

**“It Is Finished!”**

SERMON TEXT: John 19:30

Rev. Basil Christi

*In the name of Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of the Living God, who bore upon Himself our sins and shed His life's blood so as to give us Life Eternal...*

Dearly beloved of God, today is a solemn day. Yes, it is filled with sorrow, but it is also a day for which we find our source of comfort. Yes, we should be moved to shed tears at the thought of the blood that was shed for us. Yet, it is on account of that blood being shed for us that we trust that each tear will be wiped away. Today, we come to the foot of the cross to hear once more of the great lengths that God Himself would willingly go to so as to secure our safe passage into His glorious presence. Today, we hear of how God, in His great love for us, allowed His beloved Son to be secured to lengths of wood so that we could crossover from death to Everlasting Life, no longer condemned in His sight. Today, we hear of how He gave unto us His Son so that we could be counted as His sons. Today, we hear of how He who knew no sin took upon Himself our sin so that, in Him, we would be declared righteous on account of His righteousness. Today, we come to hear of how Jesus Christ became accursed so as to set us free from God's curse, bringing to us blessing upon blessing. Yes, today is a solemn day. Yes, today is the day that we commemorate the glorious work of God's Christ upon the cross, for the sake of the world that God so loves. Today, we come to the foot of the cross to hear the final words of God's Word enfleshed for us and then hung on Calvary's cruel tree— suspended between heaven and earth to serve as the bridge between earth and heaven. Yes, today is a solemn day as we who've turned away from God in sin, return to God once again, being turned

back in penitent faith, to hear from our Saviour those words we need to hear every day, to the very Last Day.

At the foot of the cross, dearest brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ spoke, as recorded for us in Holy Scripture, seven times. These words from Jesus, spoken from the cross, still speak to us today, if we have the ears to hear what they say. These words, His seven last words, are not words of despair, but the words of our Saviour in the midst of saving us, the words of the Good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep of His pasture, the words of the King of Kings—not merely the King of the Jews— paving the way of safe passage in the coming Kingdom of Heaven for the sake of all on earth. These words, His last words, begin with a prayer: “Father, forgive them.”

“Father, forgive them.” The first of His last words are words of forgiveness. They demonstrate God’s great love for us, for even as we mock and revile Him, He nonetheless withholds nothing, not even His own Son— allowing His Son to be killed so as to kill the enmity between us by reconciling us to Himself through the sacrifice of His Son. Jesus prays for the forgiveness of His enemies, even our own forgiveness, as He hangs upon the cross, securing our pardon by His own blood. He prays for mercy to be shown to those who’ve shown no mercy. He prays for grace to be granted to those who would surely perish apart from grace. His prayer is for you and for me, for all of us.

“You will be with Me in Paradise.” Following His prayer for forgiveness, we hear Him speak a promise. To a rightly condemned sinner, He promises paradise. In penitent faith, a sinner cries out to be counted in the Kingdom of God’s Christ. The King of Kings gives His Word of promise. He gives this word of promise to all who would come to Him. His word is

Truth. He means what He says and He says what He means. Turning from his sins and turning to Christ Jesus, a condemned sinner finds both his pardon and the promise, “You will be with Me in Paradise.” So too, this promise is for you and for me, for all of us.

“Woman, behold your son.” A prayer for forgiveness and a promise to the penitent are followed by a word of compassion and care. While His hands are pinned to the cross, our Lord reached out to His mother with His heart. It was to restore the most profound relationship—our relationship with God as our Father—that Jesus gave Himself into death. Yet, in His death, He did not forget His mother, for every relationship borne in love is bound in Him; and therefore, even as He suffers greatly, yet He still cares for those whom He loves and who love Him, tending to their needs whether they be in relation to heaven or earth. So it was for Mary, so it is for you and me, so it is for us all.

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” A word in prayer, for our forgiveness, a word of promise, a word of compassion, and, now, a word from the Word of God. These are the words of the Psalmist, King David. They are words which bring us to what we know as the twenty-second psalm. Written almost ten centuries, a millennium, before the day which we now commemorate, King David prophesied concerning the Son of David, the Messiah of Israel—the King whose kingdom will know no end, as He reigns from the throne of David, in accord with God’s own promise. Jesus, the Son of David, draws His hearers to hear once more the words of the Psalmist. In their hearing, the suffering set before their eyes is revealed as the fulfilment of God’s prophetic Word. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” The question is asked as we ponder God’s prophetic promises to His people. Why? The answer is that, in the person of Jesus, the forsakenness that comes from God’s condemnation—that I

deserve because of my sins, that you deserve because of your sins, that we deserve because of our sins— should be not given to me, to you, to us all. Why? The answer is that He has come to take our place in condemnation so as to reunite us to God within Himself, in His holiness and righteousness, through faith. Why? The answer is simply that He endures what we cannot endure, in accord with the Word that He gave to His people through His prophets, out of His great love for you and for me, for all of us.

