

Formed, Fulfilled, Finished

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 March 2016

Preacher: Jonathan Gemmell

[0 : 00] Please do have a seat and let's pray together. Paul writes to the Corinthians, for I resolved to know nothing while I was with you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Father God, what Paul resolved to teach the Corinthians, we ask that you would teach us tonight. Father, that we want to know Jesus Christ, the one who went all the way to the cross for each of us. Father, bless us, help us, speak to us, challenge us and change us. And do it all for the glory of your son, we pray. Amen.

I want us tonight just to look at three words. These three words are in John 19. I want us to look at formed, fulfilled, finished.

Those three words formed, fulfilled and finished. Oh, but they say the tongues of dying men enforce attention like deep harmony.

[1 : 17] Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain. For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain. He that no more must say is listened more than they whom youth and ease have taught to glows.

More are men's ends marked than their lives before. This is the sonnet given by John the Gaunt near death in Shakespeare's play Richard II.

And his sentiment is very straightforward. That dying men don't waste their words. Men on the cusp of eternity, men about to enter oblivion, do not make adult small talk with anyone.

And it's so true of Jesus in John 19. He does not waste his words. He does not spend them in vain. There is a lot of words in John 19. There's a lot of spoken words in John 19. There are spiteful words.

[2 : 32] Spiteful words from the soldiers who say, Hail, King of the Jews, in abject mockery of this man Jesus in their custody. There are fearful words throughout John 19.

Pilate is terrified. Look at verse 8. When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid. And he went back inside the palace.

And he spoke to Jesus trying to find a way that Pilate would release him. Also in John 19, there are hate-filled words. Verse 6.

Crucify, crucify, shout the chief priests and their officials. Verse 15. Take him away, crucify him. Words full of hate for this man who they would not have to be king over them.

What is remarkable about John 19 is how few words Jesus says. In fact, in 42 verses, he just utters four sentences.

[3 : 40] And none of them are wasted. They are all pithy comments. Jesus, this one dying, is not wasting his words.

He is not spending them in vain. While he's actually on the cross, he says three things. In verse 26 and 27, he talks to his mother and John the disciple who writes this gospel.

Woman, here is your son. And to the disciple, here is your mother. A little bit further down in verse 28, he says, I am thirsty.

And then finally in verse 30, it is finished. Scarce words, but words not spent in vain.

And I want to look briefly at each of these phrases and try and draw out some wonderful truths that Jesus and John are communicating to us.

[4 : 46] So the first one is this. New family formed. New family formed. Verses 26 and 27. Jesus is hanging on the cross.

He surveys the crowd on the exposed top of the hill of Golgotha overlooking Jerusalem. As he looks out, he sees a huge hostile crowd gathered, jeering at him, shaming him, hurling insults at him, accusations towards him.

And as he surveys, in abject agony, his eyes fall upon a familiar group. There's his auntie, Mary, the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene and John, the disciple whom he loves.

With them is Mary, his mother, gazing tormentedly at her tortured son, dying in agony on the cross. And as he gazes into the eyes of his mother, Jesus pushes against the cruel nails through his hands and his feet. He lifts himself just high enough to draw enough precious air into his burning and bursting lungs.

[6 : 06] And he says, woman, here is your son. And to the disciple, here is your mother. Dying words to honor his mother, ensuring she is looked after once he is gone.

Now, Mary and Joseph must have had quite an odd, at times, I dare say quite a strained relationship. Right at the beginning, the shame of being a pregnant, unmarried woman in the small town of Nazareth with the neck curtains constantly rustling every time Mary was in the streets. The poverty of the stable. No room at the relative's house, but made to sleep where the cattle sleep. The creepy gifts bought from the men from the east, including myrrh. The quintessential burial, Spice.

The heavy prophecy of Simeon about her eight-day-old son, saying that this child will cause a sword to pierce your own soul.

[7 : 17] A sword now deeply embedded in Mary's soul as she watches her son die. The lost 12-year-old Jesus who stays behind at the temple.

The 30-year-old Jesus who gives up the family business that Joseph had worked so hard to build to become an itinerant rabbi. The radical teacher who brought controversy to their hometown by saying that no one would honour him as a prophet where he came from.

The aloof son preferring to hang out with his followers than go to his family outside, saying, Who are, who is my mother and who are my brothers?

A strange relationship. Now on the cross, a loving son addresses his distraught mother. Dear woman, he says.

Dear woman. Not a familial term that you would use for your mother, but a highly respectful term. You would have a woman removed from you.

[8 : 25] Dear woman, he says. Respect, but not familial. Here is your substitute son. John, here is your substitute mother.

Jesus forms a new family at the cross. Jesus forms a new family at the cross where people that are not otherwise related find relationship in relation to Jesus.

