



“Meeting Jesus: He Finishes”

John 19:30

Dr. Jeff Reynolds

Sunday, September 20, 2020

Sermon Link: <https://bit.ly/2RLKGIM>

When we last left Jesus and His disciples, they were still in the Upper Room. Through five chapters of the Gospel of John, Jesus imparted to His disciples—and to us—some of the most deeply profound lessons ever taught. He served them, taught them, warned them, encouraged them, and prayed for them—and every bit of it was fueled by His great love for them. Because of His great love for us, He inspired the Apostle John to write it all down for our benefit. He wanted us to witness these things.

Now, we meet Jesus and His disciples as they are leaving the safety of the Upper Room to venture out to the places Jesus *must* go. They go the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus asks His disciples to keep watch as He prays. They can't stay awake for Him. Judas arrives with a band of soldiers so that he might betray Jesus into the hands of sinful men for thirty pieces of silver. Peter, who wants so badly to stand for Jesus, draws his sword and cuts the ear off of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest. Jesus, even as He is being betrayed and arrested, takes time to stop and heal this man who is there to arrest Him. He never stops being Jesus.

The soldiers lead Jesus away to face the High Priest where He must deal with false accusations from the religious leaders. As Jesus faces their questioning, Peter—who has followed at a distance—denies His Lord and Master three times. He weeps bitterly when he realizes what he has done.

Jesus is led by the Jewish leaders to Pilate, and they ask Pilate to bring judgement on Him. Pilate finds no fault in Him and seeks to release Him, but the Jews are insistent—they would rather have Barabbas the murderous insurrectionist released to them. They want Jesus crucified. They will get their wish.

Jesus is flogged, mocked, beaten, and led away to be crucified. They take Him out of the city to Golgotha—the Place of the Skull—where they nail Him to an old, rugged cross for all to see. As He hangs upon the cross, each breath getting more painful and shallow than the one before, they continue to mock Him, deride Him, and hurl insults at Him. After six excruciating hours on the cross, Jesus speaks one final sentence: “It is finished.” With that, He bows His head and gives up His spirit (see John 19:30).

Our Lord finished the work for which He had been sent, and it changed the world. Today, we will see some of the profound ways in which Jesus' finished work on the cross completely changes our eternal realities, and we will be blessed.

Big Idea – *Jesus finishes.*

1. Jesus finished the work for which the Father had sent Him.

Why did Jesus come to earth? In John 6, Jesus plainly tells us why He came:

John 6:37-40 - ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Notice what Jesus said His purpose was: to fulfill the will of the One who sent Him by losing nothing of all that the Father had given Him. He had come to provide eternal life to "whoever believes in Him" that they "should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). This truth is succinctly summarized by the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 1:15, as Paul writes, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." The reason Christ Jesus came into the world was to save sinners. How powerful! He came for us!

In order to save sinners, Jesus first had to fulfill the Law by living a life of perfect obedience to God. Remember, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). Indeed, Jesus had to become as one under the Law to fulfill the Law and thereby redeem those who were under the Law (see Galatians 4:4).

Jesus had to do what no one else had ever done: He had to live a life of complete and utter submission to God, not turning from the Law of God in any direction, not sinning one time in thought, word, deed, action, or attitude. He could not sin by commission—doing that which God had commanded ought not to be done—or by omission—failing to do that which God commanded to be done. Jesus had to live His entire lifetime without one single sin, and that's exactly what He did.

Why does that matter? Because Jesus was living a representative life. Nicholas Batzig puts it well: "Jesus lived a representative life. Jesus lived a sinless life, and it was, therefore, a life of representative sinlessness. Our Lord's obedience stands in the place of His people's sin. His law-keeping is counted as the law-keeping of those who have faith in Him" (*Tabletalk* magazine, April 1, 2011). Remember what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome:

Romans 5:17-19 - ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's [Adam's] trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Jesus lived the life we should've lived but didn't. He was fully and completely obedient to God in every respect, and He carried His perfect obedience all the way to "becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). When He died, Jesus' life of perfect obedience was fully and finally finished. It was finished.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection

1) Can you imagine living more than three decades without a single sin? The Bible says that Jesus "in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Can you imagine what that was like?

2. Jesus finished the payment for sin for all who would believe.

In order to save sinners, in addition to living a life without sin, Jesus also had to pay our debt of sin for us—and there's only one way to pay for sin: blood. The Bible tells us that “under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus had come to live under the Law, to fulfill the Law; but in order to atone for we who had broken the Law, Jesus had to bear the penalty of breaking the Law. What is that penalty? Death (see Romans 6:23).

This pattern of substitutionary atonement goes back to the Old Testament sacrificial system. The sacrificial system was an imperfect but commanded shadow of the cross. At the cross, Jesus fulfilled the entire sacrificial system, serving as our perfect substitutionary offering to God.