“I thirst.” A prayer for forgiveness, a promise of peace, a word of compassion, prophesy fulfilled, and now a word of the toll it would take upon Him as He calls to drink from the cup that the Father would will to have Him drink for us. Hanging on the cross, the cup that distressed Him when in the garden, now in the form of a sour wine-soaked sponge upon a hyssop branch, was now placed to His lips to drink. Nevertheless, God’s will be done. In the Passover meal He shared with His disciples, there were four cups for all to partake: the Cup of Sanctification, the Cup of Proclamation, the Cup of Redemption, and the Cup of Completion. Last night we celebrated His institution of the New Testament in the Cup of Redemption as He transformed the Passover meal from an observance in memory of the exodus from Egypt to a remembrance of Him, the Sacrament by which He gives Himself to us by means of bread and wine. Today, we hear of Him bringing to His lips the last cup, the Cup of Completion, as He fully finishes the Passover meal, drawing the service to a close by conforming it to the cruciform sacrifice of Himself as our Paschal Lamb— the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! He drinks this cup for you and for me, for us all.

“It is finished!” Here He speaks not merely about His own life and mission as most would have you believe. Rather, it is with these words that He concludes the Passover Service,

the meal that was begun in the upper room with His disciples. Here He speaks as the fulfillment of the true passover, the greater exodus. He is not speaking of freedom from bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt, but freedom from bondage to sin. He is not speaking the words which tell of a promised land that needed to be seen to be believed in this world, but the words of a land of greater promise that needs to be believed to be seen in the world to come. “It is finished!” “It is fulfilled!” “It is completed!” God has not abandoned us to His wrath, but by His grace, and in His mercy, He has sent His own Son to stand in our stead... or more accurately, to be crucified for our sins. He is the Lamb of God whose blood ensures that God’s wrath passes over us. He is God’s own sacrifice for our sin’s atoning. In Christ, God’s plan for our pardon was put in place as He, “made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” Christ became accursed for us to free us from God’s curse upon us — this He did by being crucified in our stead for as St. Paul reminds us, “it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’” Christ has taken our place.

Jesus’ hands healed the sick, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, and raised the dead as He ministered among His people. Our hands, on the other hand, are quick to do that which we know we ought not do. Yet, the nails pierced His hands and held them fast to the cross. Jesus travelled to and fro bearing the good news of the Kingdom of God and willingly took every step towards the cross on Golgotha. Our feet take us where we know we ought not go so as to do what we know we ought not do, and they grow weary when carrying us to those places where we know we ought to be so as to do what is good. Still, it was His feet which were pinned to the wood of the cross and not our own. He spoke and by His Word revealed God’s truth; the Apostle Paul reminds us, however, that according to the Scriptures, “[Our] throat is an open

grave; [we] use [our] tongues to deceive.’ ‘The venom of asps is under [our] lips.’ ‘[Our] mouths are full of curses and bitterness.’” Yet, it was Jesus’ throat which was parched when from the cross He said, “I thirst.” It was Jesus’ mouth that received the wine-vinegar. It was Jesus who drank from the “cup” which was given Him by the Father, the Cup of Completion. While our hearts, which are, in the words of Jeremiah the Prophet, “deceitful above all things, and desperately sick,” continue to beat, Jesus’ heart, using the imagery of the Psalmist, became like wax and melted within Him as He hung on the cross. Yes, the very Author of Life died in order to bring us His Life. “It is finished!” “It is fulfilled!” “It is completed!” It is done for you and for me, for us all.

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” One last prayer. A prayer of faith. Beloved in the Lord, it is also our prayer, in death and in life. When we draw our first breath every morning, may it be our prayer, in faith. When we draw our last breath, may it be our prayer, in faith. May we ever and always commend ourselves to Him whose death we commemorate this solemn day. May His last words be our consolation. They are words in which we find our comfort because of the good gift of God’s own Son that was given for our own good on this Good Friday. Yes, today, at the foot of the cross we come, we hear... we receive and believe. Truly, “It is finished!” Jesus has done for us what we could not do for ourselves so as to bring us peace. Truly, “It is finished!” Amen.

*Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, ever keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.*