

January 30, 2022 7 Words of Jesus Pt. 4 John 19:28-37

The first word we looked at in this series was John 3:3. Jesus said to Nicodemus who was among other things an Old Testament scholar, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again." Jesus was talking about a spiritual birth. Being born again, is about coming to the realization, that what life is about, is our relationship with God. The born again folks, seek to live for God and through God, for others.

The second word is from Mark's Gospel, chapter 1:14 and 15. Jesus said, "the time has come. The Kingdom of God is near, repent and believe the good news." It was Jesus time. The King James Version translates the phrase as, "the Kingdom of God is at hand." Close. As close as your own hand, because Jesus is in the midst. You could reach out and touch it. It is a time for repentance, and new life in Christ.

The third word was from Matthew 4 verse 4. Jesus said, "Man cannot live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Scripture, the Bible, is crucial in our understanding of life, new life, and serving God, who sends us to care for our neighbours.

Today we examine the 4th word of Jesus in this series. It is a short statement from the lips of Jesus on the cross. His last word before death and resurrection. "It is finished."(John 19:verse 30)

My father-in-law was a gifted landscape artist. He lived in Thunder Bay when it was known as Port Arthur and Fort William. One of our family's legends goes like this. Roy would say to himself, "I think it's done." He would take his latest portrayal of northern forests, lakes, rivers, rocks and trees from the easel. He would carry it downstairs from his studio, hold it up before his wife Verna, and he would ask, "What do you think?" Sometimes she would say it needs something more. And he would go back to work. Sometimes she would say, "Don't do another thing to it!" He valued her opinion and her eye. If she told him it was done, in his opinion it really was.

There is not a room in our home whose walls are not decorated with my father-in-law's art work. I loved to talk with him about his skill with oil paints, brushes and palette knives. He was willing to talk about his art when it was finished. But he would not let any of us watch him when he was actually painting.

Jesus was not talking about a painting or the writing of a book. So what was it that was finished when he spoke from the cross? On the surface, HIS life was. John says he spoke the words, "it is finished. With that he bowed his head, and gave up HIS spirit." In other words HE died. But the answer to the question I have posed is not 33 years. Nor is it, "the sermon on the mount," or the healing of blind Bartemaeus. And it is not about the sum of all the things Jesus did, nor all the words that Jesus said.

Jesus understood exactly what HE was here to accomplish. And frankly HE was not here to establish a new religion. A religion is a system with institutions and traditions and honestly it is controlled for the most part by gate keepers who are very human and always, as sinful as anyone else. The church is a valuable instrument but (and this is a really important insight) only when it exists for others, people outside the circle, only when it serves people beyond the faithful circle. Feeding them. Binding up their wounds. Blessing them. Giving peace to the deeply troubled. Being a friend to those who are outcasts and strangers. In other words only as it renders up its many hands and souls in the service of God to people in need.

Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem? What purpose was served in his being raised in Nazareth? Who did Jesus say HE is. And why did HE say HE came among us? In the 3rd chapter of John's Gospel, verse 16, Jesus told Nicodemus that God loved the world so much, HE gave HIS only Son that whosoever believes in HIM, shall not perish, but have eternal life." We quote that verse a lot because it goes to the heart of those questions I have posed above. Too often we do not read farther. In the 17th verse of John chapter 3, Jesus added something for clarification. Remember those politicians who have said, "I want to make this perfectly clear." Well, Jesus did something one step better. He did not say he wanted to make it clear...HE just did it. "God did not send HIS son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through HIM."

On the cross, when Jesus says “it is finished.” That is what HE is talking about, saving people. No limits on the number. No limits on the classes. No limits on ethnicity, or gender, I do not understand everything but I do understand this: Jesus was specific about who HE was and is. He was specific about why HE was here, and for whom HE had come. Jew and Gentiles make up the entire population of the world. The Jews we tend to identify with Israel and its traditions. The Gentiles, and in the Greek of the New Testament the words are ta ethne, the ethnic groups who are not Jewish...the rest of the world. Jesus said HE came to save the world...all the people groups, the ethnicities that make up the world. All of them. All of us. No one outside the circle of which Jesus is the center.

So when Jesus said, “It is finished.” He was not talking about his body on the cross. He was talking about the work HE had come into the world to accomplish. HE was saying, It is done.

Those who know me well, have often heard me say, “None of us is perfect.” We all make mistakes. We all mess up. We are all sinners, fallen from grace and worthy of condemnation. There is a conversation in the Clint Eastwood western, “The Unforgiven.” The young man who needed glasses and could not afford them, who wanted to be a killer like William Munny, says of the ranch hands they killed, “Well, at least they had it commin!” William Munny gets it right when he replies, “We all got it commin” kid.”

Jesus came to save sinners. People who deserve condemnation before the throne of God. HE offered Himself in your place, and in my place. HE was innocent, in the sense that we are not. HE paid the debt we owe. Not most of it...all of it! HE has covered us with the grace of God. Some of you have heard this explanation too. Grace is an acronym. God's Redemption At Christ's Expense. That's not a trick with letters from a word we like. It is the most profound truth in existence.

Jesus was in profound pain. His suffering was almost indescribable. HE had lost more than 50 per cent of HIS blood by volume before HE was crucified, or so some scientists and physicians have estimated. HIS organ systems are shutting down. Because of the structure of the cross, HIS diaphragm is going into spasm. He can no longer breathe. He summons all his energy to say one more thing to us. "It is finished." HIS life for yours. HIS life for mine. This is heavy stuff. And then HE breathes no more. The soldiers take the bodies down when the order is given. They confirm HE is dead. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus make it possible for HIM to be buried, in a tomb that had never been used.

The resurrection, on the Sunday morning confirms what I have said. Jesus was not and is not finished. HE is God's Son. But HE did what HE came to do. He saves, sinners. Anyone who will believe in HIM.

Let us pray;

Lord Jesus we thank you for what you did for us and all the others who find the faith to trust you for eternal life and forgiveness. Help those of us who struggle with this thing called faith. Touch us, for we still have moments when we are afraid we have done the unforgiveable. Feed our faith, weak as it is, and make use of us that we might touch others with the reality of your mercy and love. Empower our hands that we might do, what you want us to do. We offer the glory to your marvelous name. Amen