act.

- **God's Love (3:16):** And, of course, we've been prepared for what is coming through the most famous verse in John, John 3:16. Say it with me: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"* (3:16). God gave his Son. What was involved in this giving, the disciples must have asked. Whatever was involved in it, it was driven by love. As Dante said, "Good Friday is the key to understanding the love that moves the sun and all the other stars" (Neuhaus, XI).

So, John and Jesus have been preparing us all the way along for something to happen to Jesus, and giving us clues as to what the meaning is. So, what is finished?

## IV. Innocence and Identity

### A. Introduction

Now that we've set the stage, I think we can gather what John wants us to see under two words: innocence and identity. John wants us to see that Jesus is not guilty and wants us to see who he really is. Understanding these two things and their implications, then, helps us answer the question of what is finished.

### B. Innocence

Before we even got into our text today, John was very careful to point out Jesus' innocence. Three times in our text last week, Pilate says that he finds no guilt in Jesus. I find no guilt, I find no guilt, I find no guilt. This man is innocent, and he does not deserve what is happening to him. The implication is that he is doing what he's doing on behalf of someone else. He is suffering and dying on behalf of other people, as Caiaphas had prophesied.

### C. Identity

Now we move into our text today where John is very careful to give us several details which point to Jesus' identity:

- **The True Son (19:17):** First of all, John highlights for us that Jesus *"went out, bearing his own cross"* (19:17). The verb "went out" is the same word used back in chapter 18 for "going forth to fulfill a mission." John is once again making the point that Jesus is not a helpless victim. He is on a mission to fulfill the Father's will.

But, this text also reminds us of Genesis 22 when Isaac, the obedient son, goes up the mountain with Abraham, carrying the wood for the sacrifice. It's interesting that as that story was passed down through the generations, it became associated with the Passover sacrifice. In that story, if you remember, Isaac, the Son, asked Abraham, the father, *"Father, behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb?"* (22:7). To which, Abraham, the father, responds, *"God will provide himself -- the lamb -- my son."* In that scene, God stops the action before the sacrifice. In this scene, God doesn't stop the action.

The implication is that, Jesus, in sacrificial obedience, reveals himself to be the true Son of the Father.

- **The True King (19:19):** Secondly, Pilate writes *“Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews”* above his head on the cross (19:19). The “kingship of Jesus” has been a key theme throughout John’s account. Pilate writes the title in the three main languages of the Mediterranean world, so it could be read by all. The implication is that the universal kingship of Jesus is being announced to the entire known world. The invitation for salvation for all the world is right here.

Another implication of this title is that at this moment, the true king is getting *“lifted up”* onto his throne. Jesus had said that when he is *“lifted up, he would draw all people to himself”* (12:32). Jesus is now “lifted up” onto his throne. This is why the early church fathers used the phrase, “He reigns from the tree.” Don Carson says this, “Jesus is the kingliest king of all because he turns an obscene instrument of torture into a throne of glory” (Carson, 351). “He reigns from the tree.”

- **The True High Priest (19:23):** Thirdly, we also saw the high priest theme previously as well. In this text, we get at least one more reference to it. John tells us that the four soldiers around the cross divided his garments and his tunic, which fulfills Psalm 22, a psalm about an innocent sufferer. John tells us that the tunic is *“seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom”* (19:23). Why does he take the time to tell us these seemingly insignificant details? Because John is giving us a hint to the identity of Jesus as the true high priest, for the priestly garments are seamless and woven. In fact, the adjective “woven” is used only once in the Old Testament to describe the priestly garments (Klink, 796). The implication is that the world must now go to Jesus for intercession, reconciliation, cleansing and forgiveness of sin. Jesus is the true eternal high priest.

