

## IT IS FINISHED

### *The Cross as the End of What We Lift Up*

**“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.” — John 12:32**

**“When Jesus had received the drink, He said, ‘It is finished,’ and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” — John 19:30**

#### **Introduction — why this weekend matters**

In the introduction, the sermon welcomes everyone to the Easter service and names the reality that Easter is often a time of travel and family traditions. But the sermon explains that God placed a specific prayer in his heart for this morning, because there was a deep conviction that **this weekend is the most important moment in the history of mankind**. The reason we sometimes struggle to feel the weight of it is that the story is both **gruesome and supernatural**—brutal and holy—so the world often tries to soften it into something safe and manageable. The sermon pushes back on that, saying plainly: **on this day, Jesus had to die**—not accidentally, not tragically, but willingly. He gave up His life, rose on the third day, ascended, and will return with a glorified body, showing us what God ultimately has in store for us. That is why the world does not want us to hear the message of Easter: **there is hope**. Not only hope that our sins are forgiven, but hope that death does not win—hope of a future beyond the grave, and hope that one day we will receive glorified bodies and dwell on a renewed earth. The sermon frames everything that follows with two statements from John’s Gospel. First, Jesus says: **“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.” — John 12:32**. Second, at the end of the cross, Scripture says: **“When Jesus had received the drink, He said, ‘It is finished,’ and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” — John 19:30**. The title, **“It Is Finished,”** sets the direction: before we can truly hear *“It is finished,”* we must walk through what Jesus actually did for us on the cross, so that we can remember, receive, and then go out and show the world what He has done.

#### **1) Good Friday Makes Us Look**

The first movement of the sermon is that Good Friday