

“It is finished” John 19:30 Good Friday 2025

Here we are on Good Friday, the most solemn day of the entire church year. This day has also been called Holy Friday and Black Friday. It is indeed all of these and more. It is “GOOD,” since what God accomplished in the person of Jesus on that last Friday of his life in this world was to win salvation for all humankind, as well as the whole creation. It is a cosmic event in this respect, for it ushers in the beginning of a new eon in which, eventually, in the fullness of time, the heavens and the earth shall be made completely new. However, it is also “HOLY,” since what happened on that last Friday of Christ’s life in this world is full of God’s activity involving the inner life of God’s Being, whom we Christians worship and know as the Trinity. It is a day where God makes the ultimate sacrifice to fulfill the requirements of God’s own Self—requirements which only God could fulfill. Only God who was, is and ever shall be without sin was able to completely win the battle over the powers of sin, evil and death. Yet, as history has shown, this Friday is also “BLACK” Friday. Black Friday for at least two reasons. First, it is Black Friday to remind us of the God-Forsakenness that Jesus experienced on the cross. It reminds us of the silence and the absence of God when Jesus faced his suffering and death on the cross. That silence, that absence of God we shall never understand; it shall always remain a deep mystery. Second, it is Black Friday, because in the name of Christ and Christianity, in centuries past, Christians preached sermons on this day that encouraged hatred of the Jewish people—blaming all Jews of every time and place for the death of Jesus. This hatred led to Christians, in the name of Christ and Christianity, openly persecuting and even killing Jews on Good Friday. Thank God that today Jews and Christians are facing this tragic history together, learning from it, and building bridges of healing and reconciliation.

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As we consider John’s Passion account of that first Good Friday, it is proper to remind ourselves of how John sees Jesus. He presents Jesus as being completely and confidently in control of his own destiny. In John, Jesus carries his own cross. In John, there is no cry of dereliction. For John, everything that happens to Jesus during his Passion happens in order to fulfill the scriptures. In John, the Passion of Jesus is therefore predestined by God; everything goes according to God’s plan.

Considering this then, we turn now to Christ’s last word on the cross according to John, as recorded in chapter nineteen, verse thirty: “When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

As Christians, I believe we must balance these words with Christ’s call to every would-be disciple concerning discipleship, namely: whoever would be a disciple of Jesus must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him. There is a sense in which crucifixion still goes on in the lives of human beings throughout history.

So, Jesus continues to be crucified in all those who are crucified in history. He is crucified in the millions who go hungry every day and in those who are subjected to inhuman working conditions. He is crucified in all those who are mutilated in war and confined to hospital beds.

He is crucified in those who are marginalized in our cities and rural areas, and in those who suffer from discrimination because of their race, sex, or poverty. He is crucified in those who are persecuted because of their thirst for justice, and in those who are forced in their jobs to violate their conscience, to conceal the truth, and to act as agents for institutions that oppress the lowly.

He is crucified in all those who fight without immediate success, against economic and ideological systems that generate sinful structures, structures engaging in exploitation. He is crucified in all those who are forced to live within such structures against their will.

There are not enough Stations of the Cross to depict all the ways in which the Lord continues to be persecuted, imprisoned, condemned to death, and crucified today in the ongoing Passion of human life. But Jesus does not just suffer. He continues to offer himself to God and his brothers and sisters, to pardon, and to love all human beings to the very end.

It is in this rather ironic, paradoxical sense that Christ’s “finished work” continues until the fullness of time. Yet, at the same time, something definitive for all time and places was finished when Christ suffered and died on the cross. Indeed, the word finished is not only referring to the end of Christ’s physical suffering—although that certainly is one aspect of it. After all, Jesus had to endure everything from betrayal and denial, to arrest, trial, flogging, mockery, humiliation of the crowds, to the final hours of excruciating pain on the cross. If we faced all of this, we, like Jesus would say, “Thank God it is finally over!”

The words “It is finished” are also a cry of victory in the sense that Jesus completed, he accomplished what God had sent him in this world to do. In this sense, it is like the athlete who enters a marathon race with the single-minded intention of both reaching the finishing line and coming in first. It is like the student finally reaching the goal after years of study comes graduation and a degree. It is like the author or artist, who after years of research and struggle finally complete their masterpiece, their most significant and enduring work. It is like undergoing major surgery and recuperating completely. For John the words of Jesus, “It is finished,” are the epitome of Christ’s life and ministry; the

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words are spoken by the King of kings on his throne, which was the cross. Jesus won the victory over sin, evil and death by willingly, and lovingly allowing himself to submit to these powers. In so doing, he defeated them.

The definitive word is in complete communion with the definitive act; when Jesus suffered and died on the cross God opened the door to include everyone and everything in his love. Nobody is beyond the reach of God and God’s saving love, thanks to Christ’s suffering and death on the cross. Amen.