

FOLLOWING JESUS: JESUS FINISHING

John 19:23-30

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Watch/Listen: www.fbcjc.org/sermon/following-jesus-jesus-finishing/

During our Lenten sermon series, “Following Jesus,” we’ve seen Jesus weeping, Jesus prioritizing, Jesus agonizing, Jesus serving and Jesus warning. This morning, on Palm Sunday, we see Jesus finishing. Finishing is important. When our children were small, they would sometimes report to us that they had finished cleaning their rooms. Occasionally, Janet and I would inspect the room and find that our definition of “finished” was different than our children’s.

From the cross, Jesus cried out, “It is finished” (v. 30). It is one word in Greek: *“tetelestai.”* Such an important phrase, first of all because John repeats the phrase (v. 28). And repetition is a good way to know that something is important to a witness. Second, the phrase is important because according to John, these are Jesus’ last words before dying. So what does “it is finished” mean?

FIRST OF ALL, “IT IS FINISHED” MEANS GOD’S PLAN IS CONSUMMATED. How long have you been working your plan? Saving your allowance for a new toy, being old enough to get your driver’s license, anxious for school to be out for the summer, finally paying off your house mortgage. How long? Well, God has been at His plan for thousands of years. In Ephesians 1, Paul says God has chosen us and loved us from the foundation of the world. Through Abraham, Moses, Israel and finally that baby born in a barn—God’s plan now comes to full flower in God’s Son, who is hanging on the Cross. The grand epoch of redemption brought to completion.

SECOND, “IT IS FINISHED” MEANS THE SACRIFICE FOR SIN IS MADE ONCE FOR ALL. Throughout John’s gospel, Jesus is pictured as the Passover Lamb. In a special touch, the Roman soldiers offer Jesus the wine, hoisting it up on the branches of the hyssop bush. Exodus 12:22 records that the blood of the Passover Lamb was to be smeared on door posts by.....? You guessed it, a hyssop branch! This Passover Lamb does not merely cover sins; he takes sins away (1:29).

Just think of it. Sin paid for by the Sinless One. “It is finished” means the transaction is complete. I remember the first loan Janet and I paid off as a married couple. We had purchased furniture, paying \$38 per month. What a joy to see that canceled note—“paid in full.” Jesus’ payment for sin is enough. It always has been and always will be. In all the ways that you feel frustrated by sin, failure and guilt, incomplete and unfinished, you may depend on the finished work of Christ. We don’t depend on ourselves; we depend on him.

THIRD, “IT IS FINISHED” MEANS JESUS WAS FAITHFUL AND OBEDIENT TO THE END. We evangelicals don’t emphasize this as much as we should. Hebrews 3:1-2 says that Jesus was faithful in everything God gave him to do. Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us to look to Jesus for an example of finishing, not giving up.

If there is a theme missing in the church today, it is perseverance, commitment to the end, even in tough times. Noted author Dallas Willard was once asked if there was anything that ever got him down (he was known to be an optimistic and joyful person). He replied quickly, "It bothers me that Christ followers require so much prompting...to do God's work in the world." He went on to talk about how pastors have to beg people to use their spiritual gifts to further the Kingdom, beg people to read their Bibles. Churches spend thousands of dollars showing videos to get people to care for the poor. Dallas shook his head and said, "It shouldn't be this way. A Christ follower's motivation should come from within" [*Simplify* by Bill Hybels, pp. 214-215].

How about you? Have you given up on prayer, church, joyful service, using your gifts for the Lord because the going is tough? Have you given up trying to get victory over that enslaving habit or trying to love that difficult person? Have you checked out because you think you've done enough? Jesus finished! Perhaps what we need to give up for Lent is giving up. Jesus finished.