

**Lenten Series:** “Live Like Jesus Is Dying.” “Jesus’ Sayings from the Cross”

**Sermon #6:** “It is finished!”

**Scriptures:** John 19:30, Mark 15:38-39

**Source:** Rev. Adam Hamilton at the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, MO

<http://www.cor.org/worship/sermon-archives/show/sermons/Into-Your-Hands-I-Commit-My-Spirit/>

**PP#1:** John 19:30 “When He had received the sour wine, Jesus said, ‘It is completed.’ Bowing His head, He gave up His life.” (CEB)

Mark 15:38-39 “The curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. When the centurion, who stood facing Jesus, saw how He died, he said, ‘This man was certainly God’s Son.’” (CEB)

**Reader:**

**John 19:30** “When He had received the sour wine, Jesus said, ‘It is completed.’ Bowing His head, He gave up His life.”

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## Opening Video Clip

**PP#2:** *Image of a Roman centurion.*

[*Monolog starts...*]

I was the centurion assigned to the task of crucifying Rome’s victims in Jerusalem. I and the four who were assigned to me were responsible for carrying out that brutal and cruel punishment, to torture Rome’s enemies—and violent criminals—so the rest of the people would know to never violate Rome’s rules again, never to challenge us. We made examples of those with this torturous death, so no one could watch a crucifixion and not be terrified.

I arrived at the praetorium at 8:00 that morning, to find that three victims awaited crucifixion. Three men had been assigned to us. We were told to be sure that they were punished appropriately. Two of them were disgusting thieves, but I was surprised to hear that the third was none other than Jesus of Nazareth!

**PP#3:** *Image of Jesus speaking with the centurion.*

I knew of Jesus of Nazareth. A friend of mine, a fellow centurion who lived in the North, in the Galilee, one time told me how he had a servant who had been very dear to him, and who had taken very sick. None of the physicians could help him. And someone had told him that Jesus might help, for Jesus was able to cure the sick. So my friend sent word to Jesus asking for help for his servant. My friend then met Jesus half way, and he said, “I’m so grateful that you would come to help my servant. But you are a man of authority, like I am, and I know how it works. I command my servants, and they fulfill what I command. Same with the soldiers. I give the orders, and they carry them out. You need to only speak the word, and I know that the illness will leave my servant.

Jesus turned to those around Him and said, “Has anyone seen faith in Israel like this centurion has?” Then He turned to my friend and said, “Go in peace. Your faith, and God’s power, has made your servant well.” My friend said that when he got home, he found his servant sitting up, and well! He was astounded. He told me this story himself a year before at the rally. I heard it with my own ears. That was the Jesus I was commanded to crucify!

I had heard some of the things He had taught. He had told them that they were supposed to love their enemies, to pray for those who persecuted them, that when they were struck on one cheek, that they were to turn the other cheek. And when one of our number commanded them to carry our bag for a mile, He said for them to carry it two miles. As far as I could see, we needed more Jews like this, not less! But He had made the religious leaders mad in Jerusalem. He had claimed to be a king, and Pontius Pilate had no choice but to sentence Him to death by crucifixion.

At 8:30 we led these three victims out to the place we call The Skull, Calvary. And it was there that we crucified them. Then we hoisted them in the air, so it would be even more miserable for them, and so everyone could see. I can tell you, I took no joy in crucifying people, but it was my job. But Jesus! It was hard to crucify Jesus. He didn’t deserve it. But that wasn’t up to me.

**PP#4:** *Image of the Roman soldiers casting lots for their clothes.*

The one perk we got was that we soldiers got all the personal belonging the men had on them. That usually meant their clothing. They were stripped naked. And as usual, we gambled to see who got what. Jesus had this one garment that was made from one piece of cloth. It wasn’t all that expensive, but nicer than normal. We decided to leave it whole and cast lots for it. So, when they gambled for His garment, they called me over. But for some reason, my heart wasn’t in it. I said, “You go ahead without me.” And I watched this man. For six hours I watched Him.

