

The Goodness of Good Friday

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[0 : 00] Join me in turning to the Gospel of John, chapter 19, verses 17 through 30.

If you're there, would you stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together?

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. 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.

So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, do not write the King of the Jews. Rather, this man said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, what I have written, I have written.

[1 : 22] 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.

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 scriptures, which said, they divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, woman, behold your son.

Then he said to the disciple, behold your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said to fulfill the scripture, I thirst.

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. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, it is finished.

[2 : 38] And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? Today is Good Friday.

I've often been asked why we call this Friday good. On this day, Jesus was rested early in the morning in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he had sweat, blood, and anguish, fully aware of the suffering that he would soon endure on the cross.

He was taken away, secretly tried, falsely accused, mocked, spat on, and slapped. He was then led before Pilate, then to Herod, who mocked him further before returning him back to Pilate.

Pilate, Jesus faced relentless humiliation. Pilate recognized Jesus' innocence, but fearing the crowd's reaction, sought to appease them by having Jesus scourged.

He then presented Jesus bloodied and beaten alongside Barabbas, a convicted criminal, offering the people a choice to set one of them free. Yet, neither Pilate's attempts nor the sight of Jesus' suffering satisfied their desire for his death.

[4 : 03] Jesus was then forced to carry his cross, upon which he would die to the place where he would be crucified. His hands and his feet were nailed to the wood, along with a sign Pilate ordered to be fixed above him, ridiculing both Jesus and the Jews who demanded his execution.

Suspended between heaven and earth, Jesus was rejected by those he came to save, and he was forsaken by his Father as he bore the weight of our iniquities.

Jesus, he suffered in our place, enduring the penalty for our sin as onlookers continued to mock him and challenge him to save himself if he truly was who he claimed to be.

Knowing all those bad things, it's no wonder that some people struggle to understand why Christians would call this day good. What ultimately makes this day good is what happened three days later, when the tomb that housed Jesus' body was found empty because Jesus had risen.

He came back to life. He resurrected from the dead. Without the resurrection, this day would not be good. But it is good because Jesus completed his mission on the cross.

[5 : 36] He achieved the purpose of his first coming. This Friday is good because of what Jesus declared on the cross before he bowed his head and died.

He said, it is finished. Perhaps these same words or similar ones were echoed by Pilate upon hearing that Jesus was dead.

He would have said them in relief. Good. Good. I'm glad it's finished. A crisis, he believed, had been averted. The Pharisees and the chief priests of Israel might have thought, good, good riddance. We're done with him. Even Satan may have whispered, good, I've triumphed. Good. Good. The phrase, it is finished, can hold different meanings to different people, shaped by their unique perspectives and circumstances.

While we know the circumstances in which Jesus spoke these words, it is important to understand their true significance so that we can truly grasp tonight why Friday, the day of our Lord's death, is indeed good.

[6 : 57] Good. Good. Good. I've often thought that a great title for a book about Jesus' crucifixion would simply be called It. It. I know there's another book with that title, but this one would easily be a whole lot better.

The it in it is finished is loaded with profound theological truth. In the Greek, it is finished is one word, to telestai.

The root of that verb is teleio, which means to bring to an end, to complete, to accomplish. It's a word that signifies the successful end to a particular course of action.

It's a word a person would use when they make their final payment on their mortgage. It's a word a person would use after the successful completion of a project.

It's a word a runner would use after they crossed the finish line or that a mountain climber would use when they reached the summit. It means I accomplished what I set out to do.

[8 : 06] Another significant aspect of this Greek word is the tense in which it's written. To telestai is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense speaks of an action completed in the past with results that continue into the present.

When Jesus cried out, it is finished, he meant it is finished in the past, it is still finished in the present, and it will remain finished forever.

However, Jesus came to die as a sacrifice to atone for our sins, to redeem us from the wrath of God towards our sin, and to give us eternal life, setting us free from sin.

There is nothing left to be done by him, by you, or by anyone else. And that's why this Friday is good. Just over a year ago, I emailed and submitted what I hoped would be the final copy of my dissertation to Midwestern.

I had already successfully defended it. I had made a few minor revisions. I wrote the abstract and all the other pages in the front that no one even looks at.

[9 : 22] I believed it was finished. I got to believe I was finished for a couple of days. Then I got an email from the last guy, the final person at Midwestern who reviews all of the formatting of the dissertations, telling me that my title page was spaced incorrectly.

I made the adjustments, and I sent it back. And he sent a reply to me saying, It isn't finished. You need to do this.

You need to do that. So I did what I thought he said. Everything seemed to line up perfectly with the style guide that Midwestern had given us. I sent it back to him again. He said, To me, it's still incorrect.

He tells me also that if things aren't done right, if this title page isn't lined up the way it's supposed to be by a certain time, which was a matter of weeks, that I would not graduate that semester.

