

## **FINISHED BUSINESS** **(John 19:28-30)**

If I asked you, “Who was the greatest artist of all time?” several names might be suggested, but I think we could soon settle on one candidate. The man I am thinking about excelled in more than one medium. He was a painter, an architect, and a sculptor. His works are world-famous.

Every time the College of Cardinals gathers to elect a new pope, they meet in the Sistine Chapel. Above them is the ceiling which this man painted. When I say he painted the ceiling, I don’t mean he slapped a couple of coats of latex on the ceiling. No, he used his knowledge of the Bible and his imagination to paint multiple scenes right from the pages of Scripture. People still marvel at its intricacy and beauty.

In the Accademia Gallery of Florence, his hometown, you will find his statue of David. It was sculpted from a single block of marble. It stands 17 feet high, the height of an adult giraffe. It weighs 12,500 pounds. It is a stunning work of art.

As is his pieta. It, too, is made of pure marble. It shows the Mother Mary in a sitting position as she holds the lifeless body of her son Jesus, who is draped across her laps, bearing the wounds of His crucifixion. To see it, you will have to go to Vatican City where it is housed in St. Peter’s Basilica.

Of course, the man responsible for these immortal works of art was Michelangelo. While he was alive, he was said to be the greatest artist ever. From where I stand, no one has come after him who has surpassed him. His contemporaries called him *il Divino*, the Divine One.

A great many of Michelangelo’s works, however, were *non-finito*, not finished. In fact, he left more unfinished than finished. Some sculptures were not meant to be completed. They show a form trying but unable to emerge from the block of stone in which the subject is forever captured. Viewing them, we feel their struggle. More often, however, he just gave up on them for one reason or another.

We have a term, *unfinished business*. We not only know the meaning of the term, we also know the pain of the experience. Sometimes unfinished business shows up in our personal relationships. We lose a mom or dad before we had that heart-to-heart conversation we had put off. We are left with a sense of unfinished business. Our son or daughter leaves home, and we are left thinking, “There was so much more I wanted to teach him, to show her.” We have a feeling of unfinished business.

Sometimes our unfinished business relates to our actual business. As a young man, I had to reconcile myself to the fact that I would never leave the office thinking to myself, “Everything I needed to do today, I got done.” I had a keen awareness that there was always one more visit that needed to be made, one more phone call that needed to be placed, one more email that needed to be sent, one more duty that needed to be done. Nothing has changed. It is still like that. At the end of every day, there is some unfinished business left to do.

We turn our attention to John 19. In this chapter, the word *finished* appears twice in a span of three verses. These are the only two times that the word *finished* is used in John’s

gospel. The first usage regards something Jesus knew, and the second regards something Jesus said. Our text is John 19:28-30.

Last week our text was rather long. It went from John 18:1-19:16. That is a total of 56 verses. This morning, our text is rather short. It covers only three verses, but there is a sense in which it really encompasses just three words. They are the words Jesus spoke in v. 30. What Jesus said shows up as three words in our English translations, but in the Greek language it was just one word. We will break down that word later, but for right now, I want you to see that never has so much been communicated with just one little word.

Let's read our text. In this message, I want to make only two statements, but at the end of each statement, I will add a question for us to ponder. I want you to notice . . .

### **Jesus Said What He Knew to Be True—Do We?**

Verse 28 tells us what Jesus knew. He knew that all was now finished. What was finished? For one, all the details that had been prophesied concerning His atoning death had come to pass. This seems to be a recurring theme in John 19. John tells us that while Jesus was hanging on the cross, the four soldiers who were there divided His clothes among them, but His tunic, which was a long garment worn under his robe and next to his skin was specially made. It had no seam. The soldiers decided they would play a game of chance. The winner would get the tunic.

John is careful to point out, "This was to fulfill the Scripture which says," and then he quotes from Psalm 22:18, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots" (John 19:24). That activity had been prophesied; it was now finished.

Later in the chapter, John points out they while the soldiers broke the legs of the criminals on either side of Jesus to hasten their death, Jesus had already died. Instead of breaking His legs, a soldier ran a spear up through His side into His heart to ensure that He was dead. John added:

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 have pierced" (19:36-37).

These quotations come from Psalm 34 and Zechariah 12, respectively.

Clearly, Jesus was not adlibbing; He was not making things up as He went along. Instead, He was following a divine script. Like a careful director, He was making sure that all was done as it had been planned long ago.

Our text shows us one little detail that Jesus did not miss. In Psalm 69:21 we find these words, "They offer Me sour wine to satisfy My thirst." Verse 29 of our text is a fulfillment of Psalm 69:21.

Jesus was student of the Scriptures. He knew it backwards and forward. He knew everything it said regarding His death. He made sure that all of it happened as Scripture said it would happen. So, knowing it was finished (v. 28), He said it was finished (v. 30). Jesus said what He knew to be true.

Jesus knew what the Bible said concerning Himself. Do you know what the Bible says concerning you? The Bible has a lot to say about you. It talks about who you were before you became a believer. Before you gave your heart and life to Christ, you were a sinner by birth and a sinner by choice making you twice condemned.