**PP#5:** *Image of Jesus on the cross with the soldiers nearby.*

The people came and hurled insults at Him. He was there, naked with only a crown of thorns. And yet He had such dignity, such strength, even there on a cross. He prayed to forgive them. He meant me, too. And my men. And those who came around to hurl insults at Him. What kind of man does that? I’ve never seen it before, in all the hundreds of people I crucified.

Then He cried out to God asking why God had left Him. My heart ached for Him. Strange. I thought I was well enough hardened by now. But something about Him drew me in.

And then the darkness rolled in. It was a darkness that you could feel! As the clouds rolled in, so did an eerie feeling. Something was dreadfully wrong! And we were right in the middle of it. People began to murmur and look scared, pointing up to the sky.

One of the thieves cried out to Jesus, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Somehow he believed that this crucifixion didn’t stop Jesus. He thought Jesus would still come in His kingdom. And Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in paradise!” What an amazing conversation! What did it mean?

Then, when it came near to 3 o’clock, He cried out, “I’m thirsty!” And one of the religious leaders broke ranks with his colleagues, and held up a sponge with some of our wine in it for Him to drink.

And then I heard Him say, “It’s finished!” And the ground began to rumble. An earthquake. People began to freak out. Some cried out, “God is judging us for killing Him!” “This is bad!” Others started running away.

And then, all of a sudden, it stopped.

And I heard one last gasp from Jesus, His dying words, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” And then He exhaled His last breath.

I watched all of this with my own eyes. I heard it with my own ears.

**PP#6:** *Image of a centurion bowing below the cross after Jesus had died.*

I was convinced that we had done the wrong thing. I hollered over to Antonius and Claudius, “We have crucified an innocent man here!”

And then I did something I had never done before. I went over to that cross, and I knelt down, and I began to cry. I wept in front of my men. And I said, “Surely, this was the Son of God!”

[*Monolog ends.*]

**PP#7:** “Live Like Jesus Is Dying.” “Jesus’ Sayings from the Cross”

Jesus said, “It is finished!” -John 19:30b

We’re listening to what Jesus says the six hours He hung on the cross. He speaks seven times. These are His dying words, words He made an effort to say. They’re pretty important! And as we listen to them, each time we hear something about what is going on on the cross, we hear something about Jesus, and something about ourselves.

We’re nearing the end. We are in the last minutes of Jesus’ life. Mark and Matthew said that just before Jesus died, He cried out in a loud voice. But they don’t record what He said. Luke and John add that when they write their Gospels.

So, we hear in the moments before He dies, Jesus says two last things. One is a single word, strong word, a final burst. The other is a prayer. We’ll listen to that one Friday night when we gather for worship at 7 p.m.

But John records Jesus saying one, powerful word near the end. In English, it is translated, “It is finished!”

**PP#8:** “It is finished!”

1. A cry of victory!

For the longest time, I had always understood this to be Jesus saying that He finally made it, that He got all the way to the end. It was finally over. I heard it as a sigh of relief.

But I noticed this time that Matthew and Mark said that Jesus shouted His last words. “He cried out in a loud voice....” In Aramaic it is one word—Jesus spoke Aramaic. In Greek it is also one word. So, we would, perhaps, put it in English like, “Completed!” or “Done!” or “Finished!” This is not a cry of defeat, surrender, or relief, but of victory! Accomplishment! Triumph!

**PP#9:** Luke 9:51 “As the time approached when Jesus was to be taken up into heaven, He **resolutely set out** to go to Jerusalem.”

Luke 18:31-33 “Jesus took the Twelve aside and said, ‘Look, we’re going up to Jerusalem, and everything written about the Human One by the prophets will be accomplished. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. He will be ridiculed, mistreated, and spit on. After torturing Him, they will kill Him. But on the third day, He will rise up.’”

