

Worship Service for April 4th: Easter Sunday – Communion Sunday

- **Old Testament:** Isaiah 25:6-9
- **New Testament:** John 19:28-30, 20:1-18
- **Psalms:** Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Announcements:

- Welcome to our worship service! We're glad you are reading. We pray that God's blessings and peace will be with you all now and forever! Amen.
- Our next Bible study is on April 14th. Time: 7pm; Place: St. David's. We will be studying James 3.

Sermon Title: τετέλεσται Tetelestai! It Is Finished!

When we read Jesus' journey to the cross, we notice that the women were quite active. They followed Jesus from when he was arrested to when he was crucified. He even had a conversation with his mother and one of the disciples. The women are the ones who discover the empty tomb and rush to tell the disciples and Jesus appears to them letting them know that He had resurrected and was ascending to the Father.

A question that has bugged me for years and one which I believe has bugged a lot of other people is why the other disciples were not there with Jesus at the time of his crucifixion. I learned that in the second half of the twentieth century, there was a civil war in Lebanon. During this period, rival militias were stalking the streets of Beirut. Men who were heavily armed were fighting to take possession of the city and it was a very risky time for male civilians and none of them ventured out of their homes unless they were heavily armed and in groups. A man was likely to be attacked or abducted if seen alone. However, the women were free to go and come as they pleased because they had to shop and prepare meals for their families and they were also considered harmless. I guess they have not watched a lot of James Bond movies.

In the time of the early church, the women had the same experience as those in Lebanon. Those who were attacking Jesus didn't have any problem with the women who revealed through their actions that they were Jesus' supporters because they were considered harmless. The one disciple who was also mentioned with the women was a young lad and wasn't considered a threat. However, the other disciples had to be in hiding.

In John 19:28-30, the writer gives us some vital information. He tells us that Jesus knew that his mission was now finished and said he was thirsty. He was given vinegar in a sponge and after he tasted it, he said, "it is finished," bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

It is finished! We might be wondering why I would bring up a Good Friday passage on Easter Sunday. Jesus Christ is already risen, why do we have to hear of his death again?

What is most important about the death of Jesus is the statement he made – "It is finished." In that statement lies the price that Jesus paid for us to be able to celebrate Easter.

It is finished in Greek is one word "Tetelestai!" Tetelestai appears only in two places in the New Testament - in John 19:28 and 30. This word was used on business documents or receipts in the New Testament times to show a bill had been fully paid.

The term Tetelestai was used in different ways and interpretations – to show that a bill had been fully paid, a task finished, a sacrifice offered, a masterpiece completed, a sacrifice accomplished, and all these interpretations applied to what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross.

The New Testament Christians identified with it as they used it on their business documents and therefore understood that Jesus had paid for their sins. The Jewish believers recognized that this word was used in Hebrew in their time of sacrifice. Each time the priest killed the animal for the sacrifice of the atonement for sin, he would come out and declare to the waiting crowd and "it is finished." This was a sacrifice which symbolically placed all the sins of the Israelites on the lamb that was killed.

It is because Jesus paid our debts in full that he resurrected and that we are able to celebrate the resurrection today. The resurrection occurred to complete the work that Jesus had started and now we can freely celebrate that all our debts have been paid in full; all of our sins have been forgiven.

On Good Friday, there was chaos, darkness, confusion and fear. The women were experiencing all these feelings and were going to not only apply burial spices on Jesus' body but also to continue weeping for their dear Saviour.

We might be going through those kinds of feelings ourselves – darkness, chaos, confusion, fear, anxiety, you name it. On the way to Jesus' tomb, Mark's gospel tells us that the women were wondering who was going to roll away the heavy stone for them. In John's gospel, even though the stone was already rolled away, Mary was still found crying. And the Lord appeared to her and asked her, "woman why are you crying?" At first, she had thought her only challenge was the heavy stone that needed to be rolled away, but she later discovered that there was an even bigger problem – her Lord had been taken away.

Yes, we have experienced a tough year, not only because of the pandemic but other personal issues that have plagued our lives. Issues that have left us shedding secret tears or crying in our hearts when the tears can't flow anymore and trying to look strong at the same time. But Jesus is asking us today "why are you crying?" I have paid the full price for your sins. I have paid the full price for your debts.