Now I'm getting angry and frustrated. I paid an editor recommended by Midwestern to do all of this stuff for me, so I emailed her.

[10 : 43] She looked at it, and she said it looked right to her. She sent it back to me. Then I emailed the guy at Midwestern once more, expressing my frustrations in a Christ-like way. Finally, he says, Everything's in order.

But even though I went to the graduation rehearsal, saw my name on the list of those who were going to graduate, even though I had received my cap and my gown, it wasn't until I had that diploma in my hand that I felt like it is truly finished.

Brother, sister, Jesus' work to redeem you is finished. He doesn't want you to wait until you get to heaven to fully believe that his work is done.

He wants you to believe it now. And he wants you to live your life in the joy of knowing that his work to save you is done.

There's nothing else for you to do. There's nothing else for you to add. The title page he stamped on your life, which he saved, reads, It is finished.

[12 : 00] When Jesus died, he left no unfinished business. Tetelestai, that one word contains the whole of the gospel and the entirety of the scriptures that Jesus came to fulfill.

The entirety of salvation. The it in it is finished means Jesus' work of redemption was totally completed.

It means redemptive prophecy has been fulfilled. It means that every requirement of God's law has been satisfied. It means that Satan has been defeated.

It means that God's holy, just, and righteous wrath has been propitiated. It means that the debt of our sin has been paid in full. It means peace with God and eternal life for those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

It is finished means that the great purpose of God the Father to send Jesus, His only Son, to redeem us is accomplished. It means that the curse of sin has been overcome by the one who became a curse for us on the cross.

[13 : 12] It means that the promised seed of the woman has crushed the serpent's head. The deliverer has come and he has delivered. The rescuer has come and he has rescued.

The Savior has come and he has saved. Archaeologists have found ancient fragments of receipts written on papyrus with the word tetelestai written on them noting that the debt has been paid in full. On the cross, Jesus paid the debt for our sin in full. Past sin, present sin, future sin was paid in full by our Lord on the cross.

It's as if Jesus took our receipt, knowing our debt, which we could never repay, and in His blood He wrote, it is finished.

Signed, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the great I Am, the Lion of Judah, who didn't whisper or who didn't whimper, it is finished, but who roared from the cross, it is finished.

[14 : 30] I love what Charles Spurgeon had to say about this. He said, Our Redeemer's glorious cry of, It is finished, was the death knell of all the adversaries of His people, the breaking of the arrows of the bow, the shield and the sword in the battle.

Behold the hero of Golgotha, using his cross as an anvil, and his woes as a hammer, dashing to shivers bundle after bundle of our sins, those poisoned arrows of the bow, trampling on every indictment and destroying every accusation.

What glorious blows the mighty breaker gives with a hammer far more ponderous than the fabled weapon of Thor. How the diabolical darts fly to fragments and the infernal bucklers are broken like potter's vessels.

Behold, he draws its form, its sheath of hellish workmanship, the dread sword of satanic power. He snaps it across his knee as a man breaks the dry wood of a twig and casts it into the fire.

Who now accuses? Who now condemns? Christ has died and has risen again. Jesus has emptied the quivers of hell, has quenched every fiery dart, and broken off the head of every arrow of wrath.

[15 : 46] The ground is strewn with the splinters and relics of the weapons of hell's warfare, which are only visible to us to remind us of our former danger and of our great deliverance.

Church, because Jesus said it is finished, you can say, I am rescued. Because Jesus said it is finished, you can say, I am redeemed.

Because Jesus said it is finished, you can say, I am forgiven. Because Jesus said it is finished, you can say, I am saved.

Because Jesus said it is finished, you can say, I am eternal life. Because Jesus said it is finished, you can say with certainty and with gladness and with joy that this is a good Friday because Jesus has finished it.

Let's pray. Lord, it is good to know that in you it is finished.

[17 : 00] You have saved us. You will keep us. In regard to our salvation, there is nothing left for us to do.

But Lord, you have given us a mission. You have commanded us to go. You have commanded us to share the gospel. You have commanded us to teach others what you have taught us. And so, Lord, may we be bold like you. May we be committed to our task as you were. That more would hear the gospel. That more would hear the good news of your salvation, of your finished work on the cross.

Lord, we pray that as many gather this Sunday for Easter, that your gospel would be boldly declared. That the impact of your gospel on us would be clearly seen.

And that you would save more, bringing them to the full knowledge of what you have finished for us. We thank you. We praise you. We worship you.

[18 : 04] We worship you for who you are and what only you could do for us. You are our champion. You are our king.

You are our Lord. You are our savior. You are the author and finisher of our salvation. You are the one in whom and only through whom is eternal life.

You are the Christ. The son of the living God. And we pray this in your name. Jesus. Amen. Thank you.