

18.1.26 am The Finished Work of Christ

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Date: 18 January 2026

Preacher: Reverend Thomas Davies

[0 : 00] Good morning everyone and a warm welcome to our service this morning. It's nice to see a few! well Kent faces back once again. We're very pleased this morning to have Thomas Davis getting to be! a bit of an old friend now I would say preaching to us so we're very happy to have him with us both this morning and this evening. There's quite a few intimations I'd just like to pick up on. There will be a Deacons Court meeting tomorrow night and the Kirk session on Thursday night. So Deacons Court tomorrow at 6.30, Kirk session on Thursday at 6pm so office fairs please note that. Prayer meeting as usual 7.30 on Wednesday. It's been good to see numbers increasing for the last while so please do come out if you can make it and if you can't do log in on Zoom. There's a curry evening this Saturday from 6.30pm and that's to raise funds for the upcoming Island Study Conference so if you're able to attend please do. If you're not able to attend it says takeaways earlier so I'll leave you to decide how early you come in to pick up your takeaway.

Also there's a new editor for the monthly record and there will be six copies of the record coming up through this year. The price of that has increased to £3 if you wish to continue receiving the record please add your name to the list of the door if you haven't already done so that would be great.

And then there's Preaching Pathway Workshops. The next one is next Monday week on Monday the 26th from 7 to 9 in Kenneth Street Stornoway. And then finally just if I can ask everybody to note that there will be a congregational meeting on the evening of Thursday the 29th of January where we'll be looking at and considering options for growth of the church and the congregation over the next few years. So that's following up on the last meeting we had with people we were discussing about things that the church could be doing over the next number of years to build us all up and strengthen us in our faith and also to reach out to the community. And also thinking about what we need to do with the building here itself in terms of providing extra space for all the things we're doing. So we'll give you an update at the So these are all the intimations and once again just a warm welcome to Thomas and look forward to worshipping with you this morning.

Well thank you very much indeed. I'm going to thank you all for your warm welcome. It's always a huge privilege and a joy to have the opportunity to be with you. I'm very grateful to David as well for taking the services in Carloway. I always say that they're the ones that are that you guys get the raw end of the deal in terms of the pulpit swap but I'm really glad to have the opportunity to be with you as we worship together today.

It's a new week and we gather together along with millions of other people across the globe today to rejoice in the fact that Jesus is risen. And in the name of our risen saviour we come together to worship and we're going to sing to his praise from Psalm 121.

[3 : 24] That's from the Scottish Psalter and we have these amazing words. The imagery of standing in a valley looking to the hills feeling exposed seeking help and the Lord is the one who comes to our aid.

And so as we sing these words whatever last week was like for us whether it was a good week or a tough week these words draw us closer to the Lord as our strength, our shield, our keeper.

So I to the hills will lift mine eyes from whence doth come my need. My safety cometh from the Lord who heaven and earth hath made. Let's stand and sing together. Let's stand and sing together.

Let's stand and sing together.

Let's stand and sing together.

[5 : 27] Let's stand and sing together.

Rest for thy going out and in, God be forever well.

Let's pray together. Dear God, our Father in heaven, we are so thankful that as a new week begins, that you have brought us together to come and to worship you.

Thank you that as we come together today, we come because you are calling us into your presence. Thank you that we have that amazing privilege of access to you, that we have the freedom and opportunity to come together, and that we have the most amazing reason to come together.

We come together because your Son, our Saviour Jesus, is risen. And we thank you so, so much that as a new week begins, we are being reminded of the hope of resurrection life through the gospel, through your Son, our Lord Jesus.

[7 : 00] And we thank you that as we gather together here, you are with us, and we can come into your presence. And we thank you so much that we are able to do that.

And so we pray that as we come, that this would be the moment that sets us up for the whole week ahead. And we pray that this would be the time when our eyes are drawn back to you, that our hearts are refocused and realigned to your will, that our minds are directed towards the things of God.

Because we confess that so often we are distracted, so often we turn aside, so often the stuff in life that's difficult can lead us looking inwardly and taking our eyes off you.

And worse than that, we confess that so often we can actually choose patterns of behaviour that are sinful, doing the things that you've told us not to do, failing to do the things that you have told us to do.

We confess that we so easily wander. But we thank you so much that as this new week begins, we can return to you and we can come together again, that we can meet around your word, that we can sing your word and read your word and pray to you and hear your voice speaking to us through your word and be drawn closer to you again.

[8 : 17] And so may that be the experience for us all. Please draw us nearer to you and prepare us for the week ahead. Because this week and for every week of our lives, we want to live for you.

Because you are our God. You are our King, our Maker, our Saviour. We love you and we worship you. And you are the most important thing in our lives.

