

April 3, 2026
John 19:28-30

Good Friday
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

“It Is Accomplished”

“When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘It is finished.’ Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

It is finished.

On this darkest of days, it appears that all is lost. Any hope of rescue, and possibility of a dramatic turn of events, has ceased to be in the realm of possibility. The man whose ministry began with such hopes – who called disciples, turned water into wine, fed multitudes, healed the sick, raised the dead, and promised that he is “the resurrection and the life” – has now reached the tragic end of his life. Those who had been his followers, who had left everything behind to follow him, will soon leave that dreaded place known as Golgotha – “the skull” – not knowing where they were going or what their future would behold now that all their hopes for the future had died along with Jesus on the cross. When Joseph of Arimathea claimed his body and laid it in a tomb, the stone that sealed the tomb had also buried the faith that many had placed in the man from Nazareth, the one many believed was the long-awaited Messiah.

It is finished.

These three words are among what is often identified as the Seven Last Words of Jesus on the Cross, words taken from all four Gospels. In the Gospel of John, they are the last words that Jesus utters before his death, as if he is also admitting defeat now that his mission has been defeated by the Roman Empire. But if we look closely at the Fourth Gospel’s account of Jesus’ final moments, we find a reference that seems to point in another direction: “*After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill scripture), ‘I am thirsty.’*” (John 19:28). These words invite us to look at Jesus’ final words from another angle, that his knowledge that “*all was now finished*” links Jesus’ death to the beginning of his “hour,” when Jesus’ knowledge of the arrival of his “hour” and its significance is identified. In the account of the Last Supper in the Fourth Gospel, the Evangelist reports that “*before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that the hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end*” (13:1). It points us to a meaning of Jesus’ final words that are

radically different from one of defeat and despair: “to finish” (*teleo*) is synonymous with Jesus’ mission as completing the work of God:

- “Jesus said to them, ‘My Food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.’” – 4:34.
- “But I have a testimony greater than John’s. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me.” – 5:36.
- “I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.” – 17:4.

Jesus faces the moment of his death with the knowledge that he has completed the work God has given him. The scripture John refers to is Psalm 69:21: “*They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*” Jesus takes the initiative with his words, “*I am thirsty.*” Unlike the accounts of this scene in the other gospels, there is no mockery in the offer of sour wine; Jesus remains a figure of dignity (“*At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.’*” – Matthew 27:47-48). Jesus’ “thirst” may also be seen as his desire to finish the Father’s Will, to drink his “cup” and to pour out the “living water” in fulfillment of God’s promise:

- “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” – 4:10.
- “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” – 16:12-13.
- “Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that my Father has given me?” – 18:11.

With the final fulfillment of Scripture accomplished in the offer of sour wine, Jesus announces that “*it is finished.*” Jesus’ death is not a moment of defeat or despair, but a moment of confidence in his completion of God’s work in the world. Jesus’ death on the Cross is the final expression of his love for his own and his love for God (“*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*” – 15:13). Jesus offers his life in a perfect act of love and obedience to the Father and so accomplishes the work of salvation.

- “The cross of Jesus reveals God’s love because it shows how far God goes for our salvation. God gives absolutely everything; he holds nothing back for the good of his beloved, the salvation of the human race. The Son became incarnate in Jesus, and out of love and obedience, he lays down his life on the cross. The Father gives his all, his beloved Son, by freely giving his all on the cross. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, reveals that ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8).” – Francis Martin and William Wright.

For many people, Good Friday is a day of sadness and solemnity which many would seek to avoid. Some even question why we call it “Good Friday,” since there was nothing good about Jesus’ suffering and dying in such an excruciating manner. But while there was nothing good about the way the Roman Empire used crucifixion to humiliate and torture its victims and to terrorize those who might want to challenge its authority, what Jesus does in his crucifixion becomes an act of love that has good consequences for all who believe in him. Jesus dies on the cross so that in his death he might defeat the power of death inflicted on humanity by the “kingdom of this world” that was opposed and seeks to destroy the Kingdom of God. Jesus takes the cross and transform it from an instrument of death into the means of our salvation, so that all who are baptized into Jesus’ death and resurrection might know that death no longer has the final word because of Christ’s death and resurrection and the victory that is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” – Romans 6:3-5.

• This Friday can be called “good” not because of what the Romans did in crucifying Jesus, nor is it “good” because of the suffering our Lord endured. This day can rightfully be called “Good Friday” because on this day our Lord accomplished God’s will in defeating the powers of “sin, death, and the devil” by claiming the instrument of death as the means of salvation for God’s people. While there was no reason for an innocent man to be executed in such a horrific fashion, it was necessary for our Saviour to die in such a way so that he might be the one who would overcome the power of death that seeks to separate us from the love of God and seeks to finish the relationship that God seeks to establish with us because of God’s great love for humanity.

- “His need to die was to show that there were no limits to his love, that with us and our need in mind he could stand among the evil ones who thought they were getting a victory. In Lutheran thought these evil ‘ones’ are sin, death, and the devil. His death, however, tricks them and takes away their victory and bragging rights. This is so because God vindicates Jesus by raising him from the dead.” – Martin Marty

It is finished.

Good Friday is a day of great sadness and solemnity; but we should not hear Jesus’ final words as an admission of defeat but as a cry of victory. In his death, Jesus has accomplished the Will of God in destroying the power of death. While on this day our Lord was “crucified, died, and was buried,” we know that even the tomb could not contain him, nor was it the end of his story and the end of our hope. Yes, it is Friday – but Sunday is coming! Amen.