

January 10, 2016  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: John  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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*To Ponder . . .*

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from John 19:28-42.

1. What did Jesus mean by “It is finished”?
2. Why did Matthew write that Jesus refused the wine, but John recorded that Jesus received the wine?
3. Explain the extent of hypocrisy the Jews displayed by demanding that the bodies be removed from the crosses before the Sabbath.
4. What do you think of Joseph and Nicodemus? Were they good guys or cowards? How do you compare?
5. Compare the sacrifice those two men made with the sacrifices you make for Jesus.

**THE GREATEST ATTACK AGAINST GOD WAS NEVER  
OUT OF CONTROL**  
**John 19:28-42**

A few days ago, over the Christmas holidays, my grandchildren reveled in beating me at a video game called “FIFA Soccer” that they had received for Christmas. You have to understand that I am about as far from being a “gamer” as one can possibly be. I think the last video game I played was something like an Atari 64.

At any rate, this new video game is quite amazing. The players look quite lifelike and even show emotions and facial expressions.

The great thing about it is that I was able to control the actions of the players by electronic controllers I held in my hand. I have to admit that at times I was frustrated because a particular player did not do what I thought he ought to do. Obviously, in spite of the fact that the little pictures running around on the TV screen looked lifelike, they are still inanimate.

Thinking about this whole scenario makes me wonder if there isn’t a sense of “God-ness” that avid gamers and video game developers experience. Imagine the power of making these little human-looking characters do what you will them to do! Isn’t that what God does to us?

While there are creative and authoritative issues involved in video games, the comparison between us and God breaks down pretty quickly. God created real humans in His image. Therefore, we also have creative juices flowing within us just like our Creator does. We too have a will – like He has. That is one of the great differences between me and the little pixilated guy on TV. Though it seems like the little guy on TV has a mind of his own, he really doesn’t. He can only do what the programmer created him to do, and what the boy or girl with the controller commands him to do.

Not so with us. It appears that we can do whatever we want to do. It seems quite obvious that, though we are the objects of God’s creativity, we have risen to a higher level and now tell our Creator what we will or will not do. That is all part of God’s incredible wisdom in creating us with determination and a will. It does appear that God gives us created beings unlimited freedom to choose. But things are not always as they appear to be.

No doubt Caiaphas and his father-in-law Annas, and the other members of the Sanhedrin, were quite sure they had pulled off one of the greatest rescues of all time. They thought they had rescued the nation of Israel from inevitable discipline that would come from Rome if Jesus was able to lead a coup.

No doubt Pilate was sure that he had done the most expedient thing with Jesus of Nazareth. On one hand, he had to deal with the agitated and agitating Jews who wanted Jesus dead. On the other hand, he found no reason to punish or kill this kindly fellow from the hills of Galilee. Normal men would have been very frustrated about what to do. Not Pilate. He coldly calculated a way to put the onus for

this man's death on the Jews as he washed his hands clean of the man's blood.

Surely it was obvious that the Roman soldiers had their way with Jesus just like they did with the other two criminals. When the order came to break the victims' legs so that they would die sooner, the soldiers went about their task with all authority. Except when they came to Jesus and discovered He was already dead. Hmmm! That was weird. Oh well. On a whim they decided to thrust a spear into His side.

Really. With three simple words in the English translation, Jesus smashed all such misconceptions. He cried out "It is finished!" What that means is that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit completed every detail of their plan to pay the price for redemption. All those people who thought they were so powerful were not much freer than little pixilated men running around on TV. Their Creator simply directed their actions according to their desires. At the same time, their Creator held each of them fully responsible for their actions.

We should be greatly encouraged to know that we serve the God who is the Blessed Controller of all things.

### **"I Thirst" (v.28-30).**

What appeared to the followers of Jesus to be circumstances out of control was in fact a plan under perfect control. God the Son was in charge of the timing of His sacrifice. John wrote, *After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished (v.28a).* That simple word translated "finished" contains the magnitude of God's plan of redemption. God the Son, who was at that moment hanging on the cross, became man in the fullness of time. In eternity, the Trinity determined that only a human could redeem other humans from their sins against the Creator. God the Son volunteered to lay aside His glory and become like us in order to complete the task of redemption (Philippians 2:5-8).