You are the source from which everything good in our lives has come. We depend on you for everything. And we want to serve you in our lives. And so we pray that for every one of us here, that as this new week begins, as we step into this week, that every part of our lives would be shaped by the gospel, that in every part of our lives, your name would be hallowed and your kingdom would advance, so that we would live seeking to please you, that we would live our lives in loyalty and commitment towards you, just as you have shown such amazing love and commitment towards us. And so as we gather here today, we pray that we would see and understand more of the gospel, that it would shape every part of our lives, that it would heal and encourage all of our hearts, that you'd strengthen us and build us up.

And we pray the same for all who are meeting in your name across our island, across our nation and across the world. We pray that you'd bless your word and bless those who are coming together and build us up in our faith.

[9 : 41] And we pray that all across the globe today, that the name of Jesus would be lifted up. And as the gospel is proclaimed here and to the ends of the earth, we pray, Father, that you will be drawing more people to see the light and hope and glory of the gospel revealed in Jesus Christ.

And we pray that more and more people would find that amazing peace and joy that comes from only knowing you. So please bless us in our time together. We need you for everything. And we pray that we would just know you and love you and serve you more and more this week and for the rest of our lives.

We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, boys and girls, it's great to see so many of you here today. And I hope you're all doing well. You can come along here if you like and take a seat at the front.

It's nice to see you all. Where are you going? Let's see. Is this where you go? Right. Great. Excellent. Take a seat over here. Right. So I want to ask a question. Do any of you have any pets? Any of you have pets? What do you have? A dog. What's your dog called? Sheila. Sheila's nice. Anyone else got pets? What do you got? A cat. A cat. What's your cat called? A cat with Millie.

[10 : 49] Millie. Nice. Any other pets? Okay. What have you got? Two dogs. Two dogs. What are they called? Berlantina. Berlantina. Great. Excellent. Well, I have a dog.

And I'm going to tell you all about my dog today. My dog is called Rosie. And she is a Cocker Spaniel. And she's 11 and a half years old.

So she's getting a wee bit old. And do you know what? She's actually in the car. We took her down so we could take her for a walk this afternoon. And when we pulled up at church, my daughter said, can we take Rosie into church?

And her boring father said, no. Maybe next time I'll take her into church. Okay. So I want to tell you a wee story about Rosie. Okay. So Rosie's a lovely dog.

Very friendly. Very happy. But she's a bit stupid. Okay. And so she's not the smartest dog in the world. And I want to tell you that we often take Rosie for a walk near where we live.

[11 : 47] And near where we live in Carloway, you can walk about just less than a bit, about a mile maybe from our house to the pier in Carloway. So a really nice walk. You go down from our house to the river.

And you walk along the river. And then the river goes into the sea. And you walk along the sea a little bit beside the sea. And then you eventually reach the pier in Carloway. It's a really nice walk. And we often take Rosie for a walk there because the road is quiet.

She can run around. And she loves to explore everything. But Rosie is a bit stupid. And one day, not that long ago, we were at the pier.

And we turned back to go home. And we were thinking, where's Rosie? We were looking around. Couldn't see her. So quite often Rosie will wander off.

So she knows the way. She's done the walk loads of times. So we thought, well, we'll carry on.

She'll catch up with us in a few minutes. And sure enough, we walked back. And we turned around. And you could see Rosie running towards us.

[12 : 47] We're thinking, oh, great, she's coming. But as she got closer, you could see like there was like this sort of shiny glimmering on her back.

And so she's running along. And her back is just like kind of shiny, a wee bit glisteny. And you're thinking, that's a bit strange. And then as she got closer, you could see that that shiny, glisteny thing on her back was actually quite wet.

And then she got closer until she came up quite close to us. And she was absolutely stinking.

Because what she had done was the shiny stuff on her back, on the pier, she had found, I don't know what it was. It was something that had been dead for a long time.

So it was like rotten fish or dead crab or something disgusting, right? And so Rosie had smelt this honking, rotten, smelly fish on the ground in the pier.

[13 : 48] And remember I told you she's not very smart. But she came up, she must have come up to this smelly pile of disgustingness. And she thought, I'm going to roll in that. That's a great idea.

I'm going to roll in this disgusting fish juice. And that's exactly what she did. And so she came up to us and she was stinking. It was absolutely disgusting.

And so even when she was as close to me as you were and I was like, it was just awful. So anyway, we had to take Rosie home. And of course, Rosie, she can't clean herself when it's all on her back.

So she can clean herself when maybe it's on her paws, if she's sort of made her paws dirty or something. But if it's on her back, she can't clean herself. So who do you think had to clean Rosie? Me, yes.

I had to clean Rosie. We had to put her in the shower, had to hose her down, shampoo her, wash this disgusting, stinking, honking stuff off. And then I had to do it again because it took two shampoos to get Rosie clean.

[14 : 57] And eventually, eventually, we got all of this horrible, smelly, rotten fish out. And instead, Rosie was smelling of head and shoulders after that.