It speaks beyond its context. Jesus dies for sin. And those gathered at the foot of the cross who stare at him in faith are formed into a new family.

A new family formed out of all those who will look upon this Jesus in faith. Family expressed here this evening.

That some of us are related to each other. Many of us aren't, but in Jesus. If we're looking at him in faith, Jesus forms us into a new family.

[9 : 38] That we have brothers and sisters in Christ. That as Jesus dies and sin is removed, so we're brought together as family in him.

Isn't that exactly what John writes in the prologue to his gospel? Yet to all those who did receive him, he gave the right to become children of God.

Children not born of natural descent, nor a human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. New family formed at the cross.

Thomas Wharton, the elder, the 17th century poet, pens this in his Ode on the Passion. Beneath low, Mary weeping stands in tears most pitifully fair, and beats the breast where Christ had hung, and tears her long disheveled hair.

Where can I lay my mournful head? My son, my king, my God is dead. Do you see Mary there?

[10 : 51] No longer son, but king and God. A new family, made up of all families, who will look to Jesus and say, my king and my God.

It's a beautiful truth. Perhaps we're here tonight and our families have not been that great. Our natural families, they say you can choose your friends, but not your family.

Well, the truth we see in this passage is that Jesus chooses his friends, dies for them and forms them as his family together.

A family open to each of us who will meet this Jesus at the foot of the cross and stare at him in faith. A family open to each of us.

Secondly, we see part scriptures fulfilled. Verse 28. Jesus fighting for every breath, dripping sweat and blood in equal measure.

[12:03] The cruelty of crucifixion engulfs every muscle and sinew in his body. And having been there a while, he cries out, I am thirsty.

A truly human statement from one who is fully human. Jesus is this same fleshed out word that came and tabernacled with us.

He is the same Jesus who got tired and slept, who got hungry and ate, who suffered grief and died, who got angry and acted, who felt pain and screamed, who got thirsty and asked for a drink.

Jesus made like us in every way, thirsted like us as he is dying for us. But there's more going on.

Look at verse 28 with me. Later, knowing that everything had now been finished and so that scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I am thirsty.

[13:16] That yes, it is a very human response to dehydration, but there's also something going on here to do with scripture. The picture of a thirsting savior.

A picture foreseen hundreds of years before by the men of old. In Psalm 22, verses 14 and 15, a psalm that Jesus is obviously reciting to himself as he goes through this pain.

David writes this in verse 14. I am poured out like water, speaking of this suffering savior, and all my bones are out of joints. My heart is like wax.

It is melted within my breast. My strength is dried up like a pot shirt. And my tongue sticks to my jaws. You lay me in the dust to death.

Jesus thinks upon Psalm 22. I'm sure he would have recited all of it, but so anguished is the pain of the cross. He simply says, I thirst.

[14:26] And so the experience of Jesus superimposes perfectly onto the picture that David saw a long time in the future. About one who would come and die.

A greater king, a suffering servant, a murdered Messiah. And verse 29 is remarkable.

A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. And so David also writes the Messianic Psalm, Psalm 69.

And in verse 21, he says, they gave me vinegar for my thirst. Not like sarsen's chip shop vinegar, we're just talking cheap wine.

And so David, even seeing a long time in the future, he says, this will happen to this Messiah. And they will seek to saliate this dead, this dying man's thirst with cheap wine.

[15:33] By declaring his thirst, Jesus was declaring that his sufferings measured up to the sufferings that the Savior of the world would undergo to rescue his people.

But there is something more. Because I thirst and you thirst and we thirst. Dehydration of the soul. So bad, like normal dehydration, that we don't even feel thirsty. A natural thirst. A dying thirst.

A thirst that we try to quench with anything and everything. Actions, ambitions and experiences.

And we try to saliate our thirst with these things, but we just get thirstier.

Our thirst. This thirst, this soul thirst, will only ever be satisfied and quenched in this one who was thirsty in our place.

[16:43] Jesus Christ became thirsty for us. So we wouldn't have to go on being thirsty for him. Jesus speaks throughout the gospel about him being living water, welling up to eternal life.

Our deepest thirst is for a relationship with this Jesus. And we will keep on panting, fainting and struggling until we meet him ourselves.

Jesus says, let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from them.

Why are living waters able to flow from Jesus? Because he took on our thirst so that we might be saturated by these streams of living water.

No one has captured it better than Edinburgh's own Horatius Bonner. I heard the voice of Jesus say, behold, I freely give.

[17:52] The living water, thirsty one, stoop down and drink and live. I came to Jesus and I drank. Of that life-giving stream, my thirst was quenched, my soul revived.

And now I live in him. May that be our experience as we gaze on this thirsting Jesus.

Finally, we have verse 30. It is finished. Spurgeon writes of this phrase.

