

“It Is Finished”

Transcript of a sermon by Christian St John
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How many here today watch LOST? Ok, how many of you cried when they announced that this season of LOST will be the final season?

There is a cold hard fact about life, and that is everything comes to an end. Youth will end, pregnancies will end, jobs will end, mortgages will end, this mortal life will end, and more importantly for some of you, LOST will end.

That things will end is both bad news and good news. It's bad news when thinking about a good book or TV show or when drinking a nice cold Ice Cap from Tim Horton's on a hot summer's day and knowing that they will at one point end.

But things ending are good news for those experiencing difficulties and hardships in life.

Either way the fact remains that everything will one day end.

It will be no more... finished.

This week I want to look at perhaps the greatest ending in history; an ending so profound that it changed the entire course of the world and all who travel upon it.

Around 2,000 years ago Jesus, God become flesh, walked on this planet. He travelled the land of Palastine teaching people about the Kingdom of God. He also healed people and cared for them showing us that there is a better way to live than just for ourselves. By all accounts Jesus was a good man, about as good as it gets.

But there were those who weren't impressed by Him. The religious folk of the day saw all that He was doing and the following He was gaining and decided in their hearts that this Jesus was a dangerous man. In fact the people were asking the question, could this Jesus be the long awaited Messiah; could He be the one promised by God to free His people?

They heard about what He was teaching and thought it to be blasphemous. And so these religious folk believed Jesus to be a charlatan, a fake prophet, a false messiah. They didn't allow themselves for one minute to consider that Jesus may be the One, and so without looking into it further the blinkers went up and they simply waved Him off as the son of a carpenter, a man who was trying to usurp authority and power away from them.

So these religious zealots began to plot His demise. *After all, they thought, don't all false messiahs deserve death?* And thus they began a covert course of action to rid the land and people of Israel of this fraud, this deceiver named Jesus.

Well, it wasn't long before they had Him exactly where they wanted Him, in their vice like grip. They probably thought that if this Jesus was the Messiah He would simply save himself, but He didn't. Even after being falsely charged as a criminal, He was beaten and flogged, insulted and spat upon, and forced to carry a wooden cross to the place of His execution.

He was then nailed to that wooden cross and then lifted high up for all to see; another false prophet meeting His end.

Today I want us to look at three words that Jesus spoke from the cross. In the Gospel accounts Jesus spoke only seven times.

In Order:

(a) *Before the darkness—*

(1) When the Roman soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross and lifted Him up for all to see Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34).

(2) When one of the two criminals that Jesus is crucified between believes, Jesus tells him, *“Today you will be with me in Paradise”* (Luke 23:43).

(3) When seeing the anguish of His mother Mary Jesus makes provision for her in one of His closest followers John. *“Woman, behold thy son! ... behold thy mother!”* (ch. 19:26).

(b) *During the darkness—*

(4) Last week we looked at when Jesus had been forsaken by most of those present at the cross, and when the darkness descended Jesus cried out, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).

(c) *After the darkness—*

(5) To fulfill a prophecy Jesus cried out, *“I thirst”* and the soldiers gave him some vinegar (ch. 19:28).

(7) And the last thing that Jesus said upon the cross...*“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit”* (Luke 23:46)

Today I want us to look at the three words of Jesus found in John 19:30, the three words spoken just before he gave up His spirit...

(6) *“It is finished!”* (ch. 19:30). The Greek word that John uses in His Gospel is the word **(PPT) Τετέλειται** and the meaning of this word is twofold: *“It is finished and it will always will be finished”*

My first point today is that in ancient times a servant would have used this word to tell their master...

“I have completed all you have asked of me.”

At the beginning of His ministry Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert where for 40 days and 40 nights He fasted. Many scholars have theorized that it was during that time that the Father’s plan was unfolded; the plan that Jesus was to live out for around three years.

During His ministry years Jesus did only that which the Father willed. In fact Jesus in what has become known as the Lord’s prayer says, “Your Kingdom come, your will be done.”

In fact Jesus knew from an early age that His was to be a life of surrender to His Father’s will. When Mary and Joseph took Jesus as a boy to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover if you’ll recall they left him behind. Upon their return to Jerusalem Jesus told them, *“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”*

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed to the Father, *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”*

When we look at Jesus we see one who is completely surrendered to the will of God. And I believe that wherever He went, whatever He did and said, He was guided by the Holy Spirit in accordance to the will of His Father in Heaven.

