

25 March 2005  
Good Friday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

## Jesu Juva

“It Is Finished”

Text: John 19:30

*(Taken in part and adapted from a Good Friday sermon by C.F.W. Walther)*

On the sixth day, namely on Friday, God created man and woman in His image and thereby completed the great work of creation. Yet, through the temptation of Satan, human beings fell away from their Creator, and fell into sin, misery, death, and eternal damnation. Creation was marred. Human beings, who had been created to share eternal glory with God, had separated themselves from their Creator. We stood condemned under God's just wrath. Something needed to be done.

And so again on the sixth day, namely on *Good Friday*, mankind's Creator died on the cross out of love for His people. ***“It is finished,”*** cried the Lord of Glory at the end of His suffering as He bowed His head and died.

What a sad day it is when God dies! But, what a *blessed* day on which God dies **for us!** His death for our life. For without the life that Jesus gives through His death, we can indeed live physically and biologically, but not spiritually, not eternally. Without Jesus Christ we are dead while living. Just as the Almighty had to breath into Adam the breath of life before he became a living soul on that first Friday, so we must have new life breathed into us by the Holy Spirit who works through the means of grace, the means that proclaim Christ's death for us on Good Friday. His death which gives us life.

And so tonight we heard this life-giving Word. We heard our Lord cry out with a loud voice to the Heavenly Father, ***“It is finished!”*** But what is it that is here brought to an end? Jesus had been tried like a common criminal. Scourged, mocked, whipped, spat on, and hung on a cross to die the most excruciating death known to man. Could it be that our Lord meant merely that now His suffering had come to an end? Surely, this is true. But it is more.

Could it be that our suffering Saviour meant that now all the ancient prophecies and His own prophecies had been fulfilled? He had just stated that He was thirsty in order to fulfill what had been recorded in Scripture. He had also fulfilled the prophecy of the suffering Servant in Isaiah. Also, regarding the prophecy to Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden, His heel was now being bruised and Satan's head was being crushed. Indeed, the prophecies *were* being fulfilled. But they were not finished. There were still

more prophecies to be completed: the resurrection, the ascension, and then the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

No, even more was meant when our Lord cried out, ***“It is finished!”*** For *finished* means more than just terminated or concluded. It means fulfilled, completed, accomplished. This is the completion for which all creation had been waiting since the fall of mankind into sin. There, at that very point and time in history, God was in Christ reconciling *the world* unto Himself. ***“It is good,”*** said God on that Friday when He finished creation. ***“It is finished,”*** God said on Good Friday when He had completed all that was necessary for our salvation. It is accomplished. Our reconciliation and atonement was finished on the cross. There is nothing more that we could possibly do or add to that. No good work, inward feeling, or bubbly emotion could add to what the Lamb of God finished there on the cross. Our great Substitute paid the great price of ransom, appeasing God's wrath to the last cent. ***“It is finished.”*** All is finished. That is the Good News. It is certain today. It was finished on the cross.

But *what does this mean* for us, for you and me, today? How do we view rightly and benefit from what was finished on the cross? This is most important. And above all, by the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit, Christ's death on the cross should mean repentance and faith on our part. For there is no better place for us sinners to come to true repentance than at the foot of the cross of Calvary. It is here we see human sinfulness in its highest degree; it is here that we see the most dreadful consequences of sin; and it is here that we see sin as an unbearable burden that we would never have been able to carry.

And so if we really want to see the depths of human sinfulness, we see it here. For who is it who hangs there between heaven and earth, between two criminals, with blood spattering his whole body? Who is He who here is slowly being tortured to death? He is not a criminal, for even one of the crucified criminals says ***“This man has done nothing wrong.”*** However, He is more than just an innocent man. He is the Son of the Most High God, the Lord of glory, the Word made flesh by whom all things were created. This is the One whom people took, hung on a cross and killed. That was indeed the most shameful, wicked, and cursed deed that has ever been conceived in human hearts and carried out by human hands. Here we see what the human heart is capable of. Here we see human sinfulness in its highest degree. And even though you and I were not there personally, our sin played a part in that. Shouldn't we be appalled that we are human beings and that we belong to a race that has made itself guilty of such a crime against God? Creatures killing their own Creator! Indeed, we should hang our heads in shame.

Yet, at Calvary we not only see sin in its highest degree, but we also see its most dreadful consequences. For what Christ has here suffered, He endured not for His sins,

but for ours. The pains that He suffered, we should have suffered. His forsakenness should have been ours, along with eternal rejection by God. On Golgotha God has written the LAW before our eyes in blood letters: ***“The wages of sin is death!”*** Dreadful wages those, that Christ is here paying. But He does so willingly, for these wages are too much for anyone else to bear. For if it had been possible for any creature to bear and atone for the sins of mankind, would God have given His only begotten Son into death to atone for them? If God could have saved mankind any other way, wouldn't He have done so? How great our sin must then be! How can we *not* repent?

And yet today is not just a day of remorse and sadness, but a day also of joy and gladness, for the blood letters of the cross show us not only that the wages of sin is death, but even more clearly and brilliantly we see that ***“God is love.”*** We see the height and depth and width and breadth of God's love for us. His love which willingly gives His only-begotten Son into death for you. As your substitute. For your pardon and peace. For your life and eternal salvation. And so while we repent of our sin, we do so not in terror and despair, but with a firm faith in God's grace. For when Jesus cries out ***“It is finished,”*** we hear the greatest demonstration of God's willingness to pardon and save us poor, miserable sinners. For in this dying breath, your Lord means what He says and He says what He means. ***“It is finished.”*** Your sins are finished. They are forgiven.

For all has been accomplished. Nothing else need be done. Yours sins are many and they are great, it is true. And every one – small or great, deliberate or careless, intentional or unintentional – worthy of death. But they are finished! And so when you feel the weight of your sin, look up and see your Saviour who took them from you and gave you forgiveness. If you worry because you don't always have a bubbly feeling to assure you of your faith, then look up and see your Saviour who has done it all for you. For the assurance of our faith is not in our feelings, but in the One who died for our sins and said, ***“It is finished.”*** And if you are anxious and worried that your sins are too great, then look up and see *how much greater* is the One hanging there in your place. And believe. Believe Him. Believe and you shall live!

For on that Friday, the sixth day of the week, it was indeed finished. Our salvation, finished. Our sin, finished. Satan, finished. Hell, finished. Our forgiveness, accomplished. Eternal life, won and given to us. And God saw all that He had done, and it was Good. A Good Friday. A very good Friday indeed.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.