When the time was exactly right for God's plan to be enacted, God the Son took on flesh as the son of Mary and the Holy Spirit. It needed to be a time after God had chosen Israel as His nation. The time had to be after God had given His law, which defined His

character and which everyone breaks, so that Christ could be born under the law. It had to come after God had given all the pictures of blood sacrifice for forgiveness of sins so that Christ could fulfill all those pictures. Therefore, God wrote, *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4-5).*

According to John's statement in this verse, Jesus Christ knew at that precise moment that the grand redemption was finished. He alone among all people in history had lived the only perfectly sinless life according to God's law. He had revealed God's person, character, and attributes to all the world. He willingly subjected Himself to the foolishness of wicked men. He allowed them to torture Him and hang Him on a cross. He spilled His blood to pay the price for sin. Now God the Son realized that the task was complete.

Having arrived at the end point of redemption's plan, God the Son fulfilled the last required prophecy (vv.28b-29). He spoke to fulfill the Scripture. He *said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." (v.28).* This statement is found in a psalm that David had written 1,000 years earlier. *"They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink" (Psalm 69:21).* It was another one of those songs in which David decried the persecution his enemies directed against him. It was a song in which David thanked God for deliverance when he cried out for help. It was also another one of those psalms in which God chose to foretell a part of the crucifixion. Jesus uttered that simple word, "I thirst" and fulfilled God's word from 1,000 years earlier. When God records in His eternal word that a statement or action fulfills Scripture, we can be sure what God intended for the original statement.

Because Jesus said that He was thirsty, He also fulfilled another promise when He tasted the sour wine. John wrote that *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 (v.29).* In this picture, we are reminded that God the Son suffered as a human. We fellow humans cannot really even imagine the intensity of His suffering. We can assume that this day in April was a typical warm Spring day with the sun beating down on His bloody, lacerated body. Certainly He was extremely thirsty with parched and swollen tongue.

In response to His admission and someone's action to address the problem, God the Son accepted sour wine. Someone, probably one of the soldiers, dipped a sponge in a full jar of sour wine, attached it to a branch of hyssop, and put it to Jesus' lips. John plainly wrote that Jesus received the wine. Oh, but wait! Matthew stated in his account that Jesus refused the wine! Who was right, and why the contradiction? This is not a contradiction in Scripture. Matthew specifically pointed out that the wine Jesus refused to taste was mixed with gall. Gall was a bitter substance that Mark identified as myrrh (Mark 15:23). It was a stupefying narcotic that would deaden the senses. To offer the victim wine mixed with myrrh was not an act of compassion. This stupefying drink was commonly given to the victim to calm them down and keep them from struggling when the soldiers drove nails into the victim's hands and feet.

God the Son refused that drink that would have impaired His senses. He was determined to drink the full cup of God's wrath against sin. But now near the end of the ordeal someone offered Jesus a drink of sour wine and He took a sip. This was the cheap wine the soldiers would have drunk during the day's task. Probably one of the soldiers gave it to Jesus not so much to assuage His thirst but to prolong His suffering. Whoever did it was compelled by God because Jesus had to fulfil this last prophecy.

Then, after fulfilling this last promise from God, God the Son laid down His life (v.30). He announced the completion of the contract. *When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished" (v.30a).* The words, *It is finished*, mean it is completed! The Greek word is *tetelestai*. It comes from the word *teleo* which means to complete, carry out, or fulfill. The word is used to speak of achieving a particular goal. In those ancient days, a person might read this word at the bottom of a tax statement indicating that the tax had been paid in full.

The little noun "it" refers to the grand work of redemption. God the Son's action upon that task completed it (passive voice). In simple terms, "it is finished" means that God the Son defeated Satan. He ultimately conquered death and would prove it in a couple of days when He rose from the tomb. He completed the atonement. He paid the redemption price. He satisfied every demand of the law. He appeased God's wrath against sin.

