

Friday, 29 March 2024

'It is Finished'

Good Friday: John 19:28-30

Introduction

How something ends is often more important than how it begins.

In the movie Cool Runnings, we hear about the story of the Jamaican bobsled team in the 1988 Winter Olympics. The whole story is based on a group of sprinters who ultimately failed to achieve their dream of running in the Summer Olympics. The coach is also disgraced because of cheating in the past. Ultimately they rise up together, out of nothing and manage to qualify for the Winter Games, despite being laughed at by the bobsledding community. Their journey comes to a climactic close as their sledge breaks apart on their last run. In one of the last scenes, you see the team carrying the sledge down the chute and over the finish line.

They may not have won but they shocked the community and showed something amazing. Out of unexpected circumstances with tragedy along the way, the Jamaican bobsled team changed the history of their sport.

Well in our passage today, we are just focussing on three verses in John but within those three verses, we see the culmination of God's mission in this world. The purpose of Jesus coming into the world as God in humanity was to die on the cross.

As we come together on Good Friday we remember and reflect specifically on the death of Jesus.

Much like a Bobsled team coming from the Caribbean island of Jamaica, God's plan of salvation came in a way that people didn't expect.

A messiah coming as a baby, in humility, born of a virgin, son of a carpenter. No grand entrance. An ordinary life. All comes to a dramatic climax seen in his defining work through the cross.

Context

I want to thank all who have read and prayed today. Giving us a chance to reflect on the last few hours of Jesus' life.

It's so important to read God's word and remind ourselves of Jesus' trial, crucifixion and death. We should often remind ourselves of how our salvation was achieved.

Roy talked about Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem as a King riding on a donkey on Sunday. But as was highlighted Jesus wasn't basking as a king entering his kingdom, he was weeping as he knew all that was about to happen.

I have three brief points for us to reflect upon this morning. All are based on verses 28-30 of chapter 19 in John, so can I encourage you to have the verse open in front of you?

Our first point is that 'Jesus shows us he is God.' Secondly, we see how 'Jesus shows us he is human' and lastly we see how 'Jesus completes our Salvation.'

Jesus shows he is God

What does it mean to have control of your life?

Is it simply you have everything set up the way you want it? Does it mean have some control over your future, and a plan is in place? Does being in control relate to us being healthy in mind and body?

If you search for books on Amazon based on being in control you will come across countless resources relating to self-help, controlling our emotions, and controlling our diet. As humans we love control, firstly for our growth and safety and then to gain position, power and wealth.

But the reality is our control is limited. We may have plans for the future but we can't control them, we may have ideas of how our health will be but we don't know what is around the corner.

As we look at verse 28 we immediately see Jesus is in control, showing us he is God. He hasn't lost control and ended up on the cross dying. He shows that he is perfectly fulfilling the will of God and is in control even to that moment of death.

If we look back earlier in the book of John we read in chapter 10:17-18. 'The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the authority to lay it down and the authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.'

No one takes Jesus' life from him. Only as he, in line with the Father's will, lays it down will he die. He has complete and utter control of the situation.

Verse 28 says - 'Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

We will mention Jesus saying I am thirsty in just a moment but the first section of the verse shows that Jesus knows that he had a purpose for entering the world and he came to fulfil all that the bible is talking about.

Isn't that incredible? All 39 books of the Old Testament ultimately point to Jesus arriving on the scene, coming to fulfil his mission. The 4 Gospels show us the story of Jesus and the 23 books making up the rest of the New Testament all are written in light of Jesus' work on the Cross.

Jesus, was in complete control, knowing that everything he needed to do had been finished, knowing he had fulfilled all that was said about him. Now in his time, he can complete the final moment of his mission.

In verse 30 we see Jesus control right up until the point of death. And just momentarily I want to touch on crucifixion. Scripture doesn't give us some of the horrific details that you can find in history books. And there is a reason for that. The focus of Jesus' work was not physical but spiritual. That being said understanding some of the physical torment that Jesus went through gives us a glimpse of understanding into what he suffered.

I just want to point out one small aspect of the death that Jesus suffered and why it points out Jesus' control over the whole situation.

Crucifixion was designed so that the criminal, or in Jesus' case victim, would suffocate to death. As the person hung there, arms outstretched, hands and feet nailed to the cross they would have to physically lift themselves to gain their next breath.

Unlike other forms of torture and death, which are based on someone else taking the sufferer's life, crucifixion allows the person on the cross to choose when they give up their final breath.

And this is what we see in verse 30. No one else took his life from him. Only when everything was finished, God's will had been done, does Jesus declare 'It is Finished', bowing his head and giving up his spirit.

We see that Jesus is in complete control showing us that he is indeed God whilst also being fully man.

Jesus shows his humanity

I was lucky enough to visit the ancient ruins of Ephesus in modern-day Turkey. As we visited in the summertime, I remember stepping off the air-conditioned coach into 40+ degree heat. And it wasn't long after looking around we realised that we had bought very little drink with us. Well after walking around for maybe about half an hour in the boiling sun. We eventually were able to buy some cool water and it felt amazing to quench that thirst.

Fulfilling a thirst is one of the most natural things for all humans.

And verse 29 we see, our second point, the humanity of Jesus coming through once more. He has been beaten and is hung up on the cross in the sweltering heat of the sun.

Jesus' simple statement 'I am thirsty', is firstly a reality check for everyone that this Jesus is still human. He hasn't lost his humanity, meaning it's easier to bear the torture he is going through.

It shows us that he understands what it means to be human. When you think life is hard, and it is at different moments, Jesus genuinely understands our pain and struggles.

