

WELCOME 29th October 2023 – Reformation Sunday '23 A

John 19:28-20 & Romans 5:6-11

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands **Growing Praise** inserts & **Bible Study Qs** that are able to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.** Link will be on website...Tuesday...Wednesday...

As we move into this week...From **artwork** to **architecture** -- **home** renovations to the "I always thought I'd have time for..." **bucket list**... The human story is often told like an essay where the **pen** ran out of ink...**unfinished**.

Not just the projects, or the work, the little visits or grand adventures you just didn't find time for...but the work of our own lives & hearts...the conversations that never come...the habits we sought or the ones we hoped to drop...We call ourselves "work in progress," but it seems at times there's neither much 'WORK' nor 'PROGRESS.'

"When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time & died for us sinners...
So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God
because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God."

Only in Christ is the work of our lives complete. Only in Christ are the words, **"It is finished"** true. Christ came. Christ died. Christ restored us to the Father. It is finished.

The Reformation recaptured that simple truth...first as the power of God that saves & transforms human lives into bearers/agents of God's redeeming love...but then as the power of God that equips & empowers the church to live into our world that good news everywhere we are every day we live.

Among all our works that end unfinished, only the work of God in Jesus is finished & transforms death/life, alienation/reconciliation, wrath/rejoicing & endures forever.

Let's pray...and then explore & experience that together...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank you that your Holy Spirit renews your church in every age. Pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people in this place. Keep us firm & strong in your word, protect & comfort us in difficult times, defend us against all enemies of the gospel, & by your power in us bless the world with your peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord...Amen

Let's hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT: *I gave you a bit of a heads up on this this week via the website or email...*

The Reformation was first a powerful Christ-centred transformation of Martin Luther's life before it transformed the church & the culture of Luther's day.

In 2023, what is in need of that same kind of transformation...

1. In your life?
2. In the church?
3. In the wider culture or our community?

REFORMATION '23 A – THREE BIG WORDS: IT IS FINISHED

Just over 20 years ago, then-POTUS Geo W Bush stood on the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln beneath a banner that read, “Mission Accomplished” to declare “major combat operations” in Iraq had been completed successfully... VICTORY had been secured in just 6 weeks of fighting. We now know & POTUS Bush & the armed forces soon discovered...the fighting was **far** from over... 1000s of lives & trillions of \$\$\$ would be spent in an ongoing war against insurgent combatants. There are still US soldiers in Iraq...some were wounded this week. I don't think the mission's “accomplished.”

It's not just politicians who make that mistake. Last week we laughed together about the 65% of Australians who said “getting their housework done” yields contentment, because we know after an hour or so there's “dirt/clutter” where you just cleaned; especially if there's kids/pets in the house or you do some baking. The list is literally endless...you paint the bedroom & then look at the lounge room & buy more paint... Then you realize you need new carpet...the roof leaks...air conditioner gives up the ghost. There's always more to do. Most of us could describe our vocational pursuits exactly the same way...The human story is often told like an essay where the pen ran out of ink...unfinished.

Which is why the Scriptures remind us that among all **OUR UN**finished business, **God** alone **always** finishes his work...always. From 1st narrative to final vision, *God alone always finishes his work: So the creation of the heavens & the earth & everything in them was completed. On the seventh day God finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work.* – **Gen 2:1-2** – *Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God & the Lamb...On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations. No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God & the Lamb will be there, & his servants will worship him. They will see his face, & his name will be written on their foreheads. There will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever & ever.* – **Rev 22:1-5** among all **OUR UN**finished business, God alone **always** finishes his work...**ALWAYS**. Like today Jesus knew his mission was now **finished**, & to fulfil Scripture he said, “I thirst.” A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, & held it up to his lips. When Jesus tasted it, he said, “**It is finished!**” Then he bowed his head & gave up his **spirit**. “**It is finished!**” What's finished? The mission of the Father to rescue redeem & restore all creation according to the Father's plan & purpose by Jesus' death/rez. Beside a well in Samaria Jesus told his disciples: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, & from **finishing his work.**” – **Jn 4:34** The focus/purpose/goal of Jesus' life was to give his life: “**I am the good shepherd. The**

good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.” – **Jn 10:11** What's finished? The sacrifice of the **GOOD** shepherd for the wayward straying sin-infected dying sheep. Preceding that declaration... *The thief comes only to steal, kill, & destroy. I came that you may have life & have it abundantly/to the full.* Abundant fullness – life as God always intended is accomplished only when the Father's mission in Christ is “finished” on the cross.