So Jesus hanging on a cross was His Father’s will. I don’t think we can ever truly comprehend what it cost the Father to save us; what it cost Jesus. The plan was being fulfilled, a plan that had been set in motion since the beginning of the world.

William Clubertson, former president of the Moody Bible Institute said this regarding our faith lives, *It is important to start right, but it is imperative to end well.*

If we look at all that Jesus did, all that He said, and all that He accomplished, I think it’s safe to say that Jesus finished well.

An important fact that we must try and comprehend is that Jesus didn’t say Τετέλεσται, It is finished, in defeat, He said it in triumph. Here He was on the cross suffering great agony and pain both physically and spiritually and yet, He knew that as He took His final gasping breaths all that the Father had asked of Him was now complete.

And as he spoke the word Τετέλεσται he was saying, *“Father I have completed all that you have asked of me.”*

Another way that the word Τετέλεσται is used is in reference to a paid debt. In ancient times merchants would often be heard using the word Τετέλεσται to proclaim...

“The debt has been paid in full!”

In his book *The Total Money Makeover*, Dave Ramsey wrote a section about financially enslaved Americans; he writes,

- 90% buy things they can't afford.
- 80% of graduating college seniors have credit card debt.
- 49% can't cover one month's living expenses if they lose their income.
- Most people carry a car loan, paying \$378 a month. That same sum invested 25 to 65 years would yield \$4 million at retirement.
- *60% don't pay off their credit cards every month.
- *80% mistakenly believe their standard of living will go up at retirement.
- *19% of those filing for bankruptcy in '02 were college students.

Debt, at one time or another most of us have felt the tightening of financial burdens, unless of course you're extremely rich, and if you are extremely rich then stay behind afterward because I want to become your very best friend.

But most of us have had a run in with debt. And it's not nice is it when we look at bank accounts and see the red numbers indicating that there is no way we can ever pay it back.

Spiritually speaking, every human that has ever lived has been born with a huge debt, a debt so big that no one could ever dream of paying it back.

None of us have kept God's law; in fact all of us are guilty of breaking some or all of God's commandments. The Bible tells us that there is not one who is by nature good... not one.

If we break the law here in Canada we will find ourselves owing a debt of some kind. Whether it's a speeding ticket that has a \$150 debt or murder which can carry a lifetime debt, every broken law results in a debt.

All of us have broken God's laws. We're all guilty of worshipping false idols, stealing, lying, cheating, hating, and so on. And none of us are immune to the sin disease that we carry around inside us that causes us to do what we don't want to do.

In this world we may be able to pay back our debts for the wrongful acts we do against one another. But who of us here today could ever hope to pay God back for the debt we have built up against Him?

There are those who try to pay God back through works, but the Bible clearly states that we are not saved by works.

There are those who believe that we can literally pay our way out of debt with God, even going as far as to believe that they can pay off the debts of their dead loved ones.

The truth is that none of us can ever hope to pay God back for the huge spiritual debt that we have built up.

A church in America put the following on their church sign... WOULD YOU JOIN OUR CHURCH IF WE PAID ALL YOUR DEBTS?

What do you think would happen if we put out the word that on April 2nd, 2010, all of the debts of every member of Crossroads Community Church right here in Sechelt would be paid off by an anonymous benefactor (maybe a Bill Gates, etc)?

You'd probably be really excited? You'd probably be filled with joy? Some of you might go out and run up a huge credit card bill from buying all the stuff you ever wanted. Personally, I think that there would be a very long line of people from here to Gibsons who would try to become members of this church, all in an effort to get their debt paid off.

But this idea is not too far out, because 2,000 years ago on an old rugged cross Jesus said "Τετέλεσται... *It is finished... I have completed all you have asked of me, the debt has been paid in full.*" Don't get me wrong I'm not going all Health/Wealth on you this morning, but our greatest debt has never been financial but spiritual, the debt brought about by our sin.

And instead of holding us to that debt God through Jesus has wiped the slate clean and freed us from any form of spiritual debt or bondage. From the cross Jesus says, "You are now debt free." Isn't that good news?

Trans: A few weeks ago I read an article about the cross and how it changes lives; it said that the cross offers an end to the things that bind us. As I thought about this I began to see that this is indeed true and came up with three endings brought about by the cross.

The cross means the end of emptiness - All of us have felt empty, like our lives mean nothing. I cannot think of many things worse than a life lived without meaning and purpose.

I think of all the people who busy themselves with making money and buying lots of stuff, or those who drink and take drugs to try and fill the void that only a loving God can fill. We humans are good at being busy, but the real challenge comes when we find ourselves alone and with nothing to do.

