

“Memorize these words!” Based on John 18-19.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Today is Good Friday and I would like you to memorize these words: “It is finished!” Why? What is the story behind them? Here it comes.

If you are a Christian then you probably know it. Most certainly you have heard about it. Many times. But we still tend to forget about it. It sounds impossible. We are afraid to believe it’s true.

What am I talking about? About this fact that you are loved more than you would ever deserve. That you are loved more than you could ever hope for. That you are loved by the most glorious and beautiful Being that exists.

That He loved you even before you were born. That you have been loved since your conception. That you are loved every day and every minute of your life. And if only you respond to this love, whoever you are, then... you will see the true God as He is and you will reign with Him forever.

As the Holy Spirit assures you: “Nothing in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We tend to forget about it, and Good Friday is a great time to marvel about God’s love, and to see why we can trust that it is true. So, how can you know that someone loves you?

Sure, they can say it to us. But sometimes we may doubt words. We live in this rough world and almost all of us have been hurt too many times. What would be a stronger proof than words? Yes, actions. If someone shows their love in their actions, then we know they mean it.

The Triune God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit says that He loves you. But He also goes to incredible length to assure you by His actions. What comes to mind when we think about God manifesting His love in His actions?

Jesus’ life is the obvious one. As John so wonderfully put it: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” But the Scriptures unveil for us so much more.

To us is given even fuller a picture that allows us at least to begin to see what God’s love is like. Listen carefully and marvel – for that is a beautiful, beautiful reality that the Scriptures unveil to us.

Jesus tells us that those who are blessed by the Father will inherit “the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Paul gives thanks to God the Father “who chose us in Him [Jesus Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.”

Apostles Peter and John speak about the Lamb of God, who was foreknown and slain before the foundation of the world! What is going on? What are these things which are being done already before the creation of the world?

Everything happens according to the eternal will of the Almighty Father. Thus, already before the creation He knew what He was going to do and what He was going to accomplish.

From the very beginning the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, whom we know as Jesus Christ, had undertaken to accomplish this mission, to manifest God's love to us and to bring us into the divine fellowship with Him.

"It is finished!" These were the last words of Jesus. They meant that Jesus had accomplished His mission, that He had completed what God had begun already before the creation of the world.

Our Creator had loved us from the very beginning, and now He had revealed the full extent of His love. He always knew that we will fail Him. This is, why Peter and John spoke about Jesus as the Lamb who was slain already before the foundation of the world.

And the Eternal Son always knew the cost of His love towards us. We can read in Genesis 3, that when our first parents broke their loyalty to their loving Creator, that was the Eternal Son who came looking for them.

"Where are you, Adam?" He still comes looking for us. "Where are you?" That was the Son who promised Adam that He will defeat sin and death and will bring us back to God. Even at the cost of His life. He was ready to show His love in action.

God kept repeating this promise throughout the ages. Finally, two millennia ago, the Word became flesh. Born with this one purpose. To die on the cross. Revealing His incredible commitment and redeeming us from sin and death.

How can you be assured that God loves you? For He not only says it, He has demonstrated with His actions that we are more important for Him than His own life. Where else you find such love! Who else will love you so fervently?!

When the gospels tell us about the events surrounding Good Friday, we can see these two very different types of characters emerging. Jesus and us, His beloved human creatures. How do we look in this story?

We can witness all the embarrassing bouquet of human vices in the span of just a few hours. So, what human heroes do we have acting in this grand cosmic drama? Here they come... worthy representatives of the fallen humanity.

We have Judas, the traitor. But don't rush to point fingers at him! How often do we betray our Lord? How often do we trade our allegiance to Him for something that we actually love more than our God?

Then we had the Jewish leaders, who were afraid that Jesus would take away their power and influence. What about us? How often are we ready to ignore Jesus, so that only we could keep things comfortably as they are?

Then we have the Twelve. They all were boasting that they would die for Jesus, but would never ever reject or abandon Him. Just a few hours later they shamefully did just that. What about our good intentions to serve God?

To live as Christians in words and actions, to share the Gospel of God's grace? How often are we like Peter – keeping silence and hoping that no one will notice that we too are disciples of this despised Jewish Messiah?

Then we have Pilate. He knew what the right thing to do was. But his selfish interests prevailed. "To do the right thing is important, but ... to do well in life is more important." How about us? How often do we know what the right thing to do is, but... we wash our hands pretending it doesn't apply to us?

Then we have the mob shouting in blind hatred: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" As one of our song writers puts it so wonderfully – we can hear our voices in this crowd as well. We could not stand someone so good and pure. His very presence exposed our sin. We had to murder Him. And the ugly list goes on...

That is how humanity acted during the last hours in Jesus' life. The same people whom God so loved that He didn't spare His own life for us. What kind of love is that? No wonder it is hard to believe that we can be so loved.

But then we have another character in these events. Jesus. On His way to accomplish His mission. Nothing could stop Him. Nothing could lessen Jesus' commitment to us. Not even our hatred.

Judas led a cohort of soldiers to capture Jesus. Rough, battle tested Roman soldiers, tough cookies. However, when Jesus stood before them and said: "I am Him," remember what happened? They all drew back and ... fell on the ground.

They couldn't even stand in Jesus' presence. They didn't capture Him. Jesus gave Himself to them. No one forced Jesus to go to the cross. He chose to endure whatever it takes, to get it finished.

But the meaning of these words "it is finished" is not confined to Jesus' mission only. These words have even deeper significance for us. We could say that on that cross Jesus completed our creation.

By taking upon Himself everything that is wrong with us, He made us good, He made us complete, He made us perfect. He did everything to make us ready for eternal life in the presence of the Holy God.

This is what "it is finished" means for us. You are made good in God's eyes. Regardless of how much you have sinned, or how much you have been shaped and broken by the sins of others, now you are made good. Very good.

This is why I wanted you to store these words in your heart. Memorize them! "It is finished!" I encourage you to use them in your daily life. How and why? Every day we encounter situations that remind us that we live in this broken world and that we are fallen people. Not perfect.

When you are exhausted trying to manage all your responsibilities and begin to look at yourself as failure, just say it aloud: "It is finished! I don't need to prove anything. I am good enough for Jesus."

When you worry about failing to carry the burden of your own goals and standards, or the standards and expectations of people around you, just say it: "It is finished! Jesus has made me perfect. He values and loves me as I am."

When you realize that you haven't lived your life as you should have and are afraid of what the Ultimate Judge will say to you just repeat: "It is finished! Jesus has done everything to bring me into His Kingdom. I am His own."

Whatever worries you may have, whatever sins and temptation you may be battling, keep reminding yourself: "It is finished! Jesus has taken care of everything. He loves me. Always has. Always will." And as the Holy Spirit assures us through Paul the apostle, you can be confident that ...

"Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And that is most certainly true.

Remember, always: "It is finished!"

Amen.