

Good Friday – 2026

And God said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). It is a single word in Greek, τετελεσται (tetelestai). Τετελεσται is Jesus’ final word from the cross. It is finished. In the beginning God created man in His image; male and female created He them (Genesis 1:27). And on the cross God performed the work of recreation. It is finished. On a Friday, God breathed into man the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). On a Friday, the Son of God gave us His breath (Luke 23:47). Adam becomes a living creature on Friday, the sixth day of creation. The Second, Greater Adam becomes a corpse on Friday. It is finished. Some words echo. There is no end to τετελεσται. The drama of the cross does not end in death but in a flow of life that comes from death. The death of Jesus is the beginning, the genesis of Christian life. “It is finished” is the essence of grace. “It is finished” is the essence of love. “It is finished” is the essence of forgiveness, and truth, and heaven.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1). From the outset of time, from the moment that God acted to create, Christ’s Word of completion was hanging in the air. Love reaches its apex on the holy cross. Victory finds its form in a crucified Messiah. This is where God intended to go all along. It is finished. It echoes. You wake every morning to a world that has Christ’s voice vibrating in the air. There is no uncertainty in τετελεσται. There is no ambiguity in our Lord’s victory. He reigns. Death is defeated. Satan’s head is crushed beneath a nail-pierced foot. Life is the product of Christ’s sacrifice. It is finished. Jesus knew it. As His flesh gave way to death, as He surveyed the span of His life, as He looked out on the horizon of the NT era, He knew it. It is finished. You have experienced something similar. It could be as ordinary as preparing a banquet and knowing that every dish is well-prepared and ready. It could be a work of art upon which no improvement can be made. It could be the painting of the house or the mowing of the lawn or the fabrication of a quilt – you complete the task and you know, it is finished.

The Lord Christ came into our domain with no illusions. His end was written in the Scriptures and there would be no alternative path. Man would crucify Him. Man would mock and taunt and jeer. Jesus would be the atoning sacrifice. The Father sent Him for no other reason. Yes, He reveals the truth, reveals the Father. Yes, He unleashes His love. Yes, He establishes His Kingdom. But the Lord came to die. Calvary is His end. Thorns, nails, and spear are His end. The weight of His burden grew the closer to Good Friday He came. True God and true Man, He would suffer. He saw it. Sin and death would be unleashed like jackals onto His flesh. The unseen burden of our transgressions inflaming His Spirit and the Father’s fury over sin, a righteous punishment, unreservedly poured out directly on Him. That’s what atonement is. That’s what payment is. It was planned. Prophet after prophet announced His coming. The Scriptures must be fulfilled. And Jesus cried out, It is finished.

Empathy is defined as “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.” To be thoroughly understood – do you know the feeling? Encouragement and empathy – those are the qualities of the finest friends. Who knows you? Scripture says that the Second Person of the Trinity was made like us in every way, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). The Lord Christ doesn’t know you from afar. Jesus isn’t acquainted with you obliquely or partially or reservedly. Some view the Lord Christ like some sort of Superman, above the fray, antiseptically clean, impervious to pain, and tentative about mussing His holiness. Our enemies certainly know us. Satan attacks

our weaknesses. If one is prone to self-pity, the devil will find a way to prompt us to justify self-pity in our minds. If one is prone to insecurity, Satan will pummel you with doubt-arousing arguments. It's in his nature. He prowls around like a roaring lion seeking a point of entry, an angle from which to pounce. There is no empathy in Satan. He is a liar, a murderer, and the prince of discouragement.

Kinship is empathy. Jesus knows your circumstance because He adopted your circumstance. God adopted your circumstance. He didn't come in a gold-plated carriage. Humble, He came to a backward town, Nazareth, grew up the son of a carpenter, and He was comfortable in the company of tax collectors. Kinship: the Son of God was in solidarity with us. He knows us. Empathy came to act. Like you; He became like you. Flesh and blood, He knew this mortal frame. His friends died and He wept. His friends betrayed Him and He smarted from the treachery. His friends misunderstood Him and it was a genuine burden. It's not angels He helps. He came to identify with the fallen sons of Adam and the broken daughters of Eve. He knows you. Thieves are crucified on His right and His left. He doesn't probe their sins. He dies with them as He dies for them. Empathy. "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17).

It's heart-breaking to see Him die. Ignominy has never known treatment such as this. I remember my mother saying that she didn't want Jesus to have to die for her. It's not a great sentiment but I understand it. She was sorry that He had to die in such a way for her. It's easy to feel defeated, looking at the shame of the cross. It's easy to feel angry at those who showed such brutality. As Jesus was being arrested, Simon Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest. Think of it – the sword stroke to cut off someone's ear is designed as a death blow to the head. Jesus replied forthwith: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:54). Empathy and love lead Him to the cross. Kinship and righteousness lead Him to the cross. Death must be repelled. Sin must be conquered. A Kingdom must come. It is finished.

Τετέλεσται -- there is no single word more magnificent than "it is finished." Τετέλεσται is embedded in the rite of Holy Baptism. Τετέλεσται is embedded in the word of absolution which the pastor speaks in the stead and by the command of Christ. "It is finished" is in the communion meal. It echoes. On the Last Day, when we are drawn from our graves, "it is finished" will be in the air. Christ's sacrifice stands outside of time and space. It is certainly within time. It is certainly within space, and its historicity permeates life on this planet. But Jesus' sacrifice is greater than time. Jesus' sacrifice is larger than space. And I know that some of you have endured great loss. You long for loved ones who have preceded you in death. Encouragement is the other side of the empathy coin, the coin of Christ's realm. At His death, "the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many" (Matthew 27:51-53). There is no loss here. Our sin is on Him and that is a verity. It hurts to know. It hurts to see the price, but there is no loss here. Easter must come. Good Friday and Easter are bonded. On the Last Day, you will know in full. It is finished. Your loved ones know. Christ saved them. They are safe. They live knowing it is finished. Heaven is predicated on τετέλεσται. The world was judged in Christ on Good Friday. He paid, He's risen, and life is ours.