

IT IS FINISHED

John 19:17-30

In the play *Steel Magnolias*, we see the story of a mother who donated a kidney to her daughter who had lost the use of her kidneys. The story ends on a note of sadness in that the daughter eventually died anyway. What Jesus did for us on the Cross goes beyond such sacrifice. Back in the 1950s, during the Korean War, there was a story of Kim, a little Korean boy who lived in an orphanage. One of the other children there was wounded and had lost a lot of blood and a blood transfusion was needed. It was found that Kim had the right blood type and he agreed to give blood to save the life of his little friend. As the blood was being transferred from Kim to the other child, the nurse noticed tears on the boy's face. She was concerned that the needle was hurting him and asked if that were the case. Kim told her that he was not hurting, so she asked what was the matter. He just looked up at her and asked, "When am I going to die?" He thought that he would be giving all his blood to save his friend's life. This is the kind of love that God has for us and yet what Jesus did for us on the Cross goes beyond such sacrifice.

While the mother who donates a kidney and the boy who gives his blood are applauded for their unselfishness, Jesus was jeered, mocked and scorned. He was betrayed, brutally beaten and abused then nailed to a cross that was raised up for all to see. He was crucified between two thieves and thought to be as they were. He was challenged to come down from the cross and save Himself and the irony of it all was that He could have if He had not loved us so much.

Raised – 19:17-22

¹⁶ So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, ¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." John 19:16–22 (ESV)

The method of Jesus' death has significance in what it communicates to us. The Old Testament tells us "cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." The curse of the law (the soul that sins, it shall die) passed upon Jesus so that we are delivered from it. This was something He did for us. He was crucified between two criminals and in that way the saying "He was reckoned among the transgressors" was fulfilled. The number of prophecies fulfilled during the time of our Lord's passion is truly amazing. The most graphic prophecy is the Psalm of the Cross (Psalm 22).

The Jews had caused Pilate much grief with this matter of what to do with Jesus. Pilate was determined to get even. This situation is somewhat ironic that the sign Pilate had made stated the truth even though he did not believe it. That sign above Jesus was a not-so-subtle warning to the rest of the Jews of what might happen to them if they got out of line. Pilate did not know that he was proclaiming the universal dominion of Jesus, and prophesying that wisdom as represented by Greece, law and imperial power as represented by Rome, and all previous revelation as represented by Israel, would yet bow before the Crucified, and recognize that His Cross was His throne.

We can examine the actions of Pilate and gain some insight as to the kind of person he was with regard to what he valued. He apparently did not value the concept of "justice based on truth" in that he was quick to cave-in to the demands of the Jews and their leaders to crucify Jesus. On the other hand, he showed firmness and obstinacy in refusing to change the words on

a sign that he had created in an effort to taunt the Jews. He gave in on the important issue and stood firm on what he thought was a trivial put-down of the Jews. Actually, Pilate's words to the Jewish leaders (v. 22) had a more tragic meaning than he knew, for 'what he had written' on his own life-page on that day could never be erased, and will confront him in eternity. Alexander MacLaren concluded: "We are all writing an imperishable record, and we shall have to read it out hereafter, and acknowledge our handwriting."

Planned – 19:23-24

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, ²⁴ so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things, John 19:23–24 (ESV)

The Roman soldiers who carried out their assigned duties had become accustomed to (or deadened to) what those humans being who were being crucified were experiencing. That should serve as a warning to us who repeatedly see violence and mayhem happening in our major cities that we, too, can become apathetic and uncaring as we watch suffering and death happening to others. We can also develop such apathy as we repeatedly see blatant disregard for the laws of decency that are rampant in the world today. We can become "blind" to what we are actually seeing.

The prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in even the seemingly insignificant acts of the Roman soldiers. A thousand years earlier, David had written about the events of the cross and in Psalm 22:18 ("they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots") had recorded exactly what happened when Christ was on the cross.

This is only one of many things that were foreshadowed in the Old Testament that were fulfilled that day. The fact that Jesus had carried the wooden cross beam would point us back to Isaac and Abraham in that Isaac carried the wood for the fire upon which Abraham would offer his promised son. The fact that Simon of Cyrene was drafted to help carry the load, pointed forward to the fact that the Gentiles would be called upon to carry on the work of taking the message of salvation to the world. The crucifixion took place outside the city walls which was in agreement with the way some of the ritual sacrifices were handled. Even the appearance of the ground upon which the cross was placed (looked like a skull) can be linked to the prophecy in Genesis 3 which predicted that the "seed of the woman" would crush the head (skull) of the serpent.