So she was nice and clean again. Okay, so that was Rosie. And the worst thing about Rosie is that that wasn't the first time that she's done it. She's actually done that a few times. And there's something, there seems to be something about Rosie that when she smells stinking, rotten, horrible, dead juices on the ground, she thinks, I'm going to roll in that.

That's a great idea. Okay? And it's not a great idea. It's a terrible idea. And that funny story about Rosie is, I think, actually teaching us some very important lessons about the gospel.

And I want to tell you three things that that story about Rosie teaches us about the gospel. Okay?

The first is that it teaches us a lesson about sin. Because if you think about it, you look at Rosie, right?

And imagine her on the pier. She's standing before this pile of rotten, disgusting fish. And you're thinking to yourself, Rosie, going anywhere near that is a terrible idea. But she does it, doesn't she? [16:14] She's attracted to the thing that's not really very good. And that's actually very often what sin is like. Because sin causes so much trouble when, you know, when we lie, when we are jealous of people, when we hurt people, when we disobey God, when we do all these things.

When we sin, we know it's a bad idea, don't we? But still, we can be attracted towards it. And still, we sometimes do it even though we know it's a bad idea.

Yeah, Rosie was attracted to something that was a terrible idea. And that teaches us a bit what sin is like. We know it's wrong, but yet sometimes, so often, too often, we still do it.

Okay? And of course, like Rosie, Rosie has that stain on her back. Sin leaves a stain on us. But the second big lesson we're learning is about the cross.

Because, remember what I said about Rosie? She can't clean herself. I had to clean her. Because she can't get it off her back. I had to clean her. And that's exactly what it's like with sin.

[17:22] We actually can't clean ourselves. We need someone else to clean us. We need Jesus to clean us. And that's why Jesus came. That's why he died on the cross.

So that our sins could be washed away. And we can't do that ourselves. But he does it for us. So that's the second thing we learn. So we learn about sin. It's awful.

But we still do it. We learn about the cross. We can't clean ourselves. But Jesus does it for us. And the third, and I think the most important lesson that we learn from this silly story about Rosie, is why all that happens.

Because Rosie rolled in that muck. And she stank. And I had to take her all the way home. And I had to put her in the shower. And I had to wash her twice. Do you know why I did all of that?

Because I actually love Rosie. I love Rosie. Because she's my dog. And she's part of our family. And even though she did that, I don't want to think, well, Rosie, you can stay at the pier and live here forever.

[18:27] We don't want you back. That's not what I thought at all. I thought, Rosie, I need to clean you. Because you're part of our family. And I love you. And I don't want to kick you out, even though you stink.

And that's teaching us the most important thing about the gospel. We sin, even though we shouldn't. And we can only be cleansed by Jesus because of the cross.

And all of that is because he loves us. All of that is because he loves you so much. And that's the amazing thing about us, about Jesus. Even though our sin stains us.

And even though he had to go all the way to the cross to heal us. He does that because he loves us. And he's not giving up on us. And we can always come to him for forgiveness and for healing and for hope.

So I hope you remember that silly story about Rosie. And if you want to meet Rosie after the service, she's in her car. We'll go and see her. But most of all, I want you to remember about Jesus.

[19:25] How he cleanses us from our sin. And how he does that because of his unfailing love for all of us. Okay, thank you guys for listening so well. We are going to sing again now. And our song is, My heart is filled with thankfulness.

And this is just a beautiful response to Jesus for all that he has done for us. And so this hymn speaks to us about the pain and agony of the cross.

But it expresses to Jesus the amazing thankfulness. The thankfulness we have to him for all his amazing work. So let's stand and sing these words together. My heart is filled with thankfulness.

To him who has filled with thankfulness. For my King, who planned the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again, who cursed and cursed all sinfulness and clothed me with His light, and wrote His law of righteousness with power upon my heart.

My heart is filled with thankfulness to Him who walks beside, who floods my weaknesses with sin and causes fears to die, whose heavenly promise is enough for every step I take, sustaining me with arms of love and crowning me with grace.

[21:28] My heart is filled with thankfulness to Him who reigns above, whose wisdom is my perfect peace, whose heavenly thought is love.

For every day I have honor is given by the King, so I will give my life, my all, to love and follow Him. Our reading this morning is from the Gospel of John and chapter 19, reading from verse 23 to the end of the chapter.

John chapter 19 from verse 23. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took His garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also His tunic.

But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, let's not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be. This was to fulfill the scripture which says, They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

[22 : 59] So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, Woman, behold your son.

Then He said to the disciple, Behold your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said to fulfill the scripture, I thirst.

A jar full of sour wine stood there. So they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to His mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, It is finished.

And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. Since it was the day of preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for that Sabbath was a high day, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

[24 : 12] But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness. His testimony is true, and He knows that He's telling the truth, that you may also believe.

For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled. Not one of His bones will be broken. And again another scripture says, They will look on Him whom they've pierced. After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.

And Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight.

So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where He was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. Amen. And may God add His blessing to the reading of His Word.