If you know Dorothy Sayers. She wrote a play cycle on the life of Christ called *The Man Born to be King*. The BBC actually made radio broadcasts out of them during WWII. You can get them now on Amazon. They’re so good! In her retelling of the Passion, she includes the scene from Matthew where Judas, remorseful about his betrayal, returns the money to Caiaphas. And Sayers, taking some creative liberty, has an hysterical Judas saying, “I wanted to believe him guilty, because I could not endure his innocence.... He was the Christ of God and I hated him and now I hate myself.” To which Caiaphas says, “What is all this to us? Your conscious is your own affair.” Judas replies, and listen to what he says, “What is it to you? You’re the High Priest! Day by day, week by week, month by month, you make the sacrifice for sin – the burnt-offering and the peace-offering and the trespass offering. On the Day of Atonement, you enter the Holy Place and pour out the blood before the Mercy-Seat for the redemption of Israel. What can your priesthood now do for me... Caiaphas, High Priest of Israel?” (Sayers, 261).

It's a powerful scene because Sayers has Judas recognize that the Jewish priests can't do anything for him anymore. They can't make things right for him. They can't cleanse him of his sin anymore. But Jesus can! Jesus can forgive and cleanse and make right because he is the true high priest.

- **The True Lamb (19:29, 33):** Fourthly, at the beginning of the Gospel, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and said, *"The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (1:29). We saw allusions of this in last week's text. In this text, we get two more hints of the Passover lamb. To remind us again of the story of the Passover, Israel was in slavery in Egypt, and God tells Moses that the final act of judgment against their oppressors will be the killing of the firstborn in every household. So God instructs Moses to tell the Israelites to kill a lamb and spread the blood on the doorposts of their houses. And God says, *"When I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt"* (Ex 12:7-13). The blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts delivered the Israelites from slavery and death.

1. In verse 29 of our text today, the soldiers raise to Jesus' mouth a sponge of sour wine on a hyssop branch. Once again, we ask why John gives us this detail? Well, hyssop was the plant used at that first Passover to spread the lamb's blood on the doorposts.
2. But, also, after Jesus dies, the soldiers break the legs of the other two criminals, but when they come to Jesus, since he has died, they do not break his legs. This fact fulfills Scripture. It fulfills Exodus 12:46, a text that provides instructions for preparing the Passover Lamb. None of the Passover lamb's bones can be broken. None of Jesus' bones are broken.

The implication is that Jesus is the true Passover *"lamb who takes away the sin of the world."*

- **The Spirit-Giver (19:34):** So, the soldiers do not break his legs, instead they pierce his side, and at once blood and water flow. Why does blood *and* water flow? I'll leave it to you doctors to explain the biology of it. But John wants us to see something else with these words.

First of all, John wants us to see the cleansing power of Jesus' blood.

*What can wash away my sin?*

*Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

The blood flows. We are cleansed by his blood (1 Jn 1:7). We have redemption and forgiveness through his blood (Eph 1:7). Peace and reconciliation come through his blood (Col 1:20).

*Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

But, secondly, water flows. Why does John say water flows from his side? Well, back in chapter 7, Jesus said these words,

*37 "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*



John then adds a theological comment about these words of Jesus,  
*“Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”* (John 7:37-39).

In John’s Gospel, water refers to the Holy Spirit, the very life of the living God. Jesus the lamb of God is *“pierced”* so that the *“Spirit of grace”* can now be given, and, John says, it’s all according to Scripture.

#### **D. Transition**

So, in summary, John wants us to see many things to help us understand what is finished. He wants us to see that Jesus is innocent, and he wants us to see who Jesus really is. So, now, in light of all those details, what is it that is finished? I think at least four things, with one ultimate implication. So, what is finished?

### **V. What is Finished?**

#### **A. God Has Been Glorified**

First of all, God has finally been glorified. It is finished! God has been glorified. Glory, the revelation of the true character and nature of God, has happened! Bits and pieces of that glory was revealed throughout the Gospel, but the ultimate revelation of the nature and character of God is finally revealed here at the cross. God’s essential nature and character is manifest through Jesus hanging on the cross for all the world to see. In *“the man”* hanging on the tree, we see God’s glorious self-sacrificing, self-emptying, self-giving love! *“For God so loved the world...”* The living God has finally been glorified! It is finished! And, this love, this self-sacrificing, self-emptying, self-giving love now drives the universe!

