

“It is finished”

-- **John 19: 30**

When Jesus says from the cross, “It is finished,” it could read as a word of desperate surrender. I give up.

There can be virtue in surrender, especially after fighting a battle for hours hanging in agony. One might agree with the market analyst, who recently said, “It takes a courageous investor to sell a losing stock. Most investors, will hold on to an habitually losing stock, rather than sell, because the pain of losing the money is much less than the pain of having to admit that you were dumb to buy that stock in the first place.” Only the truly virtuous investor knows when to fold, when to surrender, when to say, “I goofed.” Is that what Jesus is doing here?

It was a good campaign while it lasted; he gave it his best shot. Perhaps if he had been a bit more critical in his selection of disciples, he might have gotten better ones. If he had been a bit more conciliatory toward Pilate, perhaps this thing would have gone further. Now, it is finished; The End.

But I am hearing this final word in a different way. I am hearing it as a word of achievement and completion. Despite what the soldiers, the politicians, and the howling mob think; despite what even his own disciples think, Jesus has succeeded. He didn't say, “I am finished.” He said, “It is finished.” His work is done. “...he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa 53:12). Jesus didn't die as a frustrated failed revolutionary. His death was the revolution.

All that unpleasantness, between us and God, begun in the Garden, that tendency to be gods unto ourselves, our rebellion, our clenched-fisted, violent pride is all addressed, not with words, but with a deed. Here, on the cross, God decides, acts, suffers, finishes, and accomplishes the destruction of death's power to separate us from our Creator's love.

How did Jesus say “It is finished”?

He said it in victory: “I've fought the fight, faced Satan down, and now my work is stunningly accomplished.

What now is to be done by us? Nothing. What might we learn to do from the lessons of Good Friday? Nothing. What are we supposed to do for God before nightfall? Nothing.

Did you miss his words? “It is finished.”

As we continue to self-quarantine and to shelter-in-place, I am realizing that a big part of our spiritual nature as “Church” is tied to ministry that never seems to get done. There is always more to do. Even gathering for worship carries expectations that it is a time when Jesus will give us a new assignment for the week. Perhaps, at times, you have even departed from worship feeling more burdened than when you arrived. It's regrettable that worship slips into becoming a time to settle up the accounts between us and God or they won't get paid. It makes “Church” all about us.

I once heard a preacher say, you only get as much out of worship as you put into it.” As he continued, however, hardly anything was mentioned concerning what God might do. It's all about us.

The Letter to the Hebrews tells of that great High Priest in the heavens who, when he made the full, perfect, final sacrifice, SAT DOWN (Heb. 10:12). He sat down because it was finished. If the world only knew that the cross, is God's great victory, the world would be reconciled to God. And we busy-bee sinners could embrace this day as a day to sit down, to be still and simply adore the wonder of Jesus' completed work on our behalf.

Just know this. Today is a decisive day. All the sad dealings between us and God can only be finished by God. The Good news: the battle is done. The war is won. The debt is paid. It is finished.

Peace,
Pastor Steve