

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen!

There are few words more satisfying than “It is finished.” Whether it’s the final line of a long paper, the closing chapter of a project, or the last nail driven into a home—there’s something deeply human about the relief and joy that come with completion. But tonight, on Good Friday, we hear those words from the lips of Jesus. And they carry far more weight than any earthly task. “It is finished,” He says—not with defeat, but with triumph.

In John 19 Jesus, nailed to the cross, is near death. His body has been beaten. His hands and feet pierced. He is mocked by those He came to save. He suffers the full weight of divine justice, not for His own sin—for He had none—but for ours. And as He breathes His last, He declares: “It is finished.”

These words are not the sigh of a man giving up. They are the victorious cry of a Savior who has completed the work His Father gave Him to do. From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus spoke of the mission: to seek and to save the lost. And now, as He hangs upon the cross, the mission is complete. The sacrifice is made. The debt is paid. The curtain of the temple is torn. And the gates of heaven are opened.

Why does this matter? Because you and I need what Jesus finished.

The Bible is clear: “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Sin is not just a mistake or a personality quirk—it is rebellion against God. And all of us have done it. We’ve all said things we shouldn’t have. We’ve all harbored resentment or ignored someone in need. We’ve all walked past opportunities to love and serve, thinking, “Someone else will do it.”

A woman came to confession burdened with guilt. She had stopped speaking to her sister years earlier over a property dispute after their parents died. She said, “I know it’s wrong, but I can’t undo the past.” Her voice trembled when the words came out. But when the pastor spoke the words of the Gospel again: “Jesus died for that. He paid the debt.” And through tears, she said, “You mean even this?” Yes—especially this.

That’s what Good Friday proclaims: There is no sin too deep for the cross. When Jesus says, “It is finished,” He means the price is fully paid. He means your record is wiped clean—not by your effort, but by His blood.

St. Paul puts it plainly: “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). In other words, Jesus takes our sin and gives us His righteousness. This is not a trade we deserved. This is grace.

Sometimes people carry guilt for decades. A man once shared that he hadn't taken communion in years because of something he did in his youth. He thought staying away was more respectful than coming unworthy. But someone gently reminded him: the only requirement to come to the cross is need. And when he returned, he heard again, "The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you." Not for the deserving or the worthy, but for sinners. For him. For you.

We don't have to add anything to what Jesus has done. His work is perfect. His sacrifice is complete. That's what makes Christianity different from every man-made religion. Every other system says, "Do more. Climb higher. Keep moving upwards. Be better." In contrast, Jesus says, "It is finished."

And because it is finished, you are free—free from the weight of guilt, free from fear of death, free from wondering where you stand with God. You don't have to guess whether He loves you. Look to the cross. That's how much He loves you. God is love. Therefore, there is nothing we can do to make Him love us more than he already does. Jesus has already done everything in order for us to belong to and be loved by our Father.

So what does this mean for us, here and now?

First, it means we are called to rest in Christ's finished work. There's a temptation, even among lifelong Christians, to think that our status before God depends on how faithful we've been, how often we've prayed, or how "together" our lives look. But the cross cuts through all of that. Our hope is not in our performance—it's in Jesus'.

Second, it means we are invited to forgive others. If Christ has paid for your sins and your neighbor's sins, then how can we withhold forgiveness? This doesn't mean forgetting the past or pretending it didn't hurt. But it does mean refusing to let bitterness win. Forgiveness flows from the cross to us—and through us to others.

Third, it means we can face death with hope. Because Jesus finished the work of salvation, death is no longer the end. It is the doorway to eternal life. One Lutheran chaplain once shared how a Christian man nearing the end of his life held tightly to a small wooden cross. He had many regrets—things he wished he had done differently as a husband, a father, a friend. But in his final days, he didn't talk about his failures. He talked about Jesus. "He finished it for me," he said. That's how a Christian dies—not in fear, but in faith.

We have this tradition in our Lutheran congregations where the altar is stripped after the Maundy Thursday or Good Friday service. We do so on Maundy Thursday. The candles are snuffed out, the paraments are removed, the sanctuary stands bare. It's a stark picture of what Jesus endured—emptied, forsaken, dead. But the stripping of the altar is not the end of

the story. Sunday is coming. And so, as we leave tonight, we don't pretend that Good Friday didn't happen. We embrace it. We treasure it. Because the cross is where your sins were dealt with once and for all.

There was a volunteer who brought handmade prayer shawls to residents at a nursing home. Each one was stitched with a small cross pattern. One man who had recently lost his wife received one and clutched it tightly. He wasn't much for words, but eventually he whispered, "This... this helps me remember I'm not alone." That's what the cross is for us—not just a symbol, but a real and present comfort. Christ crucified is still near. Still forgiving. Still holding you fast.

So tonight, we remember the cost. We remember the pain. But above all, we remember the Savior who gave everything. And we hear again His final word from the cross—not a whisper of resignation, but a proclamation of perfection:

"It is finished."

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Word Count: ~1,200

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