[25 : 28] Let's pray together again. Dear Father, we thank you that we can pray to you. And as we do so, we thank you that you instruct us and invite us to come and cast all our cares upon you.

And so as a new week begins, we want to bring before you all those in here and known to us who are in need just now. We want to pray for any who are going through difficult times at the moment, any who are unwell, any who are anxious about things, any who are worn out and under pressure, any who are grieving, or any who may be doubting or struggling.

We pray for any who are in the midst of difficult times just now. We pray that they would just be helped and encouraged, that just today would be just a day that's a turning point and a token of your strength and goodness towards them.

And so please be so near to any in here or any connected to the congregation or to our families or work, colleagues or friends, any in need, we want to bring them before you.

We want to pray for wider needs across the world. And especially we pray, Father, that just for those in leadership, those in responsibility, especially those who are particularly powerful, we pray, Father, for good and healthy relationships among countries.

[26 : 49] We pray for peace where there is conflict. We pray for a de-escalation where there's tension. And we pray for wisdom for all those who rule and who carry responsibility and authority.

We pray too for any in need throughout the world. We think of people living in places where there is severe poverty, places where maybe there's been great injustice, where there's been conflict, suffering, disease, disaster.

that many, many people are suffering hugely. And so we pray for them. And we pray for the advance of the gospel to reach to those living in need and in poverty, but also reaching to those living in wealth and power.

This morning, our focus is on these words that Jesus spoke in verse 30. It is finished. That tiny statement is only recorded in John's Gospel, but it's become one of the most famous that Jesus ever spoke.

In English, it's only three words. In the original Greek, it's actually only one word. Because in Greek, you don't need to add the words I and it and he and she. You can just change the spelling of the word and it tells you what it's referring to.

[35 : 38] It's just one Greek word. Tetelestai is the Greek word. In English, you've got three words. In Greek, you only have one word. And yet, this is describing the most momentous event in all of history.

And so I want us to think about this finished work of Christ. And as we think about it, we're just going to ask the very obvious question. What is finished? And to answer that, we're going to have our answer in three parts.

We're going to say that the suffering is over. The scriptures are fulfilled. And God's salvation is accomplished. So thinking, first of all, when we ask what's finished, well, the first part of that answer is to say the suffering is over.

These words are spoken by Jesus in the moments before he died. And that brought to an end a prolonged period of agonizing suffering in the experience of Jesus.

And that was part of what a crucifixion involved. One of the aims of putting someone to death by crucifixion was that it was meant to be as long and as painful as possible.

[36 : 51] And the way crucifixion worked, the idea was that you're suspended by your arms tied or nailed and your feet are nailed as well.

And that position that the cross puts you in makes breathing very difficult. And so the idea behind it is that you have to pull yourself up in order to breathe.

And then as you let yourself down again, if you want to breathe again, you've got to pull yourself up in order to breathe. And so the idea is that because you're having to pull yourself up to breathe for every breath, you're getting just slowly more and more tired.

And it becomes harder and harder to pull yourself up, which means it's harder and harder to breathe. And eventually you die of asphyxiation. And the whole idea is that it's long and slow and agonizing.

And so that's the context in which Jesus spoke these words. But as we think about that, there's two things we need to remember.

[37 : 58] The first thing we have to remember is that for Jesus, the suffering actually began long before he was nailed to the cross. If you read through the chapters running up to this, you see that Jesus has been mocked and betrayed and beaten and denied and abandoned and accused and condemned.

And even before that, Jesus' public ministry, as he became more and more prominent, brought an ever-increasing strain of opposition, threats, temptations, criticisms, and rejection.

And so the journey right up to this point from long before the cross has been one of suffering. And it's all reminding us that when Jesus came into the world, he came to suffer.

The Old Testament prophesied Jesus as the suffering servant. And then later in the New Testament, in Philippians 2, you have this amazing description of the downward trajectory of Jesus' ministry.

Picking up Philippians 2, verse 5, Paul writes, All of Christ's experience, all of Christ's experience in coming into the world, to be alongside us, is in the context of humiliation.

[39 : 36] And when we use that word, humiliation, we mean in the kind of technical sense of just being brought low. It was all a downward movement from Jesus, from the glory of being God the Son himself, down to the manger, down to the Garden of Gethsemane, down to the trial where he was condemned, down to the cross, all the way to death.

And so he's moving down that path, which is bringing ever-increasing suffering, and it all culminates here on the cross. So we've got to remember that the suffering started, that's been the pathway all along.

The second thing we've got to remember, though, is that although I just described to you the physical agony of a crucifixion, the suffering for Jesus involved far more than just that physical pain of a crucifixion.

As we know from the wider New Testament teaching, as Jesus died on the cross, he is dying to make atonement for our sins.

And we'll see a little bit more of that shortly. But the key point we want to see just now is that for Christ, for the one who forever has been God the Son, that brings not just physical pain, but enormous emotional and spiritual suffering.

