

Rev. Anthony T. Bertram

## IT IS FINISHED

Genesis 1:31-2:3; John 19:28-31; Lent Good Friday; March 29, 2024

**And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all his work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation.**

Everything God created in the beginning was good. When God finished creating, it was very good, and then He rested. We are familiar with the Hebrew word for “rest,” *Sabbath*. God rested from His work because nothing more needed to be done; His creation was perfect, complete, very good. Man and woman, Adam and Eve, the pinnacle of God’s creation, were living in the paradise of Eden under God’s blessing and everything was going according to God’s plan. **“It was very good.”** Job finished and well done.

We know what it’s like to get a big job done successfully. After the snow is done falling, we clear it from the driveway, step back and admire our work, and then it starts snowing again. We clean the house, mop the floors, sit down and relax, and a horde of kids charges through the door with muddy shoes and messes up the place. We finish an assignment at work or at school and someone comes in afterwards and changes everything, ruining all our hard work, and we have to start over again.

It wasn’t long before God’s very good creation was totally corrupted by sin. God’s fallen creation needed saving and redeeming. God promised that the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent-devil’s head at the expense of bruising of the Seed’s heel. Jesus, the Seed, Mary’s and God’s Son, came to pay for our sin, save us from death, and restore all of creation by His suffering and death on the cross. God would not take a break, a Sabbath rest, from this task until it was finished, and His ruined creation was restored to perfection.

**Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” A 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. When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished,” and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.**

Jesus’ birth, life, suffering and death are God working a new creation. This week, Holy Week, began on Palm Sunday with God’s Son coming into the Holy City to clean up a mess of sin that had been getting messier since the fall into sin. The temple was a mess of people buying and selling, so Jesus cleaned house. The world was no longer ordered by Word of God, so Jesus taught God’s Word each day to establish His kingdom among us in an orderly way. Jesus brought His disciples together for one Last Supper, taking the fruit of the earth, bread from wheat and wine from grapes, which God had created for our good, and used them to bless and save His disciples with His body and blood for the forgiveness of their sins.

God was working a new creation in His Son’s body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins, life, and salvation. But His work was not finished yet. What Jesus gave them to eat that night – and to us in the Lord’s Supper every time we eat it – His body, He was about to give on the cross. What Jesus gave them to drink that night – and to us in the Lord’s Supper every time we drink it – His blood, He was about to shed on the cross.

Later that day, Jesus’ work of saving was almost finished. At the end of His strength and with parched lips His voice croaked from the cross, **“I thirst.”** They brought Him some sour wine on a sponge. Jesus needed a little drink to bring His work to a close, to speak a few last words from the cross and then die. God’s creative Word in the beginning made all things good. Jesus spoke God’s Word at the close of His work of bringing the new creation: **It is finished.** What was finished? What had Jesus accomplished?

He had gotten Himself killed on a cross as a criminal, even though He was innocent. That hardly appears to be cleaning up a mess of sin, more like making a bigger mess. Blood and water from His pierced side poured onto the ground after He died.

Adam and Eve had two sons after the Fall into sin, Cain and Abel. Abel sacrificed the firstborn of His flock, which was acceptable to God, but Cain's sacrifice was rejected by God. So, Cain killed his brother. God confronted Cain. **The LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand"** (Gen. 4:10-11). The ground of the earth was cursed by the shedding of Abel's blood.

Jesus, the Father's only begotten Son and Mary's firstborn Son, came into this world to lift the curse by the shedding of His blood. The Son of the Father, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, was sacrificed on the cross and died, and His blood poured out onto this earth which was cursed with sin to purify it and recreate it. Abel's blood cried out for vengeance against Cain, which God prevented anyone from carrying out. That vengeance was carried out against Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews states: **Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel** (12:24).

When Adam and Eve sinned, they were cursed at their deaths to return to the dust of the earth from which they were made. While Abel's blood cried out for vengeance, Jesus' blood poured out on the ground cried out for our forgiveness. What did Jesus finish on the cross? Sin was finished. Death was finished. The devil was finished.

This is true even though it does not look that way to us right now. We still suffer with sin. We and our loved ones still die. The devil still tempts us. Despite this, Jesus' work of forgiveness, life, and salvation is finished. God's work of new creation in Christ has been accomplished, and like the original creation finished with God's pronouncement of "**very good**" and a day of rest followed, Jesus' body rested in the tomb, keeping the Sabbath rest for our sake.

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After our bodies die because of our sin, they will obey God's command to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy by resting in the ground until the new day dawns. Jesus perfectly kept holy the Sabbath Day by resting on the seventh day from the work He had finished, and then rose victorious over sin, death, and the devil on the first day. Sin is finished for us in the forgiveness earned by Christ. Death is finished for us because the life of Christ dwells in our mortal bodies and we will be raised. The devil is finished because he cannot accuse God's holy ones. Jesus was led to the slaughter for us, a Lamb without spot or wrinkle. The blood of the Lamb makes us holy.

**When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished," and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.** Father, into Your hands we commend our spirits. In the name of Jesus. Amen.