"It Is Finished!" -- John 19:28-30"

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
4 April Anno Domini 2001
Wednesday Vespers
Pastor Michael L. McCoy

"For He has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted;
and He has not hid His face from Him,
but has heard, when He cried to Him."
Psalm 22:24

Dear Baptized,

There came a moment in created time on that first Friday when God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them (Genesis 1:31-2:1). It was finished and there was a perfect creation and behold, it was very good. Ahh , yes indeed, such was Paradise. But did you notice the tense in the verbs - the past tense? There was a perfect creation and behold, it was very good. Such was Paradise. Was does not mean is and we know this to be true. The whole creation that was very good suddenly wasn't and all of creation and every part of creation had fallen and was continually progressing to a date with death. Thus the creation groaned for the first time as Adam and Eve, and you and me were finished. It is most certainly true that this would be the situation unless the Creator interceded. All would be lost. What would God do?

Dear Baptized,

There came a moment in created time on that other Friday - that one tens of thousands of Fridays later - that Good Friday when Jesus saw everything that He had done, and behold, it was perfect and complete. And there was evening and there was morning, and lo, there was more, because on that one particular sixth day of the week there was another evening and it began at noon and from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land (Matthew 27:45). Thus, near the end of that midday night, we hear Jesus speak His sixth Word from the cross ...

It is finished!

After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture) 'I thirst.' A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of vinegar on hyssop and held it to His mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, 'It is finished'; and He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit.

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

The Incarnate Son of God had suffered unimaginable agony, the onslaught of the devil, the accosting

by the hellish forces of darkness, the mockings of man, the abandonment by His disciples, the awful sorrows of being forsaken by God and the raging thirst and dehydration of Body and Soul. Jesus knows that all had now been done and He sought to declare it. His lungs and throat and mouth and lips are parched. In order to speak some moisture must be applied. As the Old Testament Scripture prophesies what the Messiah would be said, Jesus calls out, I thirst. There is vinegar in a bowl and some of this acid is daubed on His mouth with the passover hyssop. Immanuel speaks the one word that all of history has been pointing at, moving toward and waiting to hear ... tetelestai ... It is finished!

This is a statement of the truth from Jesus the Christ. It is finished is a declaration made to His Father. The faithful Son has done what He was sent to do, for God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son (John 3:16). In His Life, Jesus has actively obeyed the Law on behalf of all people, doing so perfectly. In His Death, Jesus has taken upon Himself all that has been required in order to be a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:2), doing so completely. The Incarnate Son of God had prayed, Father, forgive them (Luke 23:34) and then presented Himself as the Offering that would make it possible. Father, 'It is finished,' for all that You sent Me to do is done and complete and fulfilled and accomplished.

Not only is this a declaration made to the Father, but also is it an announcement made to and realized by the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan (Revelation 20:2) and his lost legion. The Paradise promised Savior is here on the cross and His saving act is now accomplished. Certainly the Roman nail has pierced the feet of Jesus and the satanic spike has bruised the heel of the Savior, but in this being done, the head of the Devil and the head of all demons has been crushed in the death blow administered on the cursed tree impaled on Golgotha's bloody ground. Satan, 'It is finished,' and you and the other fallen angels have been defeated and are now being kept in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great Day (Jude 6).

This word, It is finished , is spoken to those in a dark world - to those at the cross - people who heard Jesus speak on that day. It is finished is the proclamation of the Gospel that the complete payment for all sins has been made - that the atonement for all transgressions is accomplished. Those who were at the Place of the Skull were able to Listen to Him as He said, It is finished!

So both the impenitent thief and the repentant one heard the Gospel of salvation which was now fully accomplished. Jesus' mother heard that all of her sins had been placed upon her Son and that He had paid the awful price for them and provided salvation for her, just as He had for the other woman who stood at a distance, for the Roman centurion who the overseer of the executions, for the religious leaders who craved the death of the middle Man, for the disciple whom Jesus loved, for the soldiers who were killing time by tossing dice, and for anyone who was there when they crucified the Lord.

Were there some who heard Jesus say this and not understand or believe what His Word meant? Yes. Were there any there who didn't understand at that point but who would understand later? Yes. But these are not the questions that we have been called to address. Let's consider what we know for sure. There was a man there who heard Jesus It is finished and later wrote of what was accomplished on the cross.

Decades later, the elderly Apostle John would write: My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the

righteous; and He is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:1-2).

Months earlier Jesus told the Pharisee named Nicodemus , As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life (John 3:14-15). Here it was that the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) is lifted up - is exalted and thus has earned, suffered, accomplished and provided the objective, complete atonement for all. Jesus said, 'It is finished.' He did this once, for all when He offered up Himself (Hebrews 7:27).

But what of those who were not there - what of you and me? We did not hear Him say, It is finished. Nevertheless, this is the message that has been given to the church and entrusted to her pastors and teachers. The sins of the world, and that includes every one of yours, has been charged to Christ when He was crucified. It is the privilege of the congregation who has been given the Gospel and particularly those entrusted with the stewardship of the mysteries of God to share and proclaim the Gospel to those within the Church and to bring to those outside the Church the message of salvation - the Good News concerning Christ's payment for all transgressions and the salvation He has earned, It is finished. Therefore, Listen to Him.

In the beginning the Holy Spirit moved over the water at the first creation and this He also did at your re-creation. There came a moment in created time when the Holy Spirit wrought faith in your heart for do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (Romans 6:2). You who have been cleansed by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) - and you may say, I have been crucified with Christ; it is not longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me (Galatians 2:20). Therefore, you who have been crucified with Christ may indeed say, It is finished!

The High Priest said, It is finished and thus we are able to know what was occupying the mind, heart and soul of Jesus when He was on the cross. His thoughts were on the Scripture being fulfilled and on making a sufficient Sacrifice for all people and accomplishing everything that needed to be done and He waited until its completion. This He did and this He proclaimed when He said, It is finished. This is Christ Jesus, the Suffering Servant, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2) and this He endured in order to say, It is finished.

Please recall this from the mouth of the Savior. Hours earlier, when with His disciples, Jesus had prayed His High Priestly Prayer, Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son that the Son may glorify Thee, since Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent. I glorified Thee on earth, 'having accomplished' the work which Thou gavest Me to do; and now, Father, glorify Thou Me in Thy own Presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made (John 17:1-5). Amen.