

**John 19:30**

Each Wednesday in Lent we have pondered the words of our Lord from the cross. We have watched Him suffer. We have heard His cries of agony. And through it all we have come to realize that everything our Lord said and did was for us. He came to serve sinners—and that's just what He did. And now, all of His serving; all of His suffering; everything He came to do, is completed. Just before He dies, He cries out the words, "It is finished!"

Can there be any doubt as to what He means by the word, "It." The Scriptures have been fulfilled. Everything that the promised Messiah would do, Jesus has done. There was nothing more for Him to accomplish. Salvation for all sinners had been won. Every sin had been laid upon Him. Every punishment for sin—He had accepted. The wrath of God had had its way with Him. He had suffered every bit of hell's fury. There was no price yet to pay. There was nothing more to do. He had done it all. All of it; every bit of it had been completed by Christ Jesus. And so Jesus cries out, "It is finished!"

Some of the most beautiful words ever uttered, and yet, we struggle with them. Our sinful nature hears these words of Christ and simply refuses to believe them. For you and I are born believing that it is not finished. Our sinful flesh tells us, again and again, that we ourselves must finish it. Each day, people by the scores go to their graves hoping against hope that they have lived well enough before God to finish it—to cause Him to let them into heaven.

Even among the Baptized, many lay upon their deathbeds wondering if they really are heading to heaven. "Perhaps I have not done enough to finish the task. Perhaps my 'bad' outweighs my 'good.'" These thoughts do not just torment the dying—they may be tormenting you right now. For, we weak and sinful people are plagued by doubt. "Perhaps it isn't finished. Perhaps my salvation is still undecided. I need to try harder to be good. I need to live better."

Friend, such thoughts are not only unnecessary—they are wicked. They are from Satan himself. For if I say that it is not finished, I am calling Jesus a liar. I am back in the Garden with our first parents and the Tempter is having his way with me. He is causing me to doubt what God has said. And God has said that "it is finished!" You cannot work your way into heaven, for Christ has already opened the door. It has been ripped in two from top to bottom, and you and I had no part in opening it.

For Jesus Himself has become the door into heaven. By His perfect life; by His sufferings; by His death—alone—eternal life is given as a gift to those who belong to Him. You and I cannot finish what Christ has already finished. We can only receive what He has finished. And that is why He says to you, "Take and eat... Take and drink." Here in His body and blood He gives you what He has finished. Here is forgiveness. Here is eternal life. Here is the door into heaven—for Christ is here to give everything that He has accomplished for all sinners.

"Come," He says, "Eat and drink. My perfect life; My innocence; My holiness—I give to you." "Come," He says, "Eat and drink. My place in heaven is yours. Eternal life is yours—I give it to you." Weak and sinful though we are; plagued by doubts; falling so easily into temptation—yet Christ gives Himself to you. And it is, therefore, no longer you

alone who lives, but He now lives His life in and through you. Your life now is a forgiven life; a holy life; a life pleasing to God in Christ Jesus.

You know how true it is that if you feed a hungry dog, you have a friend. You keep feeding it, and he will love you until he dies. At His Table, Jesus feeds you with every gift He has to give. Everything He finished; everything He accomplished—He places into your mouth for you to receive. And that is why we love Him. That is why we gather here often around our Savior. So that He may keep feeding us with His body and blood. So that He who finished our salvation on the cross may guard us and keep us in the Faith, so that when our time here is over, we may exclaim with the Apostle Paul, “I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.”

Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith—who finished your salvation for you on the cross. And He is calling you to believe firmly, without doubt, the words He cries out for you, “It is finished!” Amen.