

Good Friday

The Seven Last Words - "It is finished!" and "Father, 'into Your hands I commit my spirit.'"

St. John 19:30; St. Luke 23:46

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The lifeless body of God hangs on the cross. It was a short life of about 33 years for the eternal Word. "The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:14) Humbly, the Son of God began His fleshy existence in a house when Gabriel visited Mary; gloriously, it reaches its conclusion on a hill outside of Jerusalem called Calvary. How appropriate that today, March 25, is not only Good Friday this year, but also the Annunciation—the day when the church acknowledges the Incarnation of Our Lord. It's an ancient church belief that a prophet died on the day He was conceived, and this year, that belief plays out as the date of honoring His death falls on the date of observing His conception. The Son of God took on human flesh and blood in order to give that flesh and blood over to death—the living God finishes His mission, breathes His last, and dies.

At the third hour on a Friday morning, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, saw to His appointed duty to die for the sin of the world, and was nailed to a cross. In the matter of a few hours, it was done—it was finished. Satan was humiliated, brought low, his head crushed by the bruised heel of the Seed, declared in one last word from the cross: τέτελεσται. One little word has felled the devil, and we translate it as "It is finished," or, "It is completed," or, "It is ended."

τέτελεσται! This is more than simply a declaration that Jesus has defeated Satan; it declares to you that the payment for your sin is completed. Sin no longer has dominion over you to condemn you. τέτελεσται: "It is ended." Your struggle with sin began at your conception and continues throughout your life. You are conceived and born and steeped in sin. The wages of sin is death, St. Paul says. (cf. Romans 6:23) The Son of God died in your place; He has paid the wages of your sin in full. τέτελεσται!

In addition to that, τέτελεσται is the declaration that sin no longer has a hold on you. You daily sin much, as you are taught to confess by way of the Lord's Prayer. Look through the Ten Commandments; compare what you have done and not done to what they tell you not to do and to do. "We should fear and love God that...", and when you transgress these 10, you have especially transgressed the First. You fear, love, and trust in yourself over and above God.

But Jesus has paid the price for your sins in full—He bore the full wrath of God for your sins. Therefore, there is no wrath left for you, spare you should wish to hold on to your sins—that is, to rip from God in Jesus Christ what once was yours but now belongs to Him, and which He destroyed. Since Jesus was judged and condemned in your place, there is now no more condemnation for you who are in Christ. It is finished! τέτελεσται!

On this Good Friday, as in every day—every time Christ crucified is proclaimed to you—rejoice! τέτελεσται proclaims to you that it is finished, ended, completed! The work of your salvation is finished. The reign of the devil, the world, and your sinful flesh over you is ended. Your salvation is completed. Therefore, if it is finished, ended, completed, then there is nothing left for you to do, finish, end, or complete! It's a good thing, too. You couldn't finish this anyway. As steeped in sin as you are, you are unable to accomplish your salvation. Therefore, your gracious God sent His Son into the flesh to take it from you and finish it for you. τέτελεσται!

"Jesus, all our ransom paid, / All Thy Father's will obeyed, / By Thy sufferings perfect made: / Hear us, holy Jesus."

"Jesus, all Thy labor vast, / All Thy woe and conflict past, / Yielding up Thy soul at last: / Hear us, holy Jesus."

Having paid all your ransom—the ransom of all the world—finishing, completing, ending the work of your salvation that He had come to do, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” “Having said this, He breathed His last.” It is finished, and Jesus gave up His life. The lifeless body of God hangs from the cross. Having breathed His last and yielding up His soul, His body will be taken down from the cross and placed in a new grave. There, He would rest in His tomb, for you.

But, He is not finished. Jesus will rise again on the third day, for you! Your salvation is complete! You are baptized into His death and resurrection. You are given the merits of His life, death, and resurrection. He will come again and bring you to where He is because τέτελεσται—it is finished! And because it is finished, you already know what I am going to say: you are forgiven for all of your sins. τέτελεσται!

“May Thy life and death supply / Grace to live and grace to die, / Grace to reach the home on high: / Hear us, holy Jesus.”

In the name of Jesus. Amen.