

“John: It Is Finished”

Isaiah 53:8-12 • John 19:14-30

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX
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What is your purpose in life? If you had a mission statement for your life what would it say? These days it seems like many people just move through life without any clear purpose. Corporations and organizations like to develop mission statements hoping that they will help the company focus on what they think is important, as well as communicate those principles to their customers and investors. Sadly, most corporate mission statements fall pretty short in that area.

I'm going to read a few corporate mission statements. See if you can figure out the company. Here's the first one: "Our mission is to be a company that inspires and fulfills your curiosity." Any guesses? Here's another one: "Our mission is to enable people and businesses throughout the world to realize their full potential." Here's one more: "To improve every life through sustainable progress and innovation."

The mission statement of a company or an organization should clearly tell the purpose of that organization – why it exists. There's a Greek word for this and it's used in Greek philosophy and it's used in the Bible. The word is *telos*. It means the end or purpose of something. The three corporate mission statements I read don't really tell us anything about the *telos* of those companies. By the way, those are the mission statements for Sony, Microsoft, and 3M. The truth is that any of those statements could be used with any of those companies.

Jesus, on the other hand, was always clear about his *telos*, his mission. In John 10:10 he said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." In Luke 19:10 Jesus said, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." And in Mark 10:45 he said, "for even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus was clear all along that he came into the world to bring about salvation, reconciliation, for his

people, and that it would be accomplished through his death on the cross and his resurrection.

As we discussed last week, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, really wanted to release Jesus. The Jewish leaders had brought Jesus to Pilate but wouldn't specify what the charge was. Pilate examined Jesus and pronounced him "not guilty" three times. As one commentator said, Pilate would do anything to release Jesus, short of courageously doing his job. In the end Pilate succumbed to the political blackmail and sent Jesus to be crucified.

Crucifixion was perhaps the most cruel punishment ever devised. The idea was to combine shame with physical anguish. It was designed to be slow and excruciatingly painful. They wanted to make the person suffer as long as possible and for others to see it as a warning. In fact, it was so cruel that no Roman citizen could be executed by crucifixion. It was primarily reserved for slaves and rebels.

John, like the other gospel writers, doesn't go into any detail about the physical suffering Jesus endures. Maybe that's because his original hearers would have been very familiar with it, having seen many people crucified by the Romans. But another reason is that the extreme physical suffering Jesus experienced was minor compared to experiencing the full wrath of God for all of our sin, as God the Father turned away from God the Son.

After Pilate gave the order, Jesus would have been scourged by the soldiers, which involved an extremely painful whip that brought the prisoner very near to death. Then, as John tells us in verse 17, Jesus had to carry the horizontal cross bar, which probably weighed around 100 pounds. There would have been four soldiers surrounding him, leading him outside the city. Typically, they would take the longest route through the city so that everyone could see the condemned.

The soldier in front carried a placard with the charge. Verse 19 says that Pilate had the inscription read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”

Just as in every step of his trial, you can see the providence of God at work here accomplishing his purposes. The pagan governor unwittingly proclaims the truth about Jesus while the Jewish leaders, the chief priests of God’s people, protest. But Pilate has had enough of their demands and says, “What I have written, I have written.” The inscription was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek, the three common languages of the time in that area. By writing in all three languages, Pilate ends up telling the world that Jesus is a king for everyone!

The other place we see God’s providence at work is that Jesus fulfills all the prophecies of his life and death. As Rick Phillips points out “virtually every important detail in the tragedy of Christ’s cross was publicized in advance. His betrayal by a friend (Ps. 41:9), the disciples’ forsaking him (Ps. 31:11), the false accusations and Jesus’ silence before the judges (Isa. 53:7), his formal acquittal (Isa. 53:9), his being numbered with transgressors (Isa. 53:12), his crucifixion (Ps. 22:16), the mocking of the onlookers (Ps. 109:25), the taunt about his failure to save himself (Ps. 22:7-8), the soldiers’ gambling for his clothing (Ps. 22:18), his prayer for his enemies (Isa. 53:12), his being forsaken of God (Ps. 22:1), his thirsting cry (Ps. 69:21), his yielding up his spirit into the Father’s hands (Ps. 31:5), the preservation of his bones from being broken (Ps. 34:20), and his burial in a rich man’s tomb (Isa. 53:9) – all were foretold in the prophetic witness.” Then Phillips adds, “What an awe-inspiring proof of the divine inspiration of Scripture we have in the prophecies of Jesus’ death!”

John makes a point of telling us about the soldiers dividing up Jesus’ clothes, which was common practice at the time. It shows how cold and uncaring people can be apart from Christ. They would have each taken one of his

five pieces of clothing, including his sandals. They normally would have torn the undergarment at the seams but Jesus’ tunic was woven in one piece. To tear it would have destroyed it so the soldiers cast lots to see who would get it. Like Pilate, they had no way of knowing that that they were actually fulfilling the Scriptures. In this case, Psalm 22:18 says, “they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

John then contrasts the four uncaring soldiers with four women who were close to Jesus. Also standing with the four women was John himself, apparently the only one of Jesus’ disciples to be present at the cross. Here we see the heart of Jesus. Even in his intense suffering he cares for those he loves. When he sees his mother standing with John, Jesus says to Mary, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he says to John, “Behold, your mother!” We know from the gospels that Mary had other sons, but none of them were believers yet. So Jesus makes sure that Mary is cared for within the faith community. As followers of Jesus, we are still called to be that kind of loving, caring community for one another.

As Jesus nears death John again leaves out many of the details, likely because they were already covered in the other gospels. Remember, John is writing many years after the other gospels were written and he is trying to fill in details that were not in the others. One of those details that he leaves to the other gospels is the darkness that covered the land while Jesus suffered the punishment for our sin. Matthew records that during that time Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus is not just quoting but also fulfilling Psalm 22.

John picks up the story in verse 28 saying, “After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), ‘I thirst.’ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.” Psalm 69:21 says, “They gave me poison for food, and for

my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.” Even the mention of the hyssop branch is not insignificant. The hyssop plant is what the priests used to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice.

“When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘it is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” What did Jesus mean was finished? The key to understanding what he meant is in the Greek word he used, *tetelestai*, which is from the root word *telos*. Jesus is saying that he has accomplished what he came to do, he had accomplished the mission. He had given his life as a ransom for many. The suffering for sin is complete. One of the meanings of *tetelestai* is “paid in full.” It would be written on a bill when it was paid. Jesus paid in full the debt that you and I owe to God. He paid in full the penalty for our sin.

As a result, you and I are freed from trying to earn God’s forgiveness. We can bring our guilt and our shame over sin and give them over to Jesus. He takes them from us and in exchange gives us his righteousness. Jesus said, “It is finished.” There’s nothing else to be done. There’s nothing you *could* do to add to the finished work of Christ. All that’s left is for you to believe, to put your trust in Christ, and to live out your purpose. What is your purpose in life? What is your mission? The Westminster Shorter Catechism sums it up best. What is the chief end of man? In other words, what is your *telos*? Your mission is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Amen.