

It Is Finished!
Sermon for Good Friday
Sermon Text: John 19:16-30



So he delivered Him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, ¹⁷and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. ¹⁹Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ²⁰Many 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. ²¹So 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.'" ²²Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." ²³When 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, ²⁴so 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, ²⁵but standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. ²⁸After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." ²⁹A 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. ³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished," and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Around the same time that Jesus died on the cross, around 2,000 other Jews were crucified by the Romans. So some people wonder what was so special about Jesus' death and suffering on the cross. To answer this question, we must perhaps first ask where evil comes from in the first place. Even in our time, there are terrible things that concern us. Right now, so many innocent people are dying in various wars around the world. Where does it all come from and why? This is the question that is brought before us quite drastically on the cross. With crucifixion, someone has to suffer a horrible death. Surrounding the crucified person are the perpetrators, the onlookers, the others who were also accused, and God. Jesus dying on the cross challenges us in a special way because what happens there affects each of us very personally. My fate and yours will be decided there. Golgotha... who am I on this mountain? And how will I return home when this day has come to an end? Where is my Golgotha?

From the Gospel of John, it first becomes clear that Golgotha wasn't just the random fate of an individual but was ordained by God Himself. We could actually superimpose Psalm 22 over Jesus' crucifixion because everything that is already written there is accomplished in Jesus' crucifixion. Four Roman soldiers are sitting under Jesus' cross. They are casting lots for the tunic of our Lord Jesus Christ. This appears to be a trivial thing but if we look closer, all of it has a deeper meaning. Jesus' tunic is without a seam, as is the tunic of the high priest. Jesus therefore appears as the true High Priest. This would be a trivial matter if John had not written: *"This was to fulfill the Scripture"* We find the same scriptural reference again when Jesus cried out for water with a parched throat. These two trivial moments give us an insight into what actually happened on the cross, for all this was described in detail in Psalm 22. There we also find the words of our Lord again: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" John wants to tell us that Good Friday is not the great hour of darkness, but the great hour of God. There on the cross, it is not a miserable man who has failed because of the wickedness of mankind, but it is God fulfilling His plan,

which He had already determined in the Old Testament. Perhaps you know the movie about the Titanic. People achieved something great and when the ship sank, they cried out: "We are doomed! We have suffered a complete defeat and have made a mistake!" Jesus' words on the cross are not the words of someone who has made a mistake and therefore suffered defeat. He doesn't say: "It was all in vain and for nothing." Instead, Jesus' last words were: "It is finished." The Greek word used here means "to reach the goal." So it is a message of victory. Everything that could have meaning for our lives is summarized in the cross of Jesus. Hope, comfort, future, peace, reconciliation, protection from evil, overcoming death! All of this is accomplished on the cross!

When we look at the events of the cross, we realize that Jesus doesn't want anyone to be left out of this great work that is for all of us. He still cares for the everyday worries of His mother from the cross. Mary had once received a message from an angel that she would become pregnant. Since then, she has experienced many things with Jesus. She had seen His miracles and now she also walked the final path with Him to the cross. She hoped, prayed, and suffered until the very end. Jesus turns to her, sees her, and doesn't leave her alone which is why He says these words: "Woman, behold your son!" Joseph had probably already died, and His disciple John would now take Mary into his house. According to early church stories, John moved to Ephesus with Mary and there they were buried. This moment from the cross shows us that Jesus sees what His mother needs. She shouldn't be alone, but a part of the community. Jesus entrusts His mother Mary to John as well as to the church. God's word will strengthen her. In this small moment, it becomes clear that the One who has perfected everything continues to provide pastoral care for the individual.

Pilate had an inscription made which read: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." This was the sentence pronounced on Jesus. The meaning of this inscription is easy to explain: "Jesus" means God saves! "Of Nazareth" tells us that Jesus didn't appear like a spirit or heavenly being but was a real person with a very specific history, yet at the same time, He was the Savior of the world. The inscription was in three languages: Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. Today it would probably be written in English, Chinese, and Hindi. One thing is clear, it should say "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" in all languages. This Jesus is the Savior of the world. John describes the crucifixion of Jesus as God's greatest hour, not just for individuals but for the whole world. Yet many people to this day have not understood that. Jesus is our destiny and yet many have no access to Good Friday. Pilate was so close and yet he didn't understand Jesus. The soldiers standing under the cross were the ones who were closest to Jesus, but they had nothing better to do than play a cheap game of dice for His tunic. Sometimes they remind me of us as Christians. We are so close to Jesus, the Bible, and God. However, we still haven't understood it. We have suppressed the main point – that this Jesus died for us, for our sins, and instead, we are content with minor details. We argue about Jesus' clothing and fail to see Jesus Himself. We know John was at the foot of Jesus' cross, but where were the other disciples? They fled out of fear and disappointment. Most people are under the false impression that they can cope without Jesus in the worst moments of their lives or they flee from Him because they think that He doesn't really help them. We therefore prefer to manage our lives far away from Jesus. We think that we can cope with death on our own and we don't need anyone else for forgiveness. God knows better. Mary and John had no idea what God had planned for them, but they realized it later. There on the hill of Golgotha, it's about me and the evil that is stirring in my heart and the fact that I can't deal with it on my own. There on the cross, it's about a key being turned in a heavy door and the gate to heaven being opened. It's about the cherubim who guard heaven now standing invitingly in front of it and bringing us inside. It is finished! This is how Jesus completed this moment. Amen.