

John 19:30-37 – Lent 5 Wednesday – It Is Finished – March 25, 2026

+In Nomine Iesu+

Today, the Church commemorates the Annunciation of Our Lord. On this day, we mark the Angel Gabriel's announcement to the Blessed Virgin Mary regarding the incarnation.

And even though the world has co-opted so many of the holy days of the Church, we have this one to ourselves. I know that we are at the tail end of Lent—and it feels a little out of place to talk about the Incarnation right before Holy Week—but notice that it is exactly nine months until Christmas today.

Mary is an important character in this story, just like she is at the cross in John 19. And yet, in both cases, this is all about God's intervention into the world of sin in Jesus. And here things get specific.

In Luke 1, Gabriel says, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

We have such wonderful promises in the incarnation—and in the Passion of Christ. All of this is for us—and for our salvation. And it is right to give our attention to such things.

It is interesting, the early Church believed creation began on March 25th. They believed that Abraham attempted to sacrifice Isaac on March 25. They believed the Red Sea parted at the Passover on March 25. And now, we can add both the Annunciation and the Crucifixion.

Admittedly, ancient calendars are complicated—and difficult to align with our own modern Gregorian calendar. I am not sure that all these dates are certain—although it also would not surprise me. There is a fifth-century calendar which says on this date, "Our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, and conceived, when the world was made."

In this, we can see God's hand orchestrating everything. It is as the Prophet Job says about humanity, "His days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass."

So, out of nothing, the world is created through Christ, who is the Word of God. Out of the Virgin's womb, the true God-Man is conceived to redeem the world. Out of that world-ending death on Golgotha, life is resurrected from an empty tomb. Creation has an end. Creation is to be consummated. And the consummation is found in Jesus.

Now, when we began this sermon series, I told you that my goal was to do more than turn the whole of Lent into Good Friday. I am not sure that I have really *accomplished* that goal. We have certainly focused more on the crucifixion than usual.

Although, it is hard for me to see that negatively. Here, Jesus is high and lifted up. He atones for our sin. He wins salvation for us. He draws us to Himself. The Passion of the Christ is the most important thing that has ever happened. And in the church, we make sure that the cross is always visible and at the center of everything.

But we *have focused* more specifically on *His words* from the cross. Jesus says some remarkable things. His ministry continues, even while being crucified.

He calls for forgiveness for His ignorant and foolish persecutors. He cares for the eternal soul of the thief who looks to Him in faith. He ensures that His mother, Mary, is cared for in the days ahead. He prays the Scriptures for all to hear—even as He fulfills them. All this He does for the good of His people. He deals with this moment with *patient endurance*, the language of our reading from Revelation today.

“It is finished” is the penultimate—the second to last—word of Jesus on the cross. We will deal with the final word on Maundy Thursday—from Luke 23, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And then we will go back and look at some of the things that Jesus says during His ministry about His crucifixion on Good Friday.

Today, I want to start with a little grammar—because who doesn’t like a little ancient Greek grammar? Stick with me here. There is a purpose. And it is all tied to this one word in Greek translated as “It is finished.” This is the word we will find on our black paraments on Good Friday. In Greek, it is pronounced τετέλεσται.

I tell you this because Jesus chooses this word specifically. Really, this is a keyword in the whole New Testament. It is present as both a verb and a noun. And to understand this word—really to understand any word—we need to see how it is used in context—and we need to pay attention to the grammar.

And here we find a verbal form of this word—a perfect passive participle. And this form communicates—and here’s the important detail—a completed action with ongoing results. This is what the cross is all about—a completed action with ongoing results.

This same word, in the exact same form, is found just a couple of verses back. And we talked about this verse last week. Here John says, “After this, Jesus, knowing that all *was now finished*, said (to fulfill the Scripture), ‘I thirst.’” A similar form is found in the word *fulfill*.

This word as a verb, can mean *to finish, complete, end, fulfill, accomplish*. But also, as a noun, it can mean *conclusion, result, goal, aim, purpose*. It doesn’t just mean something is over. It means that the purpose has been realized—a goal has been met—with eternal implications.