[41 : 01] He has that agony of being abandoned, that sense of what we just sang in Psalm 22, that sense of forsakenness from his Father.

And he's suffering as the Lamb of God, who's come to take away the sins of the world and that happens through God's holy wrath being poured out upon him.

And so when you look at Jesus, when we think of Jesus on the cross, yes, there's awful physical agony, but that's in a way just the start. There's the deepest and most severe spiritual suffering taking place.

And maybe the clearest way to describe that is to say that on the cross, in the darkness of that moment, Jesus was suffering the agony of hell.

And John actually hints at that, even though John himself might not have realized that he was doing it. Because John is very careful to tell us, as we read, that Jesus was thirsty.

[42 : 07] You see that in verse 28. And for John, a key part of that was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, which we'll talk about in a second. But I think that there's maybe an unintentional on the part of John, but a deliberate connection on the part of the Holy Spirit, because that's linking us to something that Luke records in his gospel.

Luke records the parable of the rich man and Lazarus that Jesus tells in Luke 16. He describes the rich man in this parable ending up in hell. And whilst we must remember that it's a parable, so it's not necessarily giving us every specific detail of how we should understand hell in that sense.

The fascinating thing is that, as Jesus describes that rich man in hell, what does he say? He says he was thirsty, longing for water.

As he experiences that agony, he thirsts. And maybe we're just getting that hint here that that agony is exactly what Jesus is experiencing here.

Now, I don't know what that agony is like. I don't know what hell is like. And I don't really want to think or talk about it any more than I have to. But the key thing for us to recognize is that on the cross, Jesus, in those moments, is experiencing the fullness of that agony.

[43 : 25] And it's so important that we never, ever forget that the clearest glimpse that you'll ever get of what hell is like is if you look at Jesus on the cross, dying so that you don't have to go there.

All of this means that the life of Jesus, the mission of Jesus, the crucifixion of Jesus, exposed him to desperate suffering.

And now, at last, that suffering is finished. Now, there's loads that we could see here. I just want to highlight a couple of things.

One is just that all of this is teaching a basic and a crucial lesson about Jesus. It's telling us, reminding us all, that Jesus knows what it's like to suffer. And it is so, so important for us to remember that.

That for so many people, for some people, starting a new week on a Sunday morning is brilliant.

And we're like energized, ready, looking forward to what this week is going to bring. But for so many other people, going into a new week, it's like you're just, you're just hanging in there and just stumbling along and you just feel like you're going from one hard week into another.

[44 : 51] And that might be because of physical suffering that you're experiencing. It might be because of anxieties or struggles that you have in your mind. It might be because of things that are out of your control with your family, friends, colleagues, whatever.

There might be many, many things. I'm sure there are many, many things that are causing you to suffer. So many of you suffer physically. So many of you suffer emotionally.

And all of us at various times will suffer spiritually. Jesus knows what it's like to suffer in all of these ways. And that's why in the depths of your suffering, sometimes all you need is a two-word prayer.

A two-word prayer that you see several times in Scripture where you say, Lord, you know. You know. Because he does know.

Because he suffered in all the ways that we suffer. In fact, he suffered more than we ever will. And that's why we can talk to him. We can lean on him. We can be comforted by him.

[45 : 57] But connected to that, there's one crucial thing to remember. There's so much about the cross that we will never fully understand ourselves. The depths of suffering that Jesus reached are beyond what we will ever experience ourselves.

And so there's a kind of mystery in the cross. There's so much of it that's kind of unreachable for us. And I don't think it's, you know, I think it's absolutely on purpose that there was darkness around the cross because it's just taking things to a depth that we can never go.

So we will never say, if you're a Christian or if you become a Christian, we'll never say, I thirst in the way that Jesus said it and in the way that Jesus experienced it.

We will never have that. But if you are a Christian or if you become a Christian, there's one thing that you will say that Jesus also said on the cross. The day will come when you too will be able to say, in regard to your sufferings, it is finished.

The day will come when you will not be sore anymore and you will not be anxious anymore and you will not be alone or bruised or full of regret or full of fear or full of limitations.

[47 : 24] You will be able to say, it's finished. That's what Jesus promises us. That's what takes us to the wonderful words of Revelation 21 verse 4. He'll wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. For the former things have passed away. Physical, emotional, spiritual suffering, all finished.

And this is one of the amazing things about the gospel that we maybe don't think about enough.

That if we are trusting in Jesus, if you're a Christian or if you become a Christian, you will experience an end to sufferings.

So you will experience life with no suffering. And that's such an important thing to recognize because we live in a culture today where so many people want to see an end to suffering.

And rightly so. That's such a good thing for us to see. But it's interesting that when you see the push that there is just now in regard to assisted dying, that's motivated by an end to suffering.

[48 : 30] And at one level, you can see that's a good thing in the sense that not wanting people to suffer is a good thing. But the difficulty in that thinking is so much of that thinking is based on the worldview that there's no God.