He determined when that task was completed. In no way did Christ mean to wave the white flag of surrender as though He cried, "Uncle." Jesus did not concede that the wicked hypocrites had won. He had a task to complete that was begun in eternity. Now God the Son announced that He had finished the job.

At the moment God the Son announced that He had completed the eternal task of redemption, He left the human body and took up His glory again. He announced the victory, *and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (v.30b).* Jesus had promised the criminal that he would be with Him in paradise that day. In fulfilling that promise, we must realize that the moment God the Son released His spirit, He entered the presence of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in heaven. There He took up His glory again. He wasn't resting in the tomb for the next couple of days. Only the shell, His human body, was in the tomb waiting to be completed. He in His spirit was with the Father. The next time the followers saw Jesus, He was in a glorified body that looked like the human body. God the Son was in complete control of when He would lay aside the old human shell.

Complete control of the situation was God's plan all along. Jesus had taught this truth to the disciples, but they learned stuff slowly. Weeks earlier Jesus had taught, *"For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father" (John 10:17-18).* Of course that wonderful teaching went over the heads of the disciples.

But Jesus was faithful to His promise. He laid down His life through His own choice. Therefore, when He had completed the task, Jesus didn't mumble the words, "It is finished." He shouted the cry of victory with great strength. Matthew recorded, *"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit" (Matthew 27:50).* John recorded Jesus' last words. Matthew told us how He said His last words. Christ spoke with the authority of one who is in charge.

**They Will Look on Him Whom They Pierced (vv.31-37).**

That look was another one of God's promises. Hypocrites demanded broken bones. Verse thirty-one states, *Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away (v.31).*

The religious rulers asked Pilate to hasten the death of the "criminals" by breaking their legs – a common practice. Being very religious people, those rulers who clamored for Jesus' death were under serious time constraints. At this point, it was about 3:00 in the afternoon. The regular Sabbath would begin in just a few hours at 6:00 Friday evening. Not only was that the standard starting time for the Sabbath, but this was to be a high day. This was that special Sabbath each year that fell within the Passover celebration.

Because the religious hypocrites desired to keep God's law at all costs, they needed to get these men dead and in the grave. The Romans would normally leave the victims on the cross for days which allowed the vultures and vermin to feed on the carcasses. That was unacceptable to Jews. Dead body parts exposed would defile the land according to God's rule. Therefore, the Jews even buried the criminals' bodies. That is because God's law required: *And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).*

Do we see the seething hypocrisy in all of this? These guys had just been responsible for the ruthless torture and execution of the Author of the law, the Giver of the law, the Completer of the law. And now they were worried about keeping His law? How incredibly blind they were.

The governor ordered the soldiers to meet the hypocrites' demands (v.32). *So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him (v.32).* In such situations, the soldiers typically broke the victims' legs by smashing them with an iron mallet. The shock of that blow would hasten death. But also because the victim could no longer raise himself up on his legs to let air into his lungs, he would soon suffocate. However, in

this case when it came to time to break Jesus' legs, the soldiers were not in control.

God's promise precluded breaking the Son's bones but guaranteed a piercing (vv.33-37). God had given His word that none of the Christ's bones would be broken. The picture of the Lamb required that the Passover lamb could have no broken bones. God's instruction for the first Passover required this. *It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones (Exodus 12:46).* Later at Mt. Sinai when God gave the law regarding the Passover, He required the same thing. *They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any of its bones; according to all the statute for the Passover they shall keep it (Numbers 9:12).*

Therefore, God promised that Jesus Christ, who fulfilled all the pictures of the sacrifices, would also not have broken bones. Again it was David who wrote about the Christ 1,000 years before the crucifixion. Through David, God Himself promised that He would protect the Christ. *He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken (Psalm 34:20).* Therefore, it would have been impossible for anyone to break Jesus' legs. It made no difference that this was a common procedure to hasten death. It made no difference that the religious hypocrites demanded a hastened death. God promised that none of Christ's bones would be broken, and God keeps His word.