In the beginning mankind was created to have communion with God. To walk with Him, to talk with Him, to be with Him, but something went wrong - And ever since mankind has struggled to make sense of it all - and many have lives empty and unfulfilled lives.

What is this life for? What is the point? Why do I feel so empty? We've all asked these questions. And the ultimate answer for lives meaning and purpose is found in the cross of Christ, where he became nothing, where He emptied Himself of all of His divine rights, to give us a chance at life.

Many people will tell us that they have found the secret to living a happy life; they tell us if we buy their book or their DVD that we too will find the way to fulfillment. And quite often these

books and DVD's, including many supposed Christian books and teachings, leave us feeling just as empty.

And why, because only Jesus can truly offer life - upon that cross Jesus emptied himself of everything, that we might have life and life in all its fullness.

The cross means the end of worthlessness - Feeling empty is one thing, but feeling worthless is way worse. We live in a society where if you don't look a certain way, dress a certain way, or act a certain way life can be hard.

We call other people geeks, freaks, retards, hippies, nerds, bums, whores, losers, fat, thin, ugly, smelly, and so on, and those were the names I could think of without swear words added.

I think it's like the story of the Ugly Duckling by Hans Christian Andersen. Although hatched in the same nest as the other eggs, this "duckling" looked different. He was big and ugly, not soft and yellow like the other ducklings and no one could understand what was wrong with the ugly duckling - not the Mother Duck, not the Rabbit, not the Turkey . . . not even the ugly Duckling himself!

Can you imagine what the Ugly Duckling might have been thinking about himself? *"What's wrong with me? I'm so worthless! I'm such a failure! I'm not measuring up to the other ducks!"*

The result of such thinking was: Depression, feelings of worthlessness, a sense of failure, always trying to perform like the other ducks and perhaps feelings of rejection.

But what was the truth? The truth was that the Ugly Duckling wasn't a duck after all. It was a swan. Over the long winter months the "duckling" had changed. It had become what it really had always been, a swan, beautiful and graceful like all the other swans.

The Ugly Duckling believed that he was a duck and an ugly duck at that! But just because he thought this to be the truth was it really the truth: absolutely not! But the Ugly Duckling believed a lie and because of what he believed, his behavior was affected.

So it is with us. We live in a society that labels everyone with either a label of acceptance or a label of worthlessness.

The cross put an end to this because Jesus became worthless so that we could be made valuable. All of us from the greatest to the least, from the powerful to the weak are made in the image of God. Therefore we are worth something, and God calls us to see our worth in Him by what is written in John 3:16... *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

The cross means the end of separation - In the Garden of Eden man was separated from God because of sin. And for hundreds of years mankind struggled lived under the curse of this separation.

God was still there for His people, but they could no longer see Him, walk with Him, and talk with Him as they could in the beginning.

There was a separation between them and God and the chasm was getting wider and wider and God knew He had to do something.

So He sent His Son into this world to build a bridge... a bridge that would allow us to go back to our Father in Heaven. Someone once said this, "The Father wanted His children back. So He sent His own Son Jesus into the world and gave Him all the tools needed to build a bridge... the tools He gave him were a couple of pieces of wood and a few nails.

And that was all He needed because the cross has bought about the end of separation. As the Scriptures read we can now come boldly before the throne of grace thanks to the finished work upon the cross.

The best news of all time is that, ***the cross means forgiveness***

When an artist or writer has finished a project they might say, "It is finished!" I believe that the death of Jesus on the cross "completes the picture" that God had been painting, the story that He had been writing, since the foundation of the world.

Without the cross there is no other way to be saved. We cannot earn it and we cannot pay for it.

Throughout His ministry years Jesus spoke of forgiveness and now He was making good on His promise. On the cross Jesus said "Father forgive them." And that's just what the Father did when His Son proclaimed "It is finished."

The Word tells us that, "In Christ we are set free by the blood of his death, and so we have forgiveness of sins. How rich is God's grace, which he has given to us so fully and freely." Eph 1:7-8

Today we are forgiven our sins because of Jesus and His completed work upon the cross.

A few years ago I read the following in a daily devotional...

If our greatest need was for information, God would have sent an educator.
If our greatest need was for technology, God would have sent a scientist.
If our greatest need was for pleasure, God would have sent an entertainer.
If our greatest need was for money, God would have sent an economist.
BUT SINCE OUR GREATEST NEED IS FOR FORGIVENESS, GOD SENT A SAVIOR. Anon.

