

# “It Is Finished”

John 19:30

A few Sunday’s ago, in our Gospel reading from Luke 13, Jesus told His disciples, “Behold, I . . . perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish My course.” In John’s Gospel we hear the words of Jesus on the cross, “It is finished.” He uses the same word. In the Greek, “tetelestai;” it is finished. What is finished? What does it mean that Jesus finishes His course.” There are a number of correct answers to that question.

Last night, I spoke of how there is this seamless connection between the Old and New Testament, how God has consistently dealt with His people, and how all of human history led up to that moment on the cross – and all of human history since that day has looked back at that one epic event.

It is finished. What is finished? Christ’s humiliation and suffering begun at His conception is finished. The mocking, the beating, pain of nails

and thorns is finished. With His death, God's battle against Satan for us is finished. Satan himself is finished – at least his fate and judgment is secured.

But even beyond all of that, a fundamental change occurs. The old order is finished and a new reality begins. With Jesus on the cross, we don't read of it in John's Gospel, but the other Gospel writers record extraordinary cosmic signs that the creation is becoming unglued. Darkness reigns from noon until 3:00. This darkness over the land was noted by the Greek historian Thallus who lived at the time and published his history of the Mediterranean world in 52 AD.

Not only is this symbolic of the power of darkness which God allowed to have authority over the world at Jesus' arrest. Jesus said to Pilate that even he would have no power over Him if it were not given from above. With Adam's Fall into sin, darkness and evil is allowed to reign over God's goodness and light – temporarily.

And now an unearthly darkness enters creation – temporarily. Day and night are confused. Creation's bondage to sin and the curse of death, which Jesus had been absorbing into His flesh since His conception and bearing with Him publicly since His Baptism, is now completely laid upon

Him to do its destructive work. All the curses of sin, all sickness, all death, all judgment is now placed upon Him. And as we sang earlier, “The deepest stroke that pierced Him was the stroke that justice gave.”

Yet, the Creator who took on flesh and was born into His own creation, is, at this moment of death, bringing in new and eternal life – a new creation. The darkness is a sign that already now the end of the old world has come in the death of Jesus Christ. And a new and eternal day, a dawn from on high, is about to break forth and shine forever on those who are dwelling in this valley of the shadow of death.

And while there is this unusual darkness, another sign occurs that another part of the old world is finished. It was a sign that no one at the cross could witness. At the temple of the Lord, the curtain to the Holy of Holies, the most inner sanctuary of the temple where the high priest would enter once per year and offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people, that curtain was torn in two from top to bottom.

The shift in God’s presence from the temple in Jerusalem to Christ’s body began with the announcement of the angel Gabriel to Mary. This child was to fulfill all things. The presence of God with and in Jesus was publicly proclaimed at Jesus’ Baptism when the heavens opened, the Father

declared Him to be His Son, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him.

But it is in Christ's death, when the temple curtain is torn in two, that most clearly demonstrates that Jesus is the real temple and He is the only Way to God the Father. He has opened the way for all people to approach God. God's presence no longer resides in the temple; now God's presence is wherever Jesus is. Jesus is the new temple. The only way to approach the Father is to come to Him.

Christ's sacrifice on the cross marked the end of an age. The old order was finished. The new covenant in His blood had been established. The first creation was spoiled by sin and death. Those enemies have been defeated by Christ on the cross.

Today is a sorrowful day as we remember the awful suffering and death of our Lord. But there is a reason that the church calls this day "Good Friday." What happened on that day, in the darkness, was not only ultimately "good", but allows us to face the darkest fears of our life and walk through this valley of the shadow of death fearing no evil.

As St. Paul wrote, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone; the new has come." The old is finished, and we wait and, with all of creation, we look forward to the resurrection. Amen.