And this life is all that there is. And if this life has become bearable, it's better to end and so that suffering is over. But with that worldview, if there's nothing beyond death, what we need to recognize is that in that moment of death, there isn't then an experience of no suffering.

There's just nothing. You go from life to suffering to nothing. That's all it is. If there's no God, if this life is all it is.

And this is where we see that it's the gospel and it's only the gospel that is giving us what actually everybody wants and everybody longs for. Because the gospel is saying we have this life and yes, this will bring suffering and death will bring it to an end in God's timing rather than ours.

And beyond that, we will experience no suffering. We will experience tears wiped away and we will experience that joy and thrill of a renewed body and a renewed community where all the former things have passed away.

[50 : 06] It's only the gospel that gives us that. And if you're trusting in Jesus, you will have that amazing moment when one day you can think back to all your sufferings, all your sorrows, all your fears, all your anxieties, all your struggles and you can say it is finished.

So that's the first answer to our question. What's finished? The suffering is over. Second part to our answer is to say that the scriptures are fulfilled. fulfilled. And in many ways, this is what John focuses on more than on the suffering.

So if you look at, read John chapter 19, there isn't actually a huge amount of detail about how much Jesus suffered. And to be honest, if you want to know about how much Jesus suffered, go to Psalm 22 rather than to John 19 because John's not focusing as much on the details of Jesus' suffering. Instead, he is focusing again and again on the fact that what happens to Jesus is fulfilling the Old Testament scriptures. And you see that several times. You can look, for example, in verse 36 that the scripture might be fulfilled, verse 37, and again another scripture.

So when they cast lots for his clothing, that's fulfilling Psalm 22, verse 18. When Jesus said that he thirsts, that echoes Psalm 69, 21. When the soldiers did not break his legs, that's fulfilling Exodus 12, 46, Psalm 34, 20.

[51 : 33] When they pierced his side with a spear, that goes back to Zechariah 12, verse 10. In all of these ways, we've been shown that everything that's happening to Jesus in these moments is everything that God has planned.

It's everything that the scriptures had been expecting. And that's crucial for a couple of reasons. First, it's showing us that although Jesus has been beaten and mocked and condemned and executed, throughout it all, he is in total control.

And John makes it absolutely clear that as Jesus dies on the cross, he gives up his spirit. He's the one who decides when it's finished.

And you see that in the contrast that John highlights with the others crucified beside Jesus. Their legs are broken to accelerate their deaths, but Jesus has already died because the death of Jesus is according to God's timing, not humanity's timing.

So he's in control in it all. And secondly, all of this reference to the Old Testament is highlighting that when Jesus says it is finished, he's not saying it's finished in a sense of failure, as though everything's just come to a terrible end.

[52 : 56] Now that might seem very obvious to us because we know the outcome of the story. We know that Jesus is going to rise again. But it's so important for us to highlight this because for the people who are standing watching Jesus on the cross, to them, it looked as though everything was ending in failure.

This is not the outcome the disciples expected. Back in the garden, they pulled out their sword ready to fight because they're going to conquer Jesus' enemies. Jesus is not going to die in their minds.

And to the opponents of Jesus, all of this just confirms everything that they thought all along. He's not the king. He's not the Messiah. He's deluded. We've got rid of him. He's not the son of God. And so the disciples probably, or we can, I think it's fair to imagine the disciples walking home saying to themselves, it's finished.

In the sense that everything that they'd hoped for over the last three years was over. It's done. But of course, that's not what Jesus meant when he said, it is finished.

[54 : 10] His cry is a magnificent declaration that he has completed what he came to do. So when he says finished, he doesn't mean finished as in failed.

He means finished as in fulfilled. And it's a great reminder that everything that's happening here, and this is what John is emphasizing so much, everything that's happening here is part of this one great plan of redemption that runs right through the whole Bible.

The Old Testament has pointed forward to it again and again. And now Jesus comes and dies and fulfills that plan perfectly. And the consequence of that is highlighted in verse 35.

John says, he who saw it has borne witness. His testimony is true and he knows that he's telling the truth that you also may believe. All of this is so that you might believe.

And so John is telling you, this is what I saw. And he's saying, this is how it fulfills what was written hundreds of years ago in the Old Testament. And this is how God is bringing everything together perfectly.

[55 : 20] In other words, all of this is confirming to us that the Bible is not making stuff up as it goes along. And Christianity is not asking you to believe something that lacks credibility.

It's the very opposite. The message of the gospel stands on two things. It stands on eyewitness testimony and it stands on fulfilled prophecy. So you have eyewitness testimony of people who are like, I stood there, I saw it, this happened.

And what they saw corresponds to what was prophesied hundreds of years in advance. Eyewitness testimony, fulfilled prophecy, all of that is reinforcing the truth and credibility and reliability of the gospel.

Everything that we believe in the gospel stands on the stable coherent, consistent plan of God as it's worked out in history. Now why is that so important for us to think about?

