

## It is Finished – The Sixth Word Wednesday Vespers – March 24, 2021

### John 19:28-30

<sup>28</sup>After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.” <sup>29</sup>A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So, they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup>When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

*“It is finished.”*

“It is finished” is not the last gasp of a defeated man. “It is finished” is not another way of saying, “I’m done for.” And according to the traditional order of the words on this day, “It is finished” are not even Christ’s last words from the cross. No, “It is finished” is a cry of victory...It is a way of saying, “I’m NOT done for.” It is a triumphal affirmation that what he came to do has now been done. All is accomplished... all is completed... all is fulfilled. What that meant precisely depends on who you talked to. To **Pilate and the Roman government**, it was a welcome relief. It was hard enough ruling over a people with such a different culture... but particularly during their freedom festival – the Passover. Who knows? There may be demonstrations or riots or even worse. One can never be too careful! “Finished” for the **Jewish religious leaders** meant they had successfully rescued God from another “would-be Messiah” ... they had saved God from one who strayed much too far from the accepted ways... plus it meant they got to keep their control and power, their wealth and prestige. Since Jesus offended them... they were sure he offended God, too. And they couldn’t have all those people going after him.

For his **disciples and followers**, “finished” meant something very different. For them it was the end of a life-size dream... the dashing of all their big hopes... a disappointment almost too much to bear. For all the times he had told them what was coming, they chose not to believe him... and now - with his crucifixion – their sense of loss was great... not only the loss of his flesh and blood presence, but of their courage... their hope... their dreams.

“It is finished” means something different to Pilate and the Jewish leaders and the disciples, but to **Jesus**, “It is finished” was deeper. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus is a man on a mission. God sent him into this world for a purpose and he is going to accomplish it. “For I have come down,” he says, “not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.” My food... my very food... is to do the will of the One who sent me and to complete his work.” And it is this mission... this calling... this purpose that he pronounces finished... done... accomplished.

**And how about us?** What does “It is finished” mean to us? Well, at the risk of over simplifying, it means it IS truly finished. That what ONLY CHRIST can do, he has done. and there is nothing we can add to it.

Now, I realize that’s hard for us to believe. Christ’s work couldn’t possibly be finished... there’s got to be more we have to do - to make ourselves worthy of it... to earn it... to secure it.

Saving Private Ryan is a movie which tells the story of a band of Army Rangers who, after the invasion of Normandy, are ordered to find and bring home a young paratrooper named James Ryan. His three brothers have already been killed in action and General George Marshall orders that he be returned safely to his parents. Though the mission is ultimately successful, men die saving Private Ryan and toward the end of the movie the character played by Tom Hanks looks up at him, and as he lay dying, says, "James, earn this... earn this." Well, the final scene in the movie shows Private Ryan as a much older man. Many decades have passed... and he is making a pilgrimage to the grave of the man who died saving him. Once there, Ryan collapses in tears because all his life he has been tormented by the thought that he has not earned the sacrifice.

Jesus says, "It is finished" and what is over is our need to be our own creators. What is over is our need to secure ourselves... to somehow make ourselves deserving... to save ourselves.

Christ's sacrifice is a gift that exceeds every sinful debt. Our sin has been consumed, my friends, making possible lives that are truly free: making us MEN with a mission... WOMEN with a calling... CHILDREN with a purpose – and that purpose is to witness to the great, glad news that Jesus Christ has finished what he came to do. Amen.