One other wonderful reference that is pointed out in verse 29 is mentioning the Hyssop plant being used to raise a sponge to Jesus' lips so he could drink.

This hyssop plant is talked about in the book of Exodus. God's plagues have been sent to Egypt because Pharaoh did not let God's people. The last plague is the worst where all the firstborn sons will die in each family. God's people are told to take a lamb, sacrifice it and sprinkle its blood, using a hyssop plant, on the doorframe of their houses in the place of the firstborn son. So that God's plagues may Passover the house and though the lamb the firstborn son may be saved.

Jesus, as he was dying fulfilled the same role as for all who believe in him. As the Passover lamb achieved for the people of God 1500 years before.

Jesus completes our Salvation

In these few verses, we see that Jesus is God through his control and that he is human in his thirst.

Lastly, we can see the culminating moment of his life, his purpose, and his mission.

Jesus has come to complete something that only he can do and that is achieve our salvation and redeem us before God.

All this is found in Jesus' words 'It is Finished'.

I remember playing an old-school computer game called Red Alert. It was a little army strategy game. You'd playing against other teams and the aim was to be the last team surviving. Well, when you come to the end of the game and you defeat everyone else. The game simply paused and would flash up Mission Accomplished.

When Jesus declares 'It is Finished' he is saying it's complete, and my mission is accomplished. The word for 'It is Finished' in Greek is Tetelestai. That word is an accounting word and it means Paid in Full.

Myself and Bekah have learnt, maybe you'll resonate if you are married here, that we work in different ways in certain tasks. And one of those things is housework.

Now let's take loading the dishwasher for example. I will see things building up throughout the day and I will get the dishwasher loaded in whatever way I can. I'll put the cups in the bottom rack. I'll place bowls over saucepans and cutlery just thrown in. It's loaded, it's done, it's finished. Whereas Bekah, might leave it longer before loading but it is done to perfection. The plates were perfectly aligned, cutlery sorted. Cups and mugs divide properly in the top rack.

Jesus, when he declares 'It is finished'. He isn't just saying I've got the job done but he is showing us to what degree the job has been done. His work is accomplished to the fullest capacity.

But what has it paid for in full?

Romans 3:23 and 6:23 it says. 'All have fallen short of the glory of God' and 'The wages for sin is Death'

So everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's perfection and the debt, the wages, that are owed is death.

But Jesus through his death on the Cross pays, not just in part, not just to get the job done but in complete and utter fullness to cover our sin in his death. He substitutes himself in our place.

Let me take us back to what Emily read for us right at the start of our service today and I briefly want to reflect on the character called Barabbas.

In the lead-up to Jesus' death, he is put on trial in front of Pilate. As was the custom at the time, to help with the relationship between the Roman Empire and the Jewish people, one prisoner was allowed to be released.

In John 18:39-40 it says 'But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?' They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

In this moment we see a physical demonstration of what is about to take place on the cross. Barabbas was the polar opposite of Jesus, he was a thief, a terrorist and most likely a murderer. He has been judged and deserved death. He had no way of freeing himself but Jesus, who is perfect, and innocent is traded in his place.

The truth about the passage hits home when we realise that you and I are Barabbas. The name Barabbas has two parts. Bar, meaning son of and Abba meaning the father. Barabbas means son of the father.

When we trust in Jesus, he takes our debt, our Sins are paid for in full, meaning we are sons and daughters of the Father.

What was achieved on Good Friday is staggering. We see the vastness of so many characteristics of God. We see his complete control, we see Jesus' obedience, we see the extent of God's holiness.

But as we come toward a close I want us to focus on God's love for us.

Romans 5:8 'But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'

The love seen at the cross is mind-blowing.

Let's take something expensive in our lives. Let's say a car. Who would you let drive your car? Well, your husband or wife, maybe you think it's a risk with their driving but you'd be willing to share. Your son or daughter, has just turned 17, well it's a bit more of a risk, just learning to drive or just past their test. You would probably tell them to be very careful and look after the car but you'd let them drive it. How about a stranger? They say they need the car, they show you their driving license and agree to return it. Maybe, some of us would but most of us wouldn't. What about someone who had stolen cars and had been known to take them for joy rides? But this time says they won't. No, surely not. What about someone who actively said they are going use your car to commit crimes, not let you know where the car is, break, crash it rip it apart? No way.

God's love for us is found to its fullest extent when we see that his love was there for us whilst we were still sinners. At our lowest point, not just when we got it a little wrong but when we've taken the car, our lives, crashed it, made a mess of it all. At that point is when God's love covers our sins through the substitution and sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Jesus covers our sins completely if we believe in him. When he declares 'It is Finished'.

Application

As we come to close before we pray and sing. Let me leave you with three things to take away this Good Friday.

1. God has complete control. Jesus chooses when to give up his life, once everything is fulfilled. So we can rely on him totally in our lives. It's not easy at different times but God shows us, in his promise, that he is in control and we can trust him.
2. We see Jesus as human as he thirsts on the cross. When life is hard, and it can be so hard in life. Jesus understands, he says come to me.
3. And lastly the declaration 'It is Finished', shows us that we can have total assurance in God's work in saving us. God's work is accomplished and

completed in full to the uttermost extent. No matter what you have done past, present and future, if you trust in him your sin is dealt with.

Let's take a brief moment of reflection before I pray using Paul's words in Ephesians...

“For this reason we kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches you may strengthen us with your power through your Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. And I pray that we may be rooted and established in love, that we may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.“