



## Peters Green News Sheet Issue No: 4

Good Friday 10th April 2020

If you were asked to choose one – just one hymn or song that set out the Christian message, which one would it be? High on my list of favourites would have to be “When I survey the wondrous Cross”. Whether singing in the congregation or at the keyboard of the organ, the words “... love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all” never fail to stir something right at the very centre of my being.

The Cross is central; at the very heart not only of our faith but of God Himself! Even the mighty resurrection is but God’s vindication that what happened on the Cross was under His total control and that all was going according to plan! Preaching Christ without the Cross would be like trying to write the biography of a great footballer without mentioning the beautiful game, or trying to make a documentary about a famous politician without referring to politics.

On this Good Friday, I wanted to focus on the 6th of the 7 phrases uttered by Jesus from the Cross. More than any other it forcibly reminds us that even in the darkest times, God is planning for the brightest day! It is found in John 19:30 ‘It is finished.’ Three words in English translation. One word, “tetelestai”, in the Greek of the New Testament.

There was a lot coming to an end that black Friday. The Roman soldiers would have been coming to the end of a harrowing execution shift – “It’s finished!” Peter and the disciples considering the end of three years ministry with Jesus on the road - “It’s finished!” The High Priest and the Pharisees and Sadducees seeing an end to a thorny political issue – “It’s finished!” But no one could say or mean it in the way Jesus said or meant it on that cross on Calvary. “Tetelestai”, “It is finished” conveys a meaning that a debt has been paid in full, or an obligation has been discharged.

God had worked for thousands of years to provide His salvation. First there was creation, then rebellion, and then rejection, banishment, separation-we were cut off from God and Life. But that’s when God began the redemption process, first with promises, then with prophecies, and all with purpose, the purpose of demonstrating His power through weakness as He kept His promises and fulfilled His prophecies. His Son became one of us: His Son became His Slave, His sacrifice. our Saviour. And in Jerusalem.

God loves weakness because weakness is the greatest way He can show His power. How can an ordinary Man who isn’t even worthy of a second look become our Saviour? But He did through the power of God’s working through one man’s weakness on a hill in Jerusalem.

How can Jerusalem become the place of salvation? Jerusalem was a world capital in the ancient Roman Empire. One of the greatest structures of all, Herod’s Temple, was in Jerusalem. The city was a spiritual capital in the empire, but Jerusalem was different from the other world capitals. It was . . . well, it was Jewish, quirky, lavish in its own way, but certainly not in the Roman way. Jerusalem was really a weak world capital, crushed under the Roman heel. But God had made Jerusalem the centre of His salvation purposes, the place where all

His promises would be fulfilled, an unlikely place populated by some very unlikely people. How like God to do this.

All the gospel writers are unanimous. All of them say Jesus cried out with a loud voice. John 19:30 gives us his words. Finished! Accomplished! Done! Jesus was in complete control, despite the agonising pain that we must never minimise. It was real pain, real thirst, real death. But Jesus was no resigned victim. He was a reigning victor! He did not say “I am finished”, but rather “It is finished”, for on the cross God’s will was being done perfectly on earth as in heaven! Calvary’s cross is no place of failure but of fulfilment. If we look at John 19:28 we will see that exactly the same word is used and translated in the NIV as ‘completed.’ So it reads that Jesus “knowing” that all was now completed ... said ... completed ... finished! The task the Father began in Eternity had now been accomplished in time!

The cross was no surprise to Jesus – All of His life was lived in the shadow of the cross, from His birth and the announcement that he was born to die, through his baptism and introduction as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” His Temptation was to avoid the cross and throughout His ministry he set His face toward Jerusalem. The Good Shepherd was knowingly laying down His life for the Sheep. Blood was shed, the Body broken, the Sacrifice made, as Jesus died “the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us back to God.”

And so it was Finished – when the last moment of the last hour of the last day of His life came, He had completed God’s mission and message to humankind. The greatest example of determination, perseverance and obedient love the world has ever seen.

And so what does that mean for us today? It means that we cannot add to something that is finished! We live in the grace, mercy, forgiveness and freedom given to us in Christ everyday of our lives. The death of Jesus was once-for-all, an historical event, but the love of God which expressed itself supremely in this event is the love in which we now live, move, give and forgive! The cross of Calvary is a sign, pointing away from itself to the reality of God becoming one with us in Jesus. To live a Christian life is to let the Spirit of Christ be the Spirit of Christ in us and through us now, today and every day.

We are called to be like Him and we too have a work to do for God, a task to accomplish, given us by the Father, that only we can finish. Living in the shadow of what was done at the Cross, we seek to love God, love our neighbour, love one another, haltingly yet courageously, bringing our brokenness to His forgiveness, our sins to that finished work of the Cross, so that we can be salt and light; be broken bread and poured out wine to that part of the world, those relationships, those situations, we influence and impact; to make a difference, however small.

In his book ‘Be our Freedom, Lord’ by Terry Falla. there is a prayer that I would like to share with you. It is titled “Ultimate Loyalty”.

Lord God, may there be sense in our persistence, and reason in our tenacity. May our existence as your people not be deemed an end in itself, but solely a way and a means.

May we live our lives conscious of our past and true to our heritage, keeping ablaze the fires our prophets lit. May we, like our fathers still stand against the multitude, protesting with all our might against its follies and fears.

May a divine discontent give colour to our dreams, and a passion for holy heresy set the tone of our thoughts. May the soul of the rebel still throb in us as it throbbed in our forefathers, that, refusing to be silenced, we may take the part of those without a voice.

And may our ultimate loyalty be only to You, that we may never surrender to the threat of falsehood, or capitulate to the idols, Caesars, and powers of this world.

Thus, with the hope you have given us in Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, may we follow Him today and forever, that we may proclaim without fear or favour the Gospel of Your Suffering, Redeeming Love. Amen.

Erwin