Jesus had completed the mission He had come to accomplish. Months before He had started talking about how He was going to die. In Luke, way back in chapter 9, He sets His face resolutely towards Jerusalem, and begins to tell them He must go there in order to die. On multiple occasions He tells them He will be betrayed, He will suffer at the hands of the people, and He will die. But on the third day He will be raised again.

The disciples say “No!” but He insists. It’s part of His mission. And now, on the cross, as His death is near, Jesus proclaims that He has completed what He has started.

**PP#10:** “It is finished!”

1. A cry of victory!
2. The “it” that is finished is salvation!

What is the “it” that He finished? What is His purpose? It is to bring salvation to all people. On the cross we see Jesus earning our salvation, somehow. We are reconciled to God. The cross has become the symbol of the Christian faith. It’s pretty important. It sums up the meaning and significance of the Christian faith. So, what would you say the cross means?

At first it seems rather simple to explain. It means that God loves you. Why? It means that Jesus saves you. Why? It means He died for you. Why? He died to take away your sins. Why?

**PP#11:** *Various striking images of a/the cross.*

It is something we can summarize, but it is something we struggle to explain. We can feel it’s experience. We can know it’s real in our hearts. But we struggle to put words to it. It’s like all things that are more real than what is empirical or logical. What is beauty? What is love? What is God? These are beyond what we can adequately explain. So, to some degree, also is the cross! We can’t adequately explain what is going on. It’s beyond what words can express. Like one songwriter penned, “Oh the *wonder* of the cross!”

The Bible never fully explains it. What it does do is give many different ways of understanding it, each piece adding a bit more to the fuller picture. In the Gospels, there are 50 passages where Jesus talks about His death. Usually, He uses a metaphor. He doesn’t describe it. He talks about it. One time, in John, He says it is like a seed that falls to the ground. It rises up different than the seed that was planted. But then it produces a harvest of a hundred times itself. This is an image of martyrdom. His death brings life and blessings to the many who follow Him.

Another time He says that if I am lifted up, I will draw all people to myself. This seems to me like a metaphor of a magnet. People are drawn to Him because of His sacrifice. Another time He says that greater love has no one than to lay his life down for friend. Here is the metaphor of giving up your life so another can live. Another time He is described as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is the metaphor of the Passover Lamb, when the Jews killed the lamb, spread it’s blood on the mantles, and spared them death, and took them out of captivity. This is what Jesus is doing on the cross.

This is all still just in John. Another time He uses the metaphor of slavery, how He is the one who liberates people from their slavery to sin and death. When He eats the last meal with them, He uses the metaphor of covenant: He takes the bread and wine and says to them, “take, eat, this is my body and this is my blood of the new covenant.” A covenant is a binding agreement that, in the Old Testament, was sealed in blood sacrifice. On the cross, Jesus is making a new binding covenant between God and people. Another place He talks about being the Sacrifice. Here He takes away the sins of the world by being the sufficient sacrifice.

**PP#12:** *Cross-shaped wordle of Jesus' names and ways Jesus is our Savior.*

Paul uses many more images. He calls Jesus Redeemer. On the cross Jesus redeems, buys, slaves their freedom. He calls Him Savior, Deliverer, Warrior, and on and on.

Do you see? It's not that one image, or one concept sums it up. Each are true, and each show us something more of what is going on on the cross. But just like any metaphor, if you keep working it too far, it will break down. It can only show part of the truth. It is only when you keep holding them together, that you can begin to grasp the bigger picture.

Sometimes Christians cling to one idea so strongly that they exclude those who add others. No! This is the way to understand it! But being too focused on just one closes us off to understanding it better.

You see, the cross is less like math and more like a poem. We can't fully get it, but it "gets" us! And when the cross "gets" us, it changes everything, our world, how we live our lives.

All of us need forgiveness. But some of us need to forgive ourselves, so the cross shows us our value. Some of us need to be freed from slavery, and the cross shows us power over that which keeps us down. Sometimes we need liberation, sometime we need redeeming. Sometimes we need to be drawn go God. Each time the cross "gets" us, and changes us. Each time the cross shows us salvation. On the cross we see our need and God's grace. We see our brokenness and God's love.

Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us about the centurion. He met Jesus on the cross in a way that changed him. He didn't understand it, wasn't able to articulate what salvation truly means. He had no perfect theology. But he saw in Jesus' death a wondrous expression of love. He saw what was so wrong with humankind. And He God's amazing love for people. So, he simply proclaims this dying man to be God's Son.

**PP#13:** "The gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe" -Romans 1:16

Paul summarizes all of this in Romans 1:16, in a little nugget. He says, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel [that is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus], for it is the power of God for salvation to all who believe." This is a wonderful summary of what is going on on the cross.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke give us one more image for what Jesus' death means. They say that at Jesus' death, the temple curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom.

**PP#14:** *Image of the temple from just outside the walls, as Jesus would have seen it from the cross.*

The temple was probably about a 10 minute walk from Calvary. Jesus could see it from there, it was high up. They're referring to the thick, heavy curtain that covered the entrance into the innermost room of the temple. Take a look at this diagram.

**PP#15:** *Floor plan of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Temple (Herod's), showing the outer courts and the Holy of Holies:*  
<http://www.mycrandall.ca/courses/ntintro/intest/JerTem.htm>

The outer areas on all sides is what is called the "court of the gentiles." That's where anyone could go. The big square on the right, that called the "court of women." Only Jews could go there, but including women. Then, the small area in the middle is called the "court of the Israelites." Only men could go in that far. Do you see what's happening? It's layers and layers of barriers and exclusions, keeping people out. Well, the inner area on the right is the "court of priests," and only

priests could go there. The little square there toward the bottom is where the altar was, where the sacrifices were offered. Well, the smaller area to the left was the Holy Place. Only the High Priest could go in there. And then, the small room to the left again, is the Holy of Holies. That's where the Ark of the Covenant was, and it was where God was supposed to actually reside. It was walled off by a massive curtain.

**PP#16:** *Image of the temple curtain, before it was torn:*

<http://jerusalem-4thtemple.org/images/temple-maps/Gallery%202/Doc%20Images%201/Herodian%20Temple%20Inside.jpg>

Scholars think it was about 60 feet tall, and 30 feet wide, and it must have been three to four inches thick! It was all one piece. Can you image what it weighed? It was blue, and red, and gilded in gold, probably with the design of angels. Only once a year the High Priest would go into the Holy of Holies, and smear the blood sacrifice of atonement on the corners of the Ark, bringing reconciliation to God.

The Gospels say that when Jesus died, this curtain was torn, from top to bottom.

**PP#17:** *Cartoon image from this site:* [http://copiosa.org/mass/veil\\_temple.htm](http://copiosa.org/mass/veil_temple.htm)

What a vivid image for what is going on on the cross. Jesus dies to remove the separation between God and people. This system, which because of sin, so carefully excluded people in ranks, is rendered obsolete. Jesus removes the separation we have between us and God. The way is opened. We no longer need a high priest. Jesus has reconciled us to God.

**PP#18:** "It is finished!"

1. A cry of victory!
2. The "it" that is finished is salvation!
3. We have direct access to God!

Because of Jesus' death on the cross, we now have direct access to God.

What a powerful image for what Jesus dying on the cross means for you and me.

So, this week, as we see Jesus hanging on the cross, as we hear Him speak, "It is finished," what does this mean to you? How does this affect your life? How will you find your life changed?

**PP#19:** *Image "I'm trying to..." at this site:* <http://imgarcade.com/1/bowing-at-the-feet-of-jesus/>

We're coming back Friday night, we'll hear Jesus speak one more time. And we'll then hold prayer vigil until Easter. Be sure to be a part of that.

But as you look at the cross, that terrible instrument of torture, can you hear Jesus proclaim victory? Can you hear Him say to you, "It is finished!" "Done!" "Accomplished!"?