At the same time though, God also promised that the eternal Lamb would be pierced. Through the prophet Zechariah, God had said, *And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zechariah 12:10).* One day the remnant of God's people will repent and turn from their sins. This will happen in that last day when Christ, God the Son, the Lamb slain for sin, returns to earth – to the Mount of Olives. At that moment, the relatives of the people who crucified Jesus will understand that He really was and is their Savior and King.

God kept His word through the circumstances He arranged. Coming to Jesus the soldiers discovered He was already dead. *But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did*

*not break his legs (v.33).* Of course Jesus was dead. He had already said that it was finished. But just to make sure that Jesus was dead, a soldier thrust his spear in Jesus' side in order to pierce the heart. *But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water (v.34).* At that moment, John saw the fulfillment of God's word. He wrote, *He who saw it has borne witness – his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth – that you also may believe (v.35).* Looking back to that event when he wrote this book years later, John understood that God had to keep His word. *For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.” (vv.36-37).* No broken bones but a pierced side is precisely what God promised. And there was one more thing.

### **With a Rich Man in His Death (vv. 38-42).**

Rich men identified with Jesus (vv.38-39). One of those men was the guy named Joseph who finally stood with Jesus. *After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body (v.38).* This Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin according to Mark 15:43. That was the body of rulers who condemned Jesus to death. He was obviously rich. He disagreed with the majority who voted to condemn Jesus (Luke 23:51). In fact, Luke called him good and righteous (Luke 23:50). As such, he looked for the kingdom of God (Mark 15:43). He was a secret follower of Jesus for fear of his peers on the council (Matthew 27:57).

But now he boldly went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was amazed that Jesus was already dead (Mark 15:44). He didn't realize that Jesus was in charge, and when He finished His work, He went home.

Then there was the man named Nicodemus who also stood with Jesus after His death. *Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight (v.39).* That he was also rich is evidenced by the amount of spices he brought. He too was a member

of the Sanhedrin who defended Jesus earlier only to be rebuked (John 7:51). Now the teacher sided with Jesus publicly and honored Him in His death.

Coincidentally, a tomb was nearby (vv.40-42). Actually, that should not be surprising because God had promised this detail. Through Isaiah God had promised, *And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth (Isaiah 53:9).* And so it happened that rich friends buried the King like a king should be buried.

*So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there (vv.40-42).* There always seems to be some debate about the name “skull” in this passage. Tour guides in Israel like to point to the shape of Gordon's Calvary and tell the tourists that it was called the place of the skull. In fact, none of the Gospel accounts mention a hill, which kind of ruins a lot of songs and imaginations. Golgotha is an Aramaic word that means “skull” and comes from the Hebrew word that sounds the same and means the same. It does not require that the place looked like a skull. It seems more likely that the place of crucifixion was just outside the old city walls (not the modern city walls) probably not far from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Wherever Jesus was crucified, there was a tomb located conveniently nearby. Because of pressure to get the bodies in graves before the Sabbath began at 6:00, a tomb close by was sought. Well, lo and behold, Joseph just happened to have a new tomb in a pleasant garden nearby. Matthew told us, *And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away (Matthew 27:59-60).*

The way in which they buried Jesus was equivalent to a rich man's burial. Seventy-five pounds of spices would have been the norm for burial of a king or wealthy man. Jews did not embalm like Egyptians did and we do. They used spices and ointments to counteract the stench that came from a decaying body. In this way

they honored the bodies of their friends and loved ones. The linen cloth they wrapped Jesus in would have been costly. As God had promised, they made the Lamb's grave with the rich.

Obvious from the way they prepared Jesus' body for burial, Joe and Nick and probably Mary Magdalene and Mary mother of Jesus (Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55) did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead. We admire them for honoring our Savior and showing such respect for His body. But they clearly did not believe all that Jesus had taught about Himself. He had taught that He came from God the Father to win reconciliation for sinners. He had taught that He would return to God the Father. Where did they think God the Son was? They thought He died! They believed it was all over.

Where is your Savior? Do we believe what He taught? Do we believe that He is in heaven interceding for us with His own blood? At the same time, do we believe that He will never leave us or forsake us? The God who is able to control every circumstance of purchasing our salvation is certainly worthy of our trust.