In John 13—also in relation to the cross—John uses this word as a noun, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the *end*.”

And then similarly, Jesus uses this word—here as both a verb and a noun—and still in view of the cross—in Luke 22, “For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me has its fulfillment.”

I tell you all of this simply to help us understand what Jesus is saying. “It is finished” is not relief that His suffering is finally over. It is not even that vague sense of completion that we feel when we finish a big project. He is telling us that what He came to do has been done. His aim and goal have been accomplished, completed, fulfilled. God’s purpose at the cross has been achieved.

And there are enduring results. In fact, this moment will change the whole course of human history. And it will change the nature of eternity. It even changes us. What Jesus has accomplished here has ongoing implications for John and Mary at the cross—but also for us who live two thousand years later. It is finished—redemption, atonement, satisfaction, justification. It is all finished. Salvation—at least this wave of it—is complete.

John makes explicit what all the Gospels assume. The cross was the plan since Genesis 3. Here, God curses Satan—but it is a promise for us. He says, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

The cross is not a defeat, but is the victory of our God. Sin, death, and the devil are defeated. It is as Jesus says in John 12, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

This is even what Pilate insisted—although his purposes are nefarious. He merely plans to insult the Jews. But he gets it right anyway. Jesus is the King of the Jews. In fact, He rules over all things—even on the cross. The cross is a throne. The crucifixion does not delay His kingdom. In fact, we might even say that the crucifixion is the manner in which this King reigns.

It is His kingdom come. This is the great and long-awaited apocalyptic moment. Here, the powers of this world are forever subverted. A new age has begun. The renewal of all things has begun. On the day of the crucifixion, God brings all things alive. And this creates a new way of life for those who worship and follow Jesus.

It is finished. Christ is triumphant—that’s what this cry is all about. But it’s not over. It is not time to close our Bibles and move on. The resurrection must follow the crucifixion, for this to be good news for us. And God remains at work beyond the resurrection, drawing us into the resurrected life of Christ. Salvation comes in waves—the promise, the cross, the resurrection, the Spirit, sanctification, glorification.

Hebrews 10 brings all of this together nicely. And notice that salvation is both positional and progressive. It is finished—and yet it is also ongoing. Hebrews says, “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

I like the way Paul says it in Colossians 3. And this is one of my favorite chapters in the whole Bible. It is a chapter often missing in our contemporary minds. And we will take up this passage as our Epistle reading on Easter Sunday.

Here Paul says, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

The crucifixion is a completed action with ongoing results. God has finished what only God could finish. Christ’s sacrifice brings plentiful redemption. Our sins have been consumed—making possible lives that glow with the beauty of the Holy Spirit. What wonderful news.

It is finished. The debt has been paid. All is fulfilled. The end has come. But it is not over. He is just getting started. He now brings the reality of the cross to our lives. We are participants in His death and resurrection in Holy Baptism—as Paul points out.

And we are witnesses—with John and Mary—in a world that has no time for a crucified God—and yet we stand with Him who is our Creator and Savior and Lord. We find real life in Him—who died—and even more—was raised from the dead.

Jesus' cry becomes the foundation of our faith. He died for us. And that means everything. As we serve Christ, we do so based on His completed work. We offer ourselves. But not for a cause or for some principle. We live for a person—our Savior, Jesus Christ. His finished work accomplished our eternal blessing. So, every Christian can, and surely must, respond. We live for Him because He died for us.

Let me conclude with one last comment. I have made much on Wednesdays about the ways Christ fulfills the hidden prophecies of His crucifixion all over the Old Testament. We hear John make this point in our reading today with quotes from Psalm 34 and Zechariah 12—regarding Jesus' bones not being broken—and His side being pierced.

I think there is a connection to “It is finished” in Psalm 22. It is not an exact quote, but I think it picks up the language we have been talking about today. The last couple of verses of this Psalm read like this.

“Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.” Indeed, He has. It is finished. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+