Paul reminded the believers in Ephesus as to who they were before Jesus saved them. What Paul wrote of them is true of you and me before we trusted Christ. Paul wrote, “Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

That is who we were. The Bible tells us that and so much more. It goes on to tell us who we are in Christ.

In my library I have a signed copy of Kathie Grant’s book, *Praying in the Word of God*. She encourages believers to pray the word of God back to God. In her book, she lists 72 declarations from God’s word as to who we are in Christ with the accompanying verses to back up who God says we are. I am not going to read all 72. Let me give you ten. As a believer in Jesus, the Bible says:

- You are the object of His love.
- You are His child.
- You are saved from wrath.
- You are a new creation.
- You are blessed with all spiritual blessings.
- You are more than a conqueror.
- You are victorious over death.
- You are a dwelling for God.
- You are an ambassador of Christ.
- You are God’s possession.

And you are so, much more. Do you know who you are? I am afraid that many within God’s family suffer from an identity crisis. We don’t know who we are. It is almost like suffering from amnesia except instead of forgetting who we are, most of us never knew our true identity in the first place.

I encourage you to become a student of the Bible so that you will know you are, and so that you will know what you are to do.

Once we know the truth, we have a responsibility to say what we know to be true. That is what Jesus did. That is what we are to do. We are to say what we know to be true: about ourselves, about Him, and about what He taught.

When you come across those who are peddling falsehood, call them on it. Ask God to give you the boldness to tell the truth, to set the record straight. You need assistance to do that because the reality is that most of us don’t want to enter the fray. We would like to retire into the safety of our homes and the security we have found within the walls of the church. It is scary out there in the world.

- There are people out there who don't like us.
- There are people out there who don't like God.
- There are people out there who don't like the truth,
- There are people out there who don't want to hear the truth.

We are called to go out there into that scary environment and be bold for Christ. Like I said, we need some help. I want you to know that help is available.

This past week I read from Acts 4. In the previous chapter Peter and John healed a lame man in Jesus' name. In chapter 4, those two were called on the carpet by the high court of the Jews. They were instructed to no longer speak or preach in Jesus' name. The two replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than Him? We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard" (4:19-20).

All the authorities could do was threaten them, and then they let them go. The two returned to their friends in the faith. As a group they prayed. Luke recorded a portion of one of those prayers: "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to Your servants to continue to speak Your word with all boldness" (4:29). Luke told us what happened next, "And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness" (4:31). They got what they prayed for, and the Spirit of truth helped them to proclaim the truth.

That is what we are to do. We are to speak the truth in love. Some people speak the truth without love. They have all the tenderness of a hammer. Some speak with love, but they fail to speak truth. That only succeeds in helping feel better about themselves as they continue traveling the road to hell.

If we look to Him, He will help us speak the truth lovingly. God will use that truth and the manner in which it is spoken to change lives.

We can learn and be challenged by a second truth. Not only did Jesus say what He knew to be true . . .

### **Jesus Did What God Told Him to Do—Do We?**

Something else was finished that day. It was more than just the Scriptures being fulfilled. Through His ministry and the record of it in the gospels, we come across the phrase, "It's not My time" or "The time had not yet come." We also find Jesus talking about being given a work to do. In John 4:24, Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." Then on the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus knew His time had come, and He prayed confidently, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do" (John 17:4).

Jesus came to accomplish the work of redemption, the work of atonement, the work of reconciliation. On the cross, Jesus stood in the wide gap between a holy God and sinful people, and He brought us together by taking upon Himself God's just judgment against sin. On the cross, Jesus took our sin and our guilt, and He gave us His righteousness.

We sang that truth this morning: "Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a

crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.” That is the glorious truth of the gospel. It came about because Jesus did what God told Him to do.

Early in the message I said that it takes us three English words to communicate what Jesus said: “It is finished.” The Greek text, however, just uses one Greek word.

Greek is a very expressive language. If you take a Greek verb, you can say various things depending on the ending you attach to the word. For instance, in v. 28, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” Again, that is three letters in our language, but it was just one word in the Greek language. The ending tells us the word is first person, singular—I. It also tells us that it is in the present tense. Accordingly, we can take that one word and translated it as, “I am thirsty.”

The verb ending in v. 30 is third person, singular. Had it been first person, Jesus would have said, “I am finished.” He didn’t say that. Had it been second person, He would have said, “You are finished.” He didn’t say that. He used the third person singular which is either, *he*, *she*, or *it*. Given the context, Jesus clearly said, “It is finished.”

I am going to get technical with you, and as I do so, I am reminded of the little boy whose father gave him apple slices. He was a bit of a slow eater, and the boy noticed that his apple slices had turned brown. He got his father’s attention and asked, “Dad, why is my apple brown?”

The father explained, “Well, son, this is a natural, biochemical reaction. When I cut your apple, the plant tissue was exposed to oxygen. This triggered an enzyme that reacted with the amino acids in your apple, and it produced a brown colored melanin.”

The boy looked up and asked, “Dad, are you talking to me?”

Without saying it out-loud, I think some church people listen to the pastor’s sermon, and they wonder to themselves, “Preacher, are you talking to me?”