In the original Greek of John's gospel, there is only one word for this utterance of our Lord.

Tetelestai. To translate it into English, we have to use three words.

But when it was spoken, it was only one. An ocean of meaning in a drop of language, a mere drop. For that is all that we can call one word. It is finished.

[18:52] Tetelestai. Yet, it would need all the other words that ever were spoken or ever can be spoken to explain this one word. It is altogether immeasurable.

It is high. I cannot attain to it. It is deep. I cannot fathom it. It is finished. Cries this Jesus.

Now, if you're ever anything like me, you have a lot of unfinished stuff in your life. My fridge is full of half-eaten meals. My study is full of half-read books.

I have boxes full of abandoned hobbies I never mastered. I have half-attempted DIY projects. I have partially used exercise equipment.

I have half-filled out dentistry forms. Jesus, on the other hand, says, It's finished. It is finished.

[19:52] Jesus finished the great and sole project of his life. He got the job done. And he got it done perfectly.

It is definitively mission accomplished. In perfect obedience, he has perfectly completed the will of his Father. Now, with his final breath, he declares, Tetelestai, it is finished.

What is finished? Jesus' suffering is finished. Jesus' entire life was punctuated with suffering. The squalor of a stable. The forced asylum in Egypt.

The attempted murder as he's attempted to be thrown off the cliff by a crowd. The constant traps from the religious. The betrayal of a friend. The desertion of all the disciples.

The lashing mockery. The tenderizing flogging. The lacerating crown. The injustice. The brutality. The spitting. The slapping. The stripping. The pain of the cross.

[20:58] The abandonment from his Father. The poured out wrath. The light of the world snuffed out. And Jesus says, it's finished. I've done it.

I have completed the race. I have done it all. I have suffered it all. I have mastered it all. I have dominion over it all.

I have finished my work. He's finished suffering. But he's finished suffering for our sin. Our enslavement to sin is now ransomed.

Paid in full by the sacrifice of the perfect spotless Lamb of God. It is finished. Jesus says, paid in full. Tetelestai.

Finished. Just the word to describe what Jesus did on the cross for us. He paid it all. He suffered it all. He atoned for it all.

[21:57] He redeemed it all. He reconciled it all. He finished it all. When Jesus cried out, it is finished. He was not uttering a sigh of relief.

He was not giving a moan of resignation. Jesus was announcing ultimate and eternal victory. The triumphant shout of the champion of champions.

I did it. It is finished. I have won. This is the Robert Indiana statue that stands in Philadelphia. Philadelphia, the city of literally brotherly love. And the thing about that statue, which is imaginatively called love, is that it's finished.

You can't really add anything to it. If you put G on top to make it glove, you would utterly ruin it by adding something to it.

[23:01] And so it is with this finished work. There is nothing to add. By trying to add, you merely spoil it all.

Done is the work that saves. The end of verse 30. This is a completely unique event that will never, ever happen in history except for this occasion.

Every other human death is inevitable. None of us have the opportunity to simply give up our spirit. But for Jesus, the author of life, it is willful submission to die.

It is the final act of obedience from a perfectly obedient son. Jesus said earlier in the gospel, for this reason, the father loves me.

Because I lay down my life that I might take it up again. Jesus willingly lays down his life. And so what do we learn from what Jesus tells us at the cross?

[24:19] He says, in him a new family is formed. A new family made up of everyone who will look at him in faith. And know life and forgiveness and joy forever.

Who gives us not only peace with God, but peace with each other. We see that by him, part scriptures are fulfilled. That we know he's the real deal because he perfectly matches everything that God had revealed about this Jesus in the past.

And because of him, eternal work is forever finished. Finished for us. Meaning that grace is available and flows freely to us.

If we will trust Jesus. Work we cannot contribute to ourselves. Work that we can live in the freedom of.

Knowing that Jesus is forever for us. And in the end will welcome us. And so we leave John 19. As darkness envelops this Friday in view.

[25 : 27] And Jesus now hangs silently on the cross, dead. Before being buried. We remember, however, that Sunday will soon be here.

And this now risen Lord Jesus will soon ask the distraught Mary by a now empty tomb. He'll use his words to say, woman, why are you crying?

Who is it you're looking for? Let's pray together. Paul writes to the Philippians.

I want to know Christ. Yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his suffering. Becoming like him in his death.

And so somehow attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Father God, this would be our prayer as well. That we want to know Christ more.

[26 : 27] We want to know him better. Father, that we might have the joy of participating in his suffering. That we too might become like him in his death.

So that we might know the powerful, unstoppable, glorious resurrection that he has won for us.

And so Lord, this Friday, capture all of our attention on your son dying on the cross. Father, do this for the glory of your son, we pray.

Amen.