

211
3/20/58
"Christ's Finished Work"

Scripture Lesson:-St. John 19: 14-30.

Text:- St. John 19: 30. "When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, it is finished".

Introduction:- To understand what Jesus meant by this cry, "It is finished", one would need to have heard it. But from this message from the Cross more is required than to have heard it. No Roman soldier, no watching scribe, not even the penitent thief, or the devout women, understood in any measure what Jesus had in his heart. Not even John, when he first heard the cry, grasped its significance. In later years, he learned something of what the cry meant to Him. In later years when John's feet had travelled far from Jerusalem and he had seen what the cross could do for men, he understood more clearly the tumult of feeling that rang through the loud cry, "It is finished".

I.

To begin with this is a sigh of relief. His work on earth was almost done. Life was a serious and burdening thing to him. Yet he had a joy in things beautiful, and the deep delight in men that he loved, and in the little children who loved Him, and despite the radiant calm that was ever on His brow, life had its strain, it had many sorrows, it had much weariness.

But there were two elements in His life which made it a constant trial. One of these was that He was away from God. When he rose before it was day and went forth to pray; when He spent all night in calm meditation, when He sought the other side of the lake or when he went across the brook Kedron, He was simply seeking again his home in God. He was a "stranger on earth" and an alien to all of its ways.

The second element was the constant and scorching pain which the world's sin gave to him. Everything the pure eyes of Jesus saw was tainted with sin. As he looked into the hearts of the Pharisees, he dared not trust one of them. As the crowds press-

ed round His for healing of their diseases, they not only roused his pity, but his keen moral sense was stirred as he read the sinful story of their lives. As he looked into the minds and hearts of his own disciples he saw ambition, pride, anger, desertion, denial, and even the traitor. All through His life he walked burdened with the cross of men's sins. Now, as he hangs in death, it is all over. "It is finished!"

In the year 401 B.C. an army of 10,000 Greeks were marching westward to their homeland. They had fought a fruitless victory. Now, leaderless, half starved, harassed by foes, they marched back to their homeland. At last they reached the hills which Asia Minor lifts around the Black sea. At last, when they had climbed the long hill, they saw the waters of the home shore. They cried in unison, "The Sea! The Sea! It was a sigh of relief. They were at last at home. So Jesus, remembering all the way he had come, and looking forward into His Father's face, uttered a sigh of relief, "It is finished!"

II.

I believe it was also a word of victory. For His life was a long and difficult journey. It was a time of temptation. such as no human soul has ever known. We cannot imagine the awfulness of the conflict. We know that the hours of temptation were the keenest and bitterest of his life. The sweat came out like great drops of blood in one hour of temptation. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Every temptation searched him to the roots of his being, and assailed his loyalty to God. When he was called to make stones bread, or to cast himself down from the temple, or to take a short cut to the kingdom of this world, or even when men would have made him a king, he had to stand and watch and pray to win his victory. To find his temptations through his spiritual desires, to find Satan always transformed as an angel of light, and yet to see Christ overcoming His temptations, that is the victory of Christ. As he hung upon the Cross, he was certain that no blot marred the sinless past, no word that he had uttered, no deed left undone, his cry was one word of victory. "It is finished."

III.

Again, this cry of Jesus, was a message to the Father. It was a word of victory, but it was more. We go back and we find Him saying, "I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." What was the work God gave Christ to do? It was to reveal the Father, and the purpose of his grace, to manifest God's holiness and love, to bear in his body in life and death the penalty of sin, to give burdened consciences peace with God, to win men's faith to an assurance of the unseen, to renew their wills to holiness, to make heaven and the presence of God the hope and expectation of believing men. To finish the work God gives a man to do is the highest achievement in life. No other than Christ ever knew the exultation of having finished His own work.

IV.

In the fourth place it is a proclamation to men. It is Christ's declaration that the final revelation of God has been given, that alienation between God and man has ended, and that henceforth there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

There is a legend of the early centuries which sets forth this truth in a picturesque way. It is said that when Jesus was dying on the cross, the three hours of darkness spread like a wall over the regions beyond. A boat was crossing the Aegean sea. Its rowers were silent with terror at the dark piled up behind them. Suddenly out of the darkened heaven they heard the cry of "Pan is dead! great Pan is dead! The shuddering boatmen realized that their pagan god had yielded up his deity to Christ.

It is no legend that everywhere the deed of Christ and his Cross are being proclaimed. It is no legend that in increasing volume hymns of praise to Him who died are being sung all over the world. His work is finished. The forefathers of the Christian church spoke often of "Christ's finished work." That finished work was the comfort and joy of their soul. That was the good news of the gospel.

Conclusion:- The good news of the gospel is still

the proclamation of this dying message of Christ. Have you been rebellious? Have you a life whose secrets you are praying God no man may ever know? Is your repentance as deep as it should be? How big is your faith? Is it like a mustard seed? Do you feel that no other man has sinned as much as you? If you are, you are the very man to understand Christ's finished work. What you need is to be assured that God, for Christ's sake has forgiven you, and that even now, in the words of that very simple, yet moving hymn, "Jesus paid it all!"

Maybe you aren't outbroken sinner but lukewarm

There is one closing question which you may be asking. "What then have I to do?" This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent! Faith is not a simple and not an easy thing. What is faith? Faith is a vision of God. Faith is an attitude and disposition of the spirit. Faith is a trust not only in God, but in God's love and care. Faith is a yielding up of one's will to the will of the Father. These are not simple, still less easy, to a human mind and will. When a man so believes he will meekly and humbly accept what God has given him in and through Christ and His Cross, and he will understand that Christ was indeed right when he cried, "It is finished."

Indifferent, halfhearted

& that's just as bad. Christ said he would spew you out of his mouth. Are you witnessing for him. Are you concerned about winning others. If not you need to come to the cross as much as the deep dyed sinner.