

**MT. ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Good Friday

4/19/19

John 19:28-30

**IT IS FINISHED**

Pastor Scott Bergemann

One day there was a man who met a pastor who was out on the street. This man was not a believer, but rather a skeptic, and a rather cynical one at that. He could tell the pastor was trying to steer the conversation towards faith and God. But instead of blowing the pastor off he decided to try and mess with him a bit. So he asked, rather sarcastically, “So, what do I gotta do to be saved?” The pastor looked at him for a

moment and then replied, “It's too late.” The skeptic was struck by such a blunt and closed off answer. It threw him for a loop, and suddenly, out of nowhere, he found himself to be a little bit scared. So he asked again, “No, seriously, what must I do to be saved?” Again the pastor looked at him for a moment, and then, with a serious but calm expression answered, “It's too late.” Now, this man was beside himself, thinking, “What do you mean it's too late? No one has ever said it was too late. Every Christian he ever met held out some hope, some opportunity, something that could be done, something that could be changed that would make things OK with God.” His fear was building in his heart with a rapid rise. So again, more fervently this time, “Please, I beg you, what must I do to be saved?” This time the pastor took hold of the man by the shoulders and said, “It's too late,” and then quickly added, “It's already been done.”

That thought is what this day is all about. It is all summed up in three words of truth, “It is finished.” And because this is so, I always find myself at a bit of loss for what to say on Good Friday. It's not that there aren't words to say. It's not as though there isn't something worth talking about. It's just that I know my words can't possibly come close to matching the greatest words the our Savior ever spoke. It makes me just want to say, “It is finished. Amen.” . . . and that is the truth because it is. But you know that the sermon isn't over yet. You are Lutheran. And like any good Lutheran you ask, What does this mean? What is finished?

The Holy Spirit through John gives us an interesting perspective as he talks about the relationship between the Father and the Son. Everything was done for the Father's glory. The greatest reason why Jesus was sent from heaven to earth was to make his Father known. John said that at the beginning of his gospel. By nature we have such a vague picture of who God is; we still can see this in the religions of today's world. Born in sin as we are, we also have a natural fear (terror!) of God. God looks like nothing more than a huge shadow, towering above us—dark, unnatural in shape, no details. And that's all we see because “no one has ever seen God...” This is what our sins have done. We deserve to be in the darkness of this day the rest of our lives. Three words of truth that we really deserve are, It's not done, It's not finished, and it will never be finished. So you have to live in the pain and misery of trying to do the impossible and be good enough for God as we live in the darkness of not knowing if we have done enough and we will never do enough as we are on the path to suffer all the terrors of hell completely separated from the Father. This is how it would be if the Father wasn't made known to us by the Son.

“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known” (Jn 1:18). In the person of Jesus, God stepped out of the shadows. What do we see? A God who is also true man, our brother. We see a face of deep, deep love. We hear words of incredible comfort. And his words are so much more than words. They are God's power. When he speaks let there be, it is. When he says get out, the evil spirit has to get out. When he says get up the dead person gets up and is alive again. When he says be quiet, the storm shuts up. When he says It is finished, we know that it is. That the devil's work has been destroyed and that the plan of the Father has been completed. Through his words we have faith to see him. We see a God who desires nothing more than that we have an eternal bond of love and fellowship like that which once existed between God and the crown of his creation, before Adam's tragic fall.

On the cross, we see Jesus revealing the Father's glory. We can only see it with eyes of faith—this deep love that sacrificed his own Son. And the Son that sacrificed his own life. He gave all that he is and all that he has, every ounce of God was up there on that cross dying for me and you so that a world of sinners might truly know him as he truly is—Our God who *saves*. It is finished.

With these words Jesus says to you, “Salvation won. Salvation done. I have opened wide the gates of heaven for all mankind. I have kept all of the law perfectly for every person. I have paid for all sins – from the most heinous crimes to the seemingly simplest of sins, the ones you have forgotten about or didn’t even know about. Completely finished! I have suffered the agonies of hell that were reserved for sinners. I have endured the full punishment and anger of my Father. I have shed holy blood to redeem all mankind. And now, it is finished.”

There are no deeds left for you to do. There are no works you have to accomplish. There is no righteousness you have to earn. There is no price you have to pay. There are no words you have to say. There are no prayers you have to pray. There are no hymns you have to sing. There is no holiness you have to achieve. There is no goodness you have to acquire. Because it is finished. All who believe shall not perish but have everlasting life.

The Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last declares it to you from the distant past, up to the present, and on into the future, for all time “It is finished.”

Three words of truth. Three little words that give the peace which passes all understanding. Three little words that give rest as we carry heavy burdens, we know Jesus carried the heaviest load of all. Three little words that bring truth to my yoke is easy and my burden is light as we give all things, and our life, into the hands of God. Three little words to dry your tears when you are sad. Three little words to grasp when you feel guilty. Three little words to turn to in times of trouble. Three little words to comfort you when you are depressed. Three little words to grant holy-healing to your sin-sick soul in life and in death. It is finished. And furnished is place for you in paradise. Thanks to the Son who has finished the work of the Father, our salvation. Amen.