#### **B. God’s Salvation Plan Has Been Fulfilled**

Secondly, the great story of God’s salvation of the world has reached its critical turning point. It is finished. Salvation has come! This is why in this text John says four times, *“that the Scripture may be fulfilled.”* The whole story beginning *“in the beginning”* has reached its critical turning point. Back in Genesis, after the fall, God said that someone was coming to crush the head of the serpent. Somebody’s coming. Somebody’s coming. Somebody’s coming. Then, Abraham is called, and the promise to him is that his offspring will be a blessing to the entire world. That blessing is fulfilled through Jesus, the Word made flesh. John wants us to see that another plan was happening at Calvary. The religious leaders had their plan. The political leader had his plan. Sin, evil and death had their plan. But, so did God. God had his plan. And, God’s plan was the plan being fulfilled through and over all the other plans. *“That the Scripture may be fulfilled.”*

#### **C. Love’s Redeeming Work is Done**

Thirdly, love’s redeeming work is done. The sin of the world has been taken away. That which keeps the world from experiencing the blessing God wants to bring the world has been taken away. That which separates a holy God from unholy people is gone! It is finished! Here is the true lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus, the lamb, drinks the cup of



judgment that we all deserve to drink because of our sin. But, the lamb of God drinks it all the way to the bottom, so that we never have to drink it. Here, at the cross, the final and sufficient Passover lamb has been offered. There is no need for any other lambs. It is finished once and for all! Our separating sin has been taken away!

#### **D. The Pouring Out of the Holy Spirit**

Fourthly, now that it is finished, that our sin has been taken away, the Spirit can be poured out on the whole human race. And, *“there came out blood and water.”* As Jesus dies, his wounds overcome all the obstacles to the flow of the Spirit into human lives. The shedding of his blood makes possible the coming of the Holy Spirit to live in and with unholy people. The enthroned king can now pour out his life-giving Spirit on the world. It is finished! The Spirit can now come! As Gary Burge says, “In John’s thought, Jesus is like a precious vial of perfume, filled with the fragrant Spirit of God... [so that] when it is [crushed] the fragrance of its contents fills the [whole] world’ (Burge, 787).

#### **E. The New World Can Begin!**

And, now, because it is finished, because the perfect sacrifice has been offered, the ultimate implication is this – the new world that he died to bring can now come into being. It is finished, but it has not ended. Chapter 20 is coming! The whole new world can now come where the king is enthroned, and the Holy Spirit is being poured out on all flesh! And we are free in the Spirit to enter this new world. We can now move out of our bondage to sin, evil and death into this whole new Spirit-filled world, where sin, evil and death no longer have the last word! Jesus’ enthronement is their dethronement. Life now has the last word because it is finished.

#### **F. Conclusion**

Do you now see all the good news John wants you to see at Calvary? Everything that needs to be done has been done. Everything that needs to be done for us to be in relationship with the living God has been done. Nothing else needs to be done. It is finished!

### **VI. The Burial (38-42)**

And, lastly, one last thing to prepare us for next week, because it is finished, because his work is done, verses 38-42, Jesus, the great I AM, now rests in the grave. John tells us it is actually in a garden, verse 41. Once again, the plight of humanity comes down to a garden. Will this garden remain a graveyard as the first garden or will this one be transformed? Chapter 20 is coming. Amen.

## **Benediction**

Now receive this benediction from the hand of Paul in Romans:

As you go, may you go in the knowledge that *“neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* because it is finished.

## **Resources**

Barrett, CK, *The Gospel According to St. John*

Burge, Gary, *John (NIV Application Commentary)*

Carson, Don, *The Gospel According to John (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC))*

Johnson, Darrell, *John 17 (Regent College Course, #3810)*

Johnson, Darrell, *It Is Finished*

Morgan, G. Campbell, *Gospel According to John*

Neuhaus, Richard John, *Death on a Friday Afternoon*