Starting in Isaiah 52:13 and continuing through all of chapter 53 we can find many statements that are obviously references to Christ and the events of His death and resurrection and the implications and impact on the world. A complete study of these correlations would show that even the most cynical skeptic would be hard pressed to argue that all these are just coincidences. A list of what Isaiah saw is amazing: He will act wisely, He will be raised, lifted up and highly exalted; many were appalled at His appearance – so disfigured by the beatings; He will provide cleansing for the nations; leaders will come to realize what He had accomplished; He was not special in His outward appearance – that would attract people; He was despised and rejected by mankind; He was not respected (esteemed) by those in power; He endured suffering and sorrow; in taking on our sin, many thought He was being punished by God; His body was pierced, He was bruised, and whipped; our iniquity was piled upon Him; He was compliant in His death as a sheep being slaughtered; His grave was with the wicked (nearby the place where criminals were executed) and with the rich (the tomb was owned by a wealthy person); He lived

a sinless life (no violence, no deceit); He was an offering for sin; what happened was according to God's plan; and God was pleased with His offering (as evidenced by the resurrection).

Honored – 19:25-27

²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. John 19:25–27 (ESV)

John sets in strong contrast the two groups around the Cross – the emotionless soldiers and the sad family and friends. It is difficult to imagine what it would be like to have to see a family member or friend undergoing the suffering that Jesus was experiencing. Those images would be burned into their memory and I would guess would produce something similar to post traumatic stress disorder. Five people are mentioned as being in close proximity to the cross. In addition to John (who was likely in his early twenties), there were three women named Mary and one named Salome who was the sister of Jesus' mother and the mother of John. The second Mary was identified with a person named Clopas. It is not certain if she was the wife, mother, or daughter of Clopas. Most translations assume that she was the wife of Clopas. It is uncertain who Clopas was. Some have speculated that he was the brother of Joseph. The third Mary was the person whom Jesus had delivered from being possessed by seven demons. Four of the five people definitely had very close family ties (mother, two aunts and a nephew), while the fifth had experienced a dramatic life-changing experience from her association with Jesus. It is not surprising to find these five feeling compelled and being drawn to where Jesus was in spite of the trauma it produced.

Little did Mary realize 34 years earlier that it would come to this when the angel announced to her she was going to have a son who would be the savior of the world. There were times when she sought Jesus to get Him to come back home because she did not understand what He was doing. However, at the last, she was there, probably confused and hurting because of what was happening to Jesus.

Jesus had promised His disciples He would send another Comforter after He was gone; however, there were other issues that needed to be addressed beyond spiritual concerns. Having someone He could count on to provide for the physical well-being of His mother was not to be overlooked.

Finished – 19:28-30

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:28–30 (ESV)

Jesus was in control of His emotions during this time. He did not lash out at those who were unjustly killing Him. During the final minutes on the cross, Jesus was physically weakened and our physical needs can naturally make themselves known.

So, how do we rise above the situations and circumstances in our lives? If we follow the example of Jesus, then we find that first of all we must be about the business of taking up our cross rather than avoiding it. We don't call ten thousand angels when situations come in which we are to put self to death. If we recognize that God is at work in our lives to transform us into the likeness of Jesus, then we can also recognize that by accepting the cross we are cooperating with God in His work in our lives. We may seem to be defeated (as people thought Jesus was when He was on the cross) but we need to know the rest of the story. Jesus told His disciples He would rise again. If we die with Him, then we shall also rise with Him.

As previously mentioned, many things that happened at the crucifixion were foretold in the Old Testament scriptures. He was beaten and Isaiah said that by His stripes we are healed. He was crucified between two thieves and we are told that He was counted among the transgressors. His clothes were divided by the soldiers and David prophesied that they would cast lots for his vesture. Even the giving of vinegar for His thirst was foretold (Ps 69:20-21).

Jesus knew these scriptures and knew what they meant. He knew that what was happening was the fulfillment of God's promises. He also knew that what He was doing was the only way to provide salvation for fallen mankind and His love compelled Him to stay on the cross and to take the abuse and scorn that were heaped upon Him. The hours dragged by until about mid-afternoon and then Jesus died.

He was even in control of His death. At the appointed time, He said "It is finished" and with that He released His spirit. It is likely that Jesus spoke those words in Aramaic (and not Greek). In Aramaic He would have said "mashelem" which comes from the root word shelem and is the same root word that "shalom" or "peace" comes from. (The prefix letters "ma" simply indicates an infinitive verb form of the term.) Most commentaries suggest that the meaning of His words was that His mission had been accomplished and He was to return to the Father.

There is likely more to it than that. It was not only that He was saying that the horrific ordeal was about to end, but that what He came to do was accomplished. He had paid the price to redeem us from slavery to sin, He had defeated Satan and broken his power so that we might sin no more, He was the fulfillment of the sacrificial system as the "spotless Lamb of God." He became the scapegoat in that God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. His shed blood became our atonement as it covers the sins that we have committed. In His death on the Cross we died with Him to sin and to self and are thus made free to have "new life." As we can appreciate, the things that the ordeal of the cross accomplished were all foreshadowed in the Old Testament scriptures of the events, the rites, and the rituals that the people of Israel had experienced during the previous fifteen hundred years.

Even going beyond all that, this statement also appears to be the same words that God had spoken to Jacob during the encounter he had with God when the ladder appeared to him when he was leaving home to find a wife among Abraham's kinsmen. It was during this incident that God told Jacob, I will not leave you nor forsake you until all that I have promised you is completed or finished. The crowning part of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was that in Abraham's Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed which is what happened on the Cross of Christ.