Most pointedly, Jesus is the fulfillment of the yearly Yom Kippur festival during which two goats would be brought to the priest. The priest would lay hands on the first goat, confess the sin of the people, and slaughter the goat. This goat served as the propitiating agent, taking the wrath of God in place of the people. The priest would then lay hands on the second, confess the sin of the people, and send the goat out of town. This goat—the scapegoat—served as the expiating agent, removing the shame of sin from the people (see Leviticus 16).

Jesus, through the cross, served as our substitute, our propitiation, and our expiation. He stood in our place, bore the awful and righteous wrath of God, and removed our sin and shame from us as far as the East is from the West. How did it work? There was a holy transaction that took place at the cross:

2 Corinthians 5:21 - ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

At the cross, Jesus—the perfect, sinless, spotless Lamb of God—took our sin upon Himself and bore in His body the wrath of God stored up for our sin. The Apostle Peter writes, “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth.... He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:22, 24).

What was the holy transaction that happened at the cross? Jesus took our sin upon Himself and died so that He might impart His perfect righteousness to us. We are not saved by our own righteousness—our righteous deeds are as filthy rags before our holy God (see Isaiah 64:6). Instead, we are saved by the righteousness of Christ that is gifted to us when we come to Jesus by faith. We cannot appeal to our own righteousness; we must appeal to His alone.

At the cross, Jesus took our sin and died so that He could give us His righteousness that we might live. His single sacrifice was enough to fully pay the price for our sin. In the Old Testament sacrificial system, the sacrifices had to be repeated regularly to cover new sins.

Hebrews 10:11-14 - ¹¹And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

By contrast, Jesus' payment for our sin was fully and finally made at the cross, once for all. It was finished.

Questions for Reflection/Discussion

1) Why does it matter that Jesus' death on the cross paid our debt of sin in full?

3. Jesus will finish the good work He has begun in us.

What does all this mean for us? If you have repented of sin and placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, it means everything. We will focus on two major outcomes of the cross for us.

First, Jesus' life of perfect obedience to God and substitutionary death on the cross means that we who trust and follow Jesus have been justified before God. The penalty for our sin has been fully and finally paid, and we are legally declared by God to be righteous based solely upon the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Remember how the Apostle Paul stated this truth as he wrote to the church at Rome:

Romans 3:21-25 - ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

Romans 4:6 - And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness

Romans 8:33-34 - ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

In other words, when you stand before God in judgement, you have one appeal and one only—Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to pay for your sin and who graciously imputed His righteousness to you.

Second, Jesus' life of perfect obedience to God and substitutionary death on the cross means that we who trust and follow Jesus are being sanctified. Sanctification is the progressive process by which God makes us holy. Through Christ, God has declared us legally righteous (that's justification); now He is making us experientially righteous (that's sanctification). This is what the writer of Hebrews means by saying, "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

So what is the bottom line? Because of the cross, we who trust and follow Jesus have been declared righteous in Christ; and because of the cross, we who trust and follow Jesus are being made righteous like Christ. It is finished, and it will be completed. Paul helps us embrace this reality in his letter to the church at Philippi:

Philippians 1:6 - ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Can you be certain that you are saved? Yes. Can you be certain that you will go to Heaven to be with God when you die? Yes. Can you know that God will see you through until the return of Christ? Yes. Why? Because if you are in Christ, the work required for those things to be true for you has been... *finished by Jesus!*

Questions for Reflection/Discussion

1) Do you find yourself hoping you will go to Heaven when you die or knowing you will go to Heaven when you die? Can you be certain of your salvation? How?

2) If God were to ask you why He should let you into Heaven, what would your answer be?

Final Thought

Three little words. Just three. “It is finished.” So simple. So profound. So life-changing. For those of us who trust and follow Jesus, we stand in the finished work of Christ on the cross, knowing that our hope of eternal life has been secured by what Jesus has done. He has lived the life we should’ve lived but didn’t. He has died the death we deserved to die so that we wouldn’t have to. He has taken our place, paid for our sin, and declared us to be righteous by His blood. He is currently working in us that which is pleasing in His sight to make us more like Him. He has declared us to be perfect for all time, and He is making us holy even now.

In 1707, Isaac Watts was preparing for a communion service in his church and decided that they needed a hymn to accompany their celebration of the Lord Supper—the meal given by Christ to commemorate His death. Watts penned a hymn entitled, “Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ;” we know it today as “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” As you ponder the meaning of the cross of Christ and all that He has accomplished for, be encouraged by these beautiful words:

“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” Isaac Watts

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

*See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

You can listen to a beautiful rendition of the song here: <https://youtu.be/2Aq9KISzaAo>