But let's look more closely...Throughout these verses we're actually seeing the same Gk word...*It is finished* is in the text **τετελεσται**. & literally means “to finish; complete a predetermined goal; accomplish a set plan.” It was a word that was used in specific ways in Gk culture...**1st** it was a **Servant's Word** spoken when an assigned task had been completed. Paint the barn...Draw water for animals...Master *tetelestai*...**When** Jesus tasted it, he said, “**It is finished!**” Other gospels record Jesus saying, “Father into your hands I commit my spirit.” Master *tetelestai*...Father I've done exactly as you willed...precisely what you desired...“**It is finished!**”

2nd **τετελεσται** was a **Business Word**...used when a debt had been paid in full... *You were dead because of your sins & because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us & opposed to us, & has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.* – **Col 2:13-14** *the LORD laid on him the sins of us all...his life is made an offering for sin he will have many descendants– Is 53* Sin...in-born human rebellion to be god-for-self is obliterated as Jesus is nailed to the cross. That debt you cannot pay is forgiven as Christ bleeds & breathes his last. “**It is finished!**”

3rd **τετελεσται** was a **Judicial Word**...When a prisoner served their time, the judge would stamp *tetelestai* over their rap sheet to indicate justice has been served & this person is free... *Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The Law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. In that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.* – **Rom 8:1-3** - *For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, & through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven & on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.* – **Col 1:19-20** When the Son sets you free you're free. “**It is finished!**”

4th **τετελεσται** was a **Soldier's Word**...when the last enemy was driven from the battlefield or the city conquered the soldier would return his sword to its scabbard *Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh & blood—the Son also became flesh & blood. For only as a human being could he die, & only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who*

have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. – Heb 2:14-15 Our ancient tormentor & his chief weapon against us are defeated...once...for all...forever. Death holds no horror. Satan cannot accuse. Guilt cannot haunt. Shame cannot destroy...Their grip is broken...*For God has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness & transferred us into the Kingdom of his dearly loved Son.* – Col 1:13 ***“It is finished!”***

5th *τετελεσται* was a Priest’s Word...When the perfect sacrificial animal was found & offered for the sake of the people: *John saw Jesus coming toward him & said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* – Jn 1:29 - *Jesus is the high priest we need because he is holy & blameless, unstained by sin. He has been set apart from sinners & given the highest place of honour in heaven. Unlike other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices every day. They did this for their own sin first & then for the sin of the people. But Jesus did this once for all when he offered himself as the sacrifice for the people’s sin.* – Heb 7:26-27 - *There is one God & one Mediator who can reconcile God & humanity—Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.* – 1 Tim 2:5-6 ***“It is finished!”***

Finally... *τετελεσται* was an Artist’s Word...When the paintbrush was set aside, the chisel put down, the pen returned to the inkwell...no more to be added...it is finished...*For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.* – Eph 2:10...**AND** notice there is the clear understanding that ***“It is finished!”*** implies a new beginning. Christ’s death starts a chain reaction in us...we are transformed equipped & empowered to now live from what Christ has finished. *Therefore anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!...God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.* – 2 Cor 5:17 & 19

You see...***“It is finished!”*** is not fire insurance...not some get out of jail/life free pass but a commission into a life where you have nothing to prove, nothing to lose, nothing to fear, no score to settle & none to keep...*you are truly free* ***“It is finished!”*** is just the beginning. ***“When*** we were utterly helpless, *Christ came at just the right time & died for us sinners...So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.”* That new relationship w/ God...that restored friendship is what the world needs to see...in **you**.

Christ came. Christ died. Christ restored us to the Father. It is finished. But ***“It is finished!”*** is just the **beginning**...I said earlier that the Reformation recaptured that simple truth...first as the power of God that saves & transforms human lives into bearers/agents of God’s redeeming love...but then as the power of God that equips & empowers the church to live into our world that good news everywhere we are every day we live. Among all our works that end unfinished, only the work of God in

Jesus is finished & transforms death/life, alienation/reconciliation, wrath/rejoicing, endures forever & releases us as bearers of the light of Christ, the life of Christ, the love of Christ, the finished work of Christ & the promise of the final fulfilment where every tear is dried, every hurt healed, everything lost restored & every joy multiplied. Where we say with Paul...*I am certain God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.* – Php 1:6

TAKE IT HOME – As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...

Since ***“It is finished!”*** is just the beginning...

What “new beginning” will you ask God to create in you this week?

Let’s pray with that in mind...

Heavenly Father, you alone are sufficient for us. You alone grant life now & forever. You alone give love without measure & without end. You alone are our refuge & strength. You alone are among us to forgive & redeem. You alone are our hope & joy. We praise you through your Son Jesus Christ who alone has defeated sin death & the devil to grant us the final victory. Amen.