Well, it's really important because today we live in a society where we see people who are responding to the biggest questions about life and death by just making stuff up as they go along.

[56 : 36] So you ask the question, what is ultimate truth? What's ultimate metaphysical truth about reality, eternity, life and death?

What's ultimate truth? People will say, look into your heart. Where can we find hope? Where can we find hope in the midst of suffering and agony and sorrow?

People will say, stay strong, keep the faith, feel the energy. What happens when we die? People will say, we cross to the other side.

We go to a better place. We fly with the angels. that is just making stuff up. That's just making stuff up.

Now it's fascinating. If you go back two or three hundred years, this is a kind of general statement, but I still think it's kind of on the whole right. You go back two or three hundred years, maybe you have to go back a wee bit further.

[57 : 40] I think it's probably the case that when it came to medical care, scientific opinion, and cultural analysis, sociological trends and things like that, I think most people made stuff up as they went along.

So you think about medical care, people would maybe have sort of maybe slightly naive ideas about how to treat illnesses and things like that. and they were maybe just making stuff up as they went along in terms of kind of medical care, scientific opinion.

Not all people, but just being kind of general people. But they knew that they had to think seriously about God and about death and about eternity.

I think today it's the other way around because all around us today people think so seriously about medical care, about scientific research, about cultural analysis, that when it comes to life and death and God and eternity, we just make up stuff that sounds nice.

And that's why the gospel is so magnificent and why it's so desperately needed. Because it's giving us a message that is telling us the truth.

[58 : 55] And we know it's the truth because it has fulfilled the plan of God and it stands on a coherent, reliable, trustworthy record. When Jesus says it's finished, he is telling us that the scriptures have been fulfilled.

So we're asking the question, what's finished? The suffering is over, the scriptures are fulfilled, and thirdly and lastly, God's salvation is accomplished. When Jesus said it is finished, I think this is what he wants us to see most of all.

that God's salvation has been accomplished. The whole of the Christian gospel, everything that the Bible reveals, arises from the fact that something is massively wrong.

We're created by God to enjoy a beautiful relationship with him, with each other, with the world around us, with ourselves, and sin has ruined it. And we're responsible.

We've rejected God, we've rebelled against him, and it's left us broken and lost. And the consequences of that are monumental. So sin's left us guilty before God in desperate need of forgiveness.

[60 : 06] Sin has left us as slaves, desperately needing to be redeemed from the power of sin. Sin has accrued a massive debt before God that needs to be paid in full that we've got no chance of paying ourselves.

Sin has provoked God's righteous and holy wrath that must be poured out. Sin has left us alienated from God, desperately needing to be reconciled to him. Sin's left us lost and disorientated.

We don't know which way to go. We need to be rescued. Sin has left us battered and bruised, desperately needing to be healed. Sin has left us under the ruthless power of death and we desperately need to be saved.

And the whole of Jesus' mission is grounded on the fact that he has come to say, I'm going to fix that. I'm going to fix all of that.

But fixing it meant leaving heaven. Fixing it meant coming into the world as one of us. Fixing it meant being laid in a manger.

[61 : 08] Fixing it meant being despised and rejected by the very people he created. Fixing it meant the garden of Gethsemane and sweating like drops of blood. Fixing it meant betrayal.

Fixing it meant his hands and feet were nailed to a cross. Fixing it meant the shame of public condemnation and execution. Fixing it meant taking all the punishment for our sins in our place.

Fixing it meant crying out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Fixing it meant death, even death on the cross. And in the councils of eternity Jesus said, I'll do it all.

And now, now that he is about to bow his head and give up his spirit, now at last Jesus can say, it's finished.

And the incredible thing is that all of that was done for you. And there's two crucial points we have to recognise.

[62 : 15] The first is that we need to recognise that there are so many times that God could have said, it is finished. So when Adam and Eve obeyed him in Genesis 3, God could have said, it's finished, we're done.

When he delivered the children of Israel from Egypt and gave them his Ten Commandments only for Moses to go down and discover that they'd made a golden calf and were worshipping that instead, God could have said, it's finished.

When the nation of Israel were given the promised land, given a beautiful city in Jerusalem, established as a nation and yet chose to turn to the idols of the foreign nations again and again and again, God could have said, it is finished.

When Jesus came to his own but his own did not receive him, God could have said, it is finished.

When the crowds cried for the Son of God to be crucified, God could have walked away and said, it is finished.

When humanity rejected God and decided that we know better, God could have walked away and said, I'm finished with it. But he doesn't.

[63 : 31] And this is where we see how unrelenting God's love for you really is. Jesus will only cry, it is finished, when he has paid the price for every mistake that you've made.

When he has atoned for every sin that you will ever commit. and when he has broken every last ounce of power that sin and death has over you.

For God, for God, it is only ever finished when your salvation is fully and irrevocably accomplished. In other words, when Jesus left heaven to come into this world, he could only ever return when he knew he could bring you with him.

