

The Sixth Word “It is finished.” (John 19:29-30)

When the ninth hour came – after Jesus had been hanging there for three hours – John tells us that He said, “It is finished.” As with much of what Jesus said, these words must have seemed somewhat enigmatic to those who heard them. As with almost everything Jesus said, what the hearer brought to the words could be as important as the words themselves.

“It is finished.” Did He mean that the pain He was enduring was finished? Did He mean that after a day of being beaten and abused; a day of having a whip across His back, thorns in His head and spikes through His hands and feet that He was about to be delivered from all further suffering? If you were Mary, His mother; or Mary Magdalene; or the Disciple John; all of whom stood at the foot of the cross and suffered while He did, you would probably have been saying to yourself, “Please let Him be right! Please, let it be finished.”

Or did He mean that His fight against the powers of the world was finished? If you were a Pharisee or a Temple official and you were standing at the foot of the cross that day, you might have been tempted to say to yourself, “It is finished. That’s right pretend messiah. It IS finished. We won. You ran across people who had wealth and power beyond anything

you – with your backwater Nazareth ways – could ever imagine. Darn right it's finished.”

From my vantage point – standing here nearly 2000 years later, I know what these words mean to me.

Adam and Eve turned their back on God and sin took hold. Cain and Abel were the product of that sin. Things got so bad that God sent a flood to destroy the world. But sin – like cockroaches – survives natural disasters. People continued trying to be their own gods – and the Tower of Babel resulted. People refused to learn how to treat each other – and there was Sodom and Gomorrah. And on and on it went. Sin ruled people's lives and sin caused spiritual as well as physical death.

But on that afternoon when the sinless one *became* sin for us – on that afternoon, it was finished. The son of God – in fact, God incarnate – hung on that cross that afternoon and said the words, “It is finished,” and so it was. The hold that sin had over humankind was broken in that very moment. And it remains so. People continue to commit their petty (and not so petty) sins. That will not change in our lifetimes. But when Jesus was hauled up the cross and carried with Him the gulf of separation between human and God – that is (in capital letters, SIN) – He *destroyed* sin. It is finished indeed.