

The Life of Christ

Lesson 12: The Cross: It Is Finished -- John 19:16-30

We come now to the center of everything. Every lesson in this study has been moving toward this hill. The eternal Word who was with God, the child born of a virgin, the beloved Son baptized and tempted, the King who announced the kingdom, the Teacher whose words are a rock, the Lord over disease and demons and death and the raging sea, the friend of sinners, the bread of life, the glory unveiled on the mountain, the Servant who knelt with a towel, all of it has been leading here, to a Roman cross outside the walls of Jerusalem on a Friday afternoon.

John tells it with stark restraint. They took Jesus, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called Golgotha, the place of a skull. And there they crucified Him, between two others, with Jesus in the middle. Pilate fastened a sign above His head, written in three languages so all could read it: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Pilate meant it partly in mockery, but he spoke more truly than he knew. The man dying on that center cross really is the King, and this bloody execution is, astonishingly, His coronation. The thorns are His crown, the cross His throne.

Watch the small details John preserves, because each one matters. Soldiers gambling for His clothing, fulfilling a psalm written a thousand years before. Jesus, in the midst of His agony, looking down at His grieving mother and the disciple He loved, and tenderly providing for her care. The cracked words, "I thirst," reminding us that the One who made the oceans was truly human and truly suffering. None of this is random. The Scriptures are being fulfilled to the letter. This is no accident, no tragedy that spun out of control. This is the plan of God, unfolding exactly as it was written.

And then, the word that changes everything. Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said, "It is finished," and bowed His head and gave up His spirit. It is not the despairing sigh of a defeated man. In the original it is a single word, the word a merchant would write across a paid bill: paid in full. The work of redemption was complete. The debt of sin was settled. The price was paid. The Son of God had borne in our place what we could never have borne, and at the last He announced that it was done. This lesson stands at the foot of that cross, to behold the substitutionary, atoning death of the Son of God, and to ask what it means that for us, and in our place, He cried, "It is finished."

Group Discussion: Above the cross Pilate placed a sign: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." In what surprising sense is the cross actually the throne of King Jesus, and how does this change the way we understand both His kingship and His death?

Personal Reflection: Jesus' final word from the cross was, "It is finished," a cry of completion, not defeat. As you consider that His work of redemption was finished for you, what is your

honest response, and where do you need to rest more fully in what He has already accomplished rather than trying to add to it?

Read John 19:16–30

Study Questions

1. In John 19:16–18, Jesus is led out and crucified between two others, a real, historical execution. As you take in the fact that the Son of God was actually crucified, what does the reality of the cross press upon you about the seriousness of sin and the love of God?
2. Scripture teaches that Christ died not merely as an example or a martyr but in our place, for our sins. What does it mean to you personally that Jesus bore the penalty you deserved, and how does grasping the cost of your sin deepen your response to Him?
3. John repeatedly notes that the events of the crucifixion fulfilled Scripture, such as the soldiers casting lots for His clothing (vv. 23–24). What does this fulfillment of prophecy teach us about the cross as the deliberate plan of God rather than a tragic accident?
4. At the cross we see every kind of response: soldiers indifferent and gambling, leaders mocking, a few standing in grief and love. Where are you tempted to be a mere spectator of the cross, observing it from a safe distance, rather than letting its meaning lay hold of your life?
5. Even in His agony, Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved, and He tenderly provided for her care (vv. 25–27). What does this reveal about the love and the true humanity of Jesus, even as He bore the weight of the cross?

6. Jesus loved and cared for others even while suffering profoundly Himself. Where is God calling you to look beyond your own pain to the needs of others, after the pattern of Christ on the cross?
7. Jesus said, "I thirst" (v. 28), a cry that reveals His genuine human suffering and also fulfilled Scripture. Why is it important that the Son of God truly suffered as a real human being, and how does contemplating the depth of His suffering shape your worship and gratitude?
8. Standing at the foot of the cross and seeing what your sin cost the Son of God, what is the sin, the self-reliance, or the divided loyalty that you most need to surrender to Him this week, in repentance and in gratitude for so great a love?
9. With His final breath Jesus cried, "It is finished" (v. 30), announcing that the work of redemption was complete. What did Jesus finish on the cross, how does this declare His death to be the full and sufficient payment for sin, and why is it crucial that our salvation rests on His finished, substitutionary, atoning work and not on anything we could add to it?
10. Because the work of the cross is finished, salvation is offered to us as a gift to be received, not a wage to be earned. Looking back over the death of Christ, what is the response that the finished work of the cross calls for from you, and what one specific step will you take to rest in it and live in light of it this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Isaiah 53:4–6, the suffering Servant pierced for our transgressions, on whom the Lord laid the iniquity of us all; Romans 5:6–11, where Christ died for us while we were still sinners; 2 Corinthians 5:21, where God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us; 1 Peter 2:24, where He bore our sins in His body on the tree; Romans 6:3–5, where we are baptized into His death and raised to walk in newness of life.