And this raises the second crucial point that we have to remember. When it comes to faith, when it comes to salvation, when it comes to the great question of what happens when we die, when it comes to the question of whether or not I'm saved, when it comes to that, for centuries humanity has been plagued by the question, have I done enough?

[64 : 50] Have I done enough? And so many of the world's religions are crushing people with that question. Do your good deeds outnumber your bad deeds? Have you remembered to pray five times a day?

Have you given enough? Have you tried hard enough? Have you reached the standard? And we can approach the gospel in the same way. We think, have I done enough to be saved? Have I learned enough? Have I been good enough?

Do I know enough? Is my faith strong enough? Have I experienced enough? And that question can plague us as we are seekers, if we're seeking the Lord, and maybe that's you just now, you're like, I'm just not sure where I stand, but you think the one thing's for sure, I look at all these other Christians around me, and I'm not like them, they've got more than me, I haven't done enough.

And even as Christians, we can be plagued by that question because we think, I actually don't know, I actually don't know if my faith is really there, I don't know if I've made too many mistakes, I don't know if I've kept on enough, and we are plagued by that question, have I done enough?

And all the time Jesus is saying, stop asking that question, and never ask it again, because when it comes to everything that's required for you to be saved, Jesus says it's finished.

[66 : 11] In other words, if you're trusting in Jesus, or if you start trusting him today, if you start following the Lord, you never, ever, ever have to ask the question, have I done enough?

Because he's done absolutely everything, and that's why every time we doubt, every time we're afraid, every time we feel like we have totally stuffed things up and messed up our relationship with God, every time we feel like we are nowhere near good enough, you come right back to these three words in John 19.30, it is finished.

And these are the words that make it possible for the gospel to be a message of grace. It's a free gift, fully accomplished, eternally effective, utterly perfect, all because Jesus finished everything.

These three words are amazing words, and I've gone on for too long, as I always do. I just want to finish with one final question. Jesus said these words, it is finished.

What do you think was the tone of his cry? So, like, when he said it, like, what was his tone? What did he sound like? So, did it, was it like, was it like a cry of agony?

[67 : 32] It is finished! Was it a cry of exhaustion? It is finished! Was it a cry of distress? Yes, it is finished! Maybe it could have been one of these.

I guess we can't be sure. But, we sang from Psalm 22 at the start, which describes the cross so vividly, and it gives a real insight into the agony that Jesus suffered.

And so, you read the first kind of two-thirds of Psalm 22, and there's loads of really powerful prophetic words that are fulfilled in the cross.

And so, you can see that there's so much suffering depicted in that Psalm. But Psalm 22 is amazing, because the first two-thirds are like the deepest depths of suffering, but the last bit are words of amazing praise, and joy, and triumph.

And so, the Psalm describes agony for the first two-thirds, but it ends on a note of joy. And because of that, I want to suggest to you, this is what I think, although I know I can't be certain that I'm right, but deep down I think I definitely am right.

[68 : 45] I think that when Jesus said, it is finished, I don't think it was a breathless, exhausted cry of anguish, and I don't think it was an agonising scream of pain.

I think it was a triumphant shout of joy. Jesus said, it is finished.

It is finished. And as he does that, he rejoices because his mission is complete, his father's will has been done, and now he can save you, and bring you into his family, and he can take you to be with him forever.

He has done everything that we need. The question for us all is are we trusting him, are we following him? I pray that we all are. Amen. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for these amazing, amazing words. It is finished. And we just pray that the fullness of that truth would just fill our hearts with joy, thanksgiving, and peace.

[70 : 00] And we pray that every single one of us would rest in the truths captured in these words, in all that you've done for us. And may we all know, either for the first time, or may we know anew again, more and more of the wonder of the saving power of your finished work.

Amen. Amen. we are going to close singing together the hymn I heard the power of the cross I heard the voices you say tonight.

So the power of the cross which just captures amazingly powerful, it's amazing how this hymn captures takes us to the cross and shows us its power.

So let's stand as we sing together. Go to see the dark of the darkest day Christ on the road to Calvary Tied by sinful men Tore and beaten there Killed to a cross of wood This the man of the cross Christ became sin for us took the blame for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross!

Oh, to see the pain written on your face! Failing the awesome weight of sin!

[72 : 25] Every bitter thought, every woman crowning your blessing crown this the power of the cross Christ became sin for us to the blame for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross now the daylight flees now the cloud beneath which as its figure floods its head curtain torn in two dead are raised tonight finish the victory cry this the power of the cross

Christ became sin for us took the blame for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross oh oh to see my name written in the wounds for through your suffering I am free death is crushed death is crushed in death life is mine to live one through your selfless love as it still as it still as it still as it still as it still as it still of God saved for us what a love what a cross we stand forgiven at the cross as you step into a new week together may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all and all God's people say
Amen