And Jesus told Martha when she was crying for her brother Lazarus who had died and was buried, Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?" Jesus is asking us that same question today. Do you believe that he has indeed paid the full price for your sins? Then why are you crying?

Austin C. Wiles is the famous hymn writer of "In the Garden." He explains that he was sitting one day in his dark room with his photographic equipment and his organ. He picked up his Bible and it opened to John 20 and as he read he felt as though he was in a trance. He felt as if he was present with Mary and the other disciple. He could see her whole experience of sadness and weeping when she didn't find her Saviour and how the Saviour appeared and when she recognized him she cried, Rabboni.

And Austin explains that, "I awakened in sunlight, gripping my Bible with my muscles tense, and nerves vibrating, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I wrote as quickly as the words could be formed the lyrics exactly as it is sung today. That

same evening, I wrote the tune. It is sung today as it was written in 1912.” And the lyrics goes thus,

In the Garden

I come to the garden alone, While the dew is still on the roses, And the voice I hear falling on my ear, The Son of God discloses...

Refrain: *And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own, And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other, has ever, known!*

Whatever challenges we are going through today, whatever challenges our loved ones are going through today that is breaking our hearts; let us remember that Jesus has paid the full price for us. Because Jesus’ story did not end that Friday on the cross, you can be sure that your story is not over yet. Things might look dark and uncertain at the moment, but I guarantee you that your story will not end here.

We have been saved by grace through Jesus Christ. Grace means God had a plan. Grace means we did not deserve to be in His plan, but He has included us in it. Grace means a new chapter is about to be opened because God loves us.

And as we partake of the flesh and the blood of Jesus today, may we have a similar encounter with Jesus like Austin Miles. May the Holy Spirit open our eyes to see and recognize Jesus walking with us in that garden even as we walk alone. And may we hear him saying to us “It is finished. In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers

Holy, gracious, God, here at this table your promise of life is made tangible. We have rested in the depth of your love; We have tasted your nourishing, nurturing presence; We accept you into our bodies, into our lives. Together, at this table, you have offered us life. Together, by your grace, we accept the life you offer. And we give you thanks.

Just like your disciples long ago, we peer into the tombs of our hearts. So many things fill our inner tombs— broken relationships, failed attempts at self-improvement, shame, anger, missed opportunities, debilitating grief.

Lord, some pieces of ourselves feel like they have been dead forever and other things so affect our living that although we breathe, we feel dead within. We lift up to you all that is within us. When those who came to Your tomb looked within, they found two men in dazzling clothes, but couldn't find you.

So often we too go through difficult times and can't find you. Perhaps we, too, are looking in the wrong places. You are always with us, but often in ways that defy our expectations. Just as the tomb couldn't limit You, neither can we. Open our minds, ears, eyes, and hearts to all the ways that you dwell in our midst.

Lord, there is no tomb that You cannot break through, including the tombs in our hearts. May we experience Your resurrection this year, inside out. May we experience life in places that we thought were dead. May we experience Your reconciliation in relationships that we thought were damaged forever.

May we find Your peace in things that once gave us anxiety. May we experience healing in the places that have been hurting for too long. May we see your presence in all the times that we always thought we were alone.

As we celebrate the empty tomb, we rejoice that death does not have the final victory, but rather that life, love, and goodness prevail. Lord, break open our lives to receive all the love, forgiveness and freedom that You so freely give. May we allow Your resurrection make a difference in how we live. May we forever live in hope of all that is yet to be.

God of Resurrecting Hope, we thank you with grateful hearts, recognizing how much you have given us in Christ, and what his gift has cost. Bless the gifts we bring so they may help spread the hope and joy we feel today in the world you love so dearly. In the name of your greatest gift, Jesus Christ, we pray.

And now we pray in one voice in the words that Jesus gave:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Now may the God who brought us peace by raising from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ so that he would be the Great Shepherd of his flock; and by the power of the blood of the eternal covenant may he work perfection into every part of you giving you all that you need to fulfill your destiny. And may he express through you all that is excellent and pleasing to him through your life-union with Jesus the Anointed One who is to receive all glory forever and ever! Amen!

HAPPY EASTER TO EVERYONE!