At the risk of you thinking or asking that question, I want to go a little further in explaining this verb found in v. 30. If you will stay with me, you will be glad you did. In addition to being first, person singular, the verb is also a perfect, passive, indicative verb. Don’t check out. Stay with me.

This was a verb in the perfect tense which indicates that it was a mighty act, the results of which would continue on and would abide.

It was an indicative verb which communicates certainty. Jesus was not saying, “It may be finished.” He said, **It is finished.**” Jesus spoke with certitude.

This was also in the passive voice. Jesus did not say, “I finished it.” That means what He did was acted upon by a great force to accomplish a great purpose.

In a sermon on this text, Joel Gregory, one of my homiletical heroes explained this first person, singular, perfect, passive, indicative verb. He claimed that Jesus was saying, “I have finished the right purposes of God and they have now been delivered to their appropriate and full intention.”

This word has been found outside of the NT. Let me describe how it was used. **It was used by a servant.** When his master gave him a task to perform, he would go off and do it. Once the assignment had been completed, he would return and say this word to his master: “It is finished.”

**The word was used by an artist.** He would labor over the canvas, trying to get the

shading just right, hoping the image on the canvas would convey the feeling and message he sought to communicate. At last, he would stand back and say to himself this word, “It is finished.”

**This was the word of a merchant.** The word was found on a pottery shard in the ruins of a merchant’s place of business. A customer paid his bill; the merchant wrote this word on the receipt: “It is finished. Payment made in full.”

Jesus did all those things on our behalf. He completed the Father’s will. The painting of salvation was begun in the OT. The first brushstrokes of salvation were made by the prophets and poets of Scripture as they gave us types and foreshadows of salvation, but Jesus completed the work. And when our sin debt was taken care of by His death on the cross, Jesus was able to say, “Payment made in full.”

While it is abundantly clear that Jesus did what God told Him to do, we must ask ourselves, “Do we?” Do we hear when our father calls? Do we discern what He says? Do we undertake to complete what He tells us to do?

Honesty compels me to say, “No. We are not fully obeying God.” You have heard of selective hearing. Some children hear their parents only when they want to hear their parents. So, when the parents of those children call them to do a certain chore, those children seem not to hear. Ahh, but when there are treats to be passed out, well, those children are Johnny-on-the-spot.

Husbands have selective hearing. Wives? Well, wives hear everything, and they remember everything!

As God’s children, we don’t hear everything, and there are times we hear; we just don’t obey.

This is particularly true in the area of evangelism or disciple-making. We know what the Great Commission says. We have read it at the end of Matthew’s gospel. We have heard sermons on it again and again. Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

But honestly, how many disciples have you made in the last year, the last 5 years, the last 10 years? The Great Commission has become the Great Omission. We are just not doing what Jesus told us to do. We are not being obedient.

I have heard it said that if a church is not planning to reach its community for Christ, that church is planning to be disobedient. We’ve got to do better than that. We can do better than that. We will do better than that if we will ask the Lord to help us and if we will humbly receive His help.

I want you to know that help is here. I believe God inspired a man named Thom Rainer to write a book called, *Pray and Go*. The subtitle of that book is: *Your Invitation to Become a Great Commission Christian*. This book is divided into 30 daily readings. You will finish it in a month. I have almost two-weeks under my belt.

I want you to know, this is good stuff. This contains helpful material. I won’t lie. At times it is convicting, but we need to be convicted of not doing what God has clearly called us to do. The goal of this book is not to make you into a Billy Graham or a street preacher. This book will help you to pray—for yourself, for your church, for your pastor, for your community, and for the lost. The first step toward effective outreach is prayer. If

we are not praying, nothing is going to happen. Again, I must be honest. Not much is happening because we are not praying.

This Tuesday at 9:30, I am going to hold a preview of this study in the Fellowship Hall. That time may not be ideal for everybody, but I don't expect everybody to go through this the first time. I hope to offer this study quarterly.

Let me be frank. Don't come if you don't mean business. Don't come if you don't really want to become more effective in reaching others. Don't come if you are content with being disobedient

If you are willing and if you desire God to use you, come.

I began this message by talking about the great artist Michelangelo. He was born in 1475. Many of the works he did were commissioned by the pope, and many were placed in the churches and cathedrals of the Roman Catholic Church. Michelangelo lived during the days of the Protestant Reformation. He undoubtedly heard the controversy surrounding the idea of justification by faith. Some say that in his later years, he experienced a spiritual rebirth.

At the age of 72 he began working on a non-commissioned sculpture. It is widely believed that it was meant to be placed at his own grave. Like many other works, it went unfinished. It featured a scene in which Nicodemus is holding the body of Jesus after it had been taken down from the cross. Joining him are Mary the Mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. If you look closely at the face of Nicodemus, you can see the features of Michelangelo's own face. Nicodemus was the one to whom Jesus said, "You must be born again."

As an old man, Michelangelo no longer looked to his art and to his acclaim for meaning. He found comfort in and wrote of "the divine Love, who to embrace us, opened his arms upon the cross."

When Jesus did that, He said, "It is finished." What do you say to His invitation and to His commission?