

Good Friday, April 18, 2014 (ELPC)

John 19:30 - ³⁰When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

"It is finished." What an ominous and final statement. "It is finished" – everything is neatly tied up, put in place, completed, accomplished. How many times have we asked someone – are you finished; have you completed that which you were doing? This three word sentence in John's account of the crucifixion, the passion embodies the essence of what Jesus came to do, to reinstitute and affirm, to make clear beyond any doubt, what was started in the beginning, in the garden when God formed the earth and created all the inhabitants there of... God is in control and therefore, it is finished!

The Gospel of John's rendering of the passion is not a brutal, violent, stark account of betrayal and brutality. John doesn't use graphic detail or recall the sound of flogging that inflicted wounds. John shies away from the agonizing walk to Golgotha, the unimaginable pain of the nails hammered into feet and hands. Instead, John's passion portrays a Jesus who is confident, and in control of even the most offensive details leading to the crucifixion. The tone is set earlier, when Jesus declares: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (John 12:23). The passion in the Gospel of John expresses Jesus' kingship and depicts his triumphant road to glory. John presents Jesus as directing and being in control the entire way to the cross.

We can almost hear the majestic and dignified Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews declare, "it is finished," as he eats the meal with his disciples in that upper room, as he sends Judas away to complete the betrayal he has set in motion. We hear, "it is finished," when the guards approach Jesus in the garden and he steps forward confidently stating, "I am he, the one you are seeking." Jesus remains in control when he stands before Pilate and declares, "My kingdom is not from this world." Gone in the Gospel of John, is the trial before the Sanhedrin, the repeated mockeries, scourging, the stumbling and falling Jesus from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jesus is introduced at the Roman trial sarcastically, but none the less true, "Behold, your King."

When we survey the world in which we live, the declaration of “it is finished” seems to be premature.

- **“It is finished,”** yet violence, disenfranchisement, prejudice, and hatred are all very much present and prevalent in our homes, communities, country and throughout the world. Nations still invade other nations; there is still fighting in the Middle East, and the streets of Pittsburgh; every day we awaken to another murder, robbery or offense directed towards another.
- **“It is finished,”** yet people continue to treat one another with disrespect, disregard and distance. The dark side of humanity sometimes seeks the destruction of those they deem different or not worthy; taking matters of life and death in our hands because of another’s ethnicity, the neighborhood they live in, the allegiances they declare or the person they love.
- **“It is finished,”** yet mental, physical and spiritual sicknesses still exist and go unnoticed until it can no longer be ignored, because something devastating and unimaginable occurs.
- **“It is finished,”** yet we find it difficult and uncomfortable to minister to those who are in need. It’s inconvenient to move outside of our comfort zones to into areas that are uncomfortable; we are unwilling to take the spotlight off of ourselves and loved ones and to direct the light towards another who is more deserving, worthy or living with a hardship.
- **“It is finished,”** and yet there seems to be so much more to do;
- **“It is finished,”** yet God is still working out the mysteries and ungodliness in this world.

But, brothers and sisters, we rest in the assurance that when Jesus uttered, those words while hanging on the cross, he completed the work his Father and God assigned him to do.

- “It is finished,” because Jesus entered fully into human existence, as one who was in the world, but not of this world.
- “It is finished,” because the Law had been completely satisfied.

- “It is finished,” because sin and death no longer have power over those who believe.
- “It is finished,” because no one took Jesus’ life, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit, his life on his own.
- “It is finished,” because the work of salvation is complete. You and I don’t need to add to it. In fact, we can’t. Jesus accomplished what we never could, taking our sin upon himself and giving us his life in return.

Jesus accomplished that for which he had been sent, and we are the beneficiaries of his one of a kind effort, his one of a kind sacrifice, his one of a kind love. Because of what Jesus finished, you and I are never “finished.” There’s much work to be accomplished; to love our neighbors better than we love ourselves; to work for the eradicate injustice, violence and war in the world; to advocate on behalf of those who have no voice, no standing in society; to ensure that others know the love Jesus had for everyone, when he took up his cross. And we have hope for this life and for the next that is to come. We know that nothing can separate us from the love of God. One day what God has begun in us will also be finished, by God’s grace. But until that day, we live in the confidence of Jesus’ cry of victory: “It is finished!” Amen!