

The Sixth Word From the Cross.

Text: John 19:30

Suggested Hymns:

82 Pt. 6, 733, 73, 375, 81

1) The dying Saviour's victorious cry

2) Prophecy is fulfilled

3) Types are finished

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the Sixth Word from the Cross John 19:30, ³⁰ *So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!"* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Again we are standing today in spirit, in our Passion meditation, under the cross of our Saviour. For three hours there had been a most mysterious darkness, a supernatural gloom, spread over the whole land, filling the hearts of all with terror and consternation.

But now the sun shines forth again after those three hours in Oriental brightness, disclosing to us the tragic scene on Calvary's hill. Transfixed to the accursed tree we see the innocent Victim, our Saviour, faint from loss of blood, parched with thirst, the nerves of His hands and feet bearing the whole weight of the exhausted frame.

A surging sea of human beings are beneath Him, while two ruffian thieves are struggling in great agonies at His side. As we approach a little closer, we hear our Saviour speak. It is the sixth time. And what does He say?

Every utterance that fell from His lips is of course precious to us; but full of particular solemnity are those sayings spoken on the cross, when His eyes were about to close in death.

It is but a brief exclamation, this sixth word, a word of a few syllables, yet one of the most significant in the history of man. In our language the words read: *"It is finished."*

Let us consider the sixth word from the cross. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Dying Saviour's Victorious Cry.

“*When,*” reads our text, “*Jesus had received the sour wine,*” when the divine Sufferer had taken the refreshing drink from the sponge that had been held up to His lips and a thrill of revivifying strength passed through His parched body, He opened His lips and in pronounced accents said, “*It is finished.*”

Finished? What? “*It,*” leaving us to ascertain outside our text the answer. Naturally, as that Garden scene rises before our vision, we would say: His suffering is finished, His physical pain is finished.

To recall the incidents of the previous hours, remember how Jesus had agonised in the Garden, with the red beads of blood-stained sweat trickling down His face! What violence had been done to Him in Pontius Pilate's judgement-hall when they ploughed up His back with scourges, drove the crown of thorns into His brow, and placed upon His lacerated form the weight of the cross till, fainting, He gave way under it; followed by the horrors and tortures of the crucifixion itself.

These were now over, ended. Nor was it only this. The cessation of physical suffering is not sufficient to justify this outcry. There was more in the cross than physical agony.

There is a picture which represents the scene on Calvary on the evening after the Saviour's body had been taken down and laid in the grave. *The cross is empty. An angel picks up the crown of thorns which lies at the foot of the cross, feeling with the tip of his finger one of the sharp points. His face wears a look of mystery and wonder. He is trying to understand what it was that caused such grief to his Lord.*

And we, too, take up in spirit the crown of thorns and feel the prickliness of it, take the nails and touch their rugged points, raise the spear that penetrated His side and pierced His heart, and ask, *Was it these alone which caused such agony to our Lord?* And we have to answer, No.

The thorns are sharp, the spear is keen, the nails are rugged, but it was more than these, that created such anguish and agony for the Crucified.

Already in the Garden of Gethsemane, where no impious hand had been placed upon Him, no ruthless nails and spear had pierced His frame, He had exclaimed: ***“My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even to death.”***¹

Far more than the physical sufferings that our Lord bore, deeper, infinitely greater and severer, were the spiritual sufferings He endured, the sorrows that evoked from His bosom that tremendous cry: ***“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”***²

But now, at the utterance of this cry, all the sharp, deep pain, the constant anguish of sorrow, all the aching of heart, the inward struggle, was over. ***“It is finished.”***

2. Prophecy Is Fulfilled

But these words have a still profounder significance. To understand them properly, we must take into our hands the sacred pages of the Old Testament. There we are told, in its very first pages, that as soon as sin had entered into this world, there was given to man the promise of a Redeemer, who was to crush the head of the serpent, a promise which was continually repeated throughout a period of four thousand years and which grew more clear and distinct as the ages rolled by.

As when the water of the Flood had subsided, a rainbow was placed in the clouds to assure people that the earth would no more perish with a flood of water, so when that more terrible flood, the flood of sin, entered into the world, God gave these glorious promises, which, like a rainbow in the heavens, foretold to God’s ancient people the salvation to be accomplished in the fullness of time.

Let us consider a few familiar promises. There is Zechariah’s prophecy: ***“So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver.”***³ There is David’s prophecy: ***“They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.”***⁴ There is Isaiah’s prediction: ***“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”***⁵

Again, another prophetic word: ***“Not one of His bones shall be broken.”***³⁷ ***And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”***⁶

And when you turn to the accounts of the holy evangelists, you marvel how minutely and marvellously exact, to the smallest jot and tittle, these and other Messianic predictions were fulfilled as Christ hung suspended upon the cross.

And because Jesus knew all this and had in His person accomplished all these predictions, He exclaimed, "*It is finished.*"

3. Types Are Now Are Finished

But not only the promises and prophecies were fulfilled, but also the types and foreshadows. With the entrance of sin into the world men were taught to come to God by sacrifice.

Thus we read immediately after the Fall that Abel, the second son of Adam, brought of the firstlings of his flock and offered them to God upon an altar. What was the meaning of that? It typified, foreshadowed, pointed forward to, that sacrifice of the promised Redeemer on the altar of the cross.

Likewise with Noah, Abraham, and all the patriarchs. And when the Jews became a nation, they had their Tabernacle and built their Temple, God appointed for them a most strict and elaborate system of sacrifices and offerings. Constantly and daily they had to bring them, but especially significant was the sacrifice on the Great Day of Atonement, which corresponds to our Good Friday.

On that day two goats were selected, one of which was slain and its blood taken by the high priest into the Holy of Holies, the most sacred part of the Tabernacle and the Temple, and there it was sprinkled on the mercy-seat, the top of the Ark of the Covenant. The other goat, after the sins of the people had been confessed over its head by the high priest, was led out into the wilderness to typify the carrying away of sins.

What impressive scenes! What did they set forth? A child may understand it. The tragedy on Calvary.

Nor were the prophecies and sacrifices the only things that met their fulfilment, but also many incidents!

We see Moses lifting up the serpent of bronze in the wilderness on a pole with a cross-beam, having the exact shape of a cross.

We see Abraham, the patriarch, climbing up Mount Moriah, binding his son, his only son, his beloved son, Isaac, upon an altar in sacrifice, and yes, raising his hand to kill him. Why is that recorded in the Bible?

Or again, see those men on that tragic night when the angel of death goes forth in the land of Egypt to kill all the first-born in every family. They kill a lamb without blemish and without spot, take of its blood, sprinkle it on the doorposts and the lintels, and the avenging angel passes-over their blood-marked house.

When and where and in whom were all these incidents of the Old Testament fulfilled? Here and now, in Jesus' death on Good Friday.

Let us direct our attention to one special circumstance: Our Lord, we read, was crucified at the third hour of the day, that is, at nine o'clock, the Jews calculating the day from six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening.

Now, it was at the third hour of the day that, according to God's regulation, a lamb had to be placed upon the altar in the Temple, of which notification was given to the people by the sound of a silver trumpet, whereupon the people would engage in prayer.

Our Lord, we heard, was placed upon the altar of the cross at that very hour, and we may fairly imagine that at the moment when the cross was uplifted, with Him riveted to it, there was heard from the Temple the pealing of the silver trumpet notifying the presentation of the morning sacrifice. Here, lifted up at that hour, was the Great Sacrifice.

Then again, according to God's regulation, at the ninth hour, accordingly three o'clock in the afternoon, the evening sacrifice had to be offered. That was the very hour that the Saviour expired on the cross, and the blast of the Temple trumpet, wafted by the wind over Calvary, was coincident with the voice from the cross, declaring, "*It is finished.*"

That was the one great sacrifice to which all those sacrifices in the Temple pointed forward and from which they received their significance. Oh, for the wonderfulness, the depth of meaning, the key which that word, "*It is finished,*" puts into our hands to understand the Old Testament Scriptures!

And so we say that the great work for which that Man, the God-man, came into the world, was finished. What work? None other than the salvation of man. We read in Acts 4:12, ¹² *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*”

The hymnist wrote,⁷

O perfect life of love!
All, all, is finished now;
All that He left His throne above
To do for us below.

No work is left undone
Of all the Father willed;
His toil, His sorrows, one by one,
The Scripture have fulfilled.

And on His thorn-crowned head,
And on His sinless soul,
Our sins in all their guilt were laid,
That He might make us whole.

That is the deepest, fullest meaning of that sixth word from the cross. Atonement, reconciliation, between God and man, redemption, is finished, completed. The glorious, momentous achievement!

And now, what does that mean to us, and how ought it to affect us? We read that when God had concluded the creation of this world, when He had made heaven and earth and all that is on it, and at the end of the sixth day surveyed what He had made, He pronounced His divine sentence upon it.

We read: ³¹ *Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.*”⁸ And *the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy.*⁹ With what greater exultation, do you think, must He have regarded the still grander work of His Son’s redemption when there sounded over the bleak hill of Golgotha His triumphant cry, *“It is finished!”*

We can hear God the Father speaking, as it were, *“It is good, My beloved Son, very good,”* and the hosts of heaven chanting forth as they did at His birth, *“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”*¹⁰

And we, for whom this entire transaction has been appointed, are we to be unaffected when God in heaven and the angels in heaven exult in that way? For what does it mean to us?

You are a great sinner, are you not, subject to God’s wrath and eternal condemnation? Nevermore, comes a voice from Calvary - *“It is finished.”* *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus”*¹¹

You are a child of death, a sure victim of the grim King of Terrors. Nevermore, comes a voice from Calvary - *“It is finished.”* *“O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”*¹²

But you are not perfectly holy, are you? Satan still has some claim on you. Nevermore, comes a voice from Calvary - *“It is finished.”* *“You are Mine.”*¹³ *“I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands.”*¹⁴

In the words of Luther, *The old evil foe Now means deadly woe; but He can harm us none; He’s judged, for e’er undone; One little word can fell him.* One little word - *“It is finished,”* can fell him.

Since that great victory on Calvary, sin, death, and Satan are powerless, harmless foes. Oh, that we might once and for all grasp that!

Let nothing, no fears, no doubts, no false teachings, rob us of that comforting assurance. But oh, what an obligation, cheerful, whole-souled obligation, it puts us under when we consider at what a tremendous sacrifice we obtained it!

And is there anything that we should begrudge our Lord and Saviour or withhold from Him? Could we ever fail to do anything that would please Him?

Let us duly ponder the words:¹⁵ —

And Thou hast brought to me
Down from Thy home above,
Salvation full and free,
Thy pardon and Thy love;
Great gifts Thou broughtest me:

What have I brought to Thee?

As we lift up the eye of faith and hope to Christ's bleeding, dying form, let this be our answer: —

O let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent,
World's fetters all be riven,
And pain with joy be blent!
Thou gav'st Thyself for me:
I give myself to Thee. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 26:38

² Matthew 27:46

³ Zechariah 11:12

⁴ Psalm 22:18

⁵ Isaiah 53:5

⁶ John 19:36–37

⁷ Hymn 81

⁸ Genesis 1:31

⁹ Job 28:7

¹⁰ Luke 2:14

¹¹ Romans 8:1

¹² 1 Corinthians 15:55

¹³ Isaiah 43:1

¹⁴ Isaiah 49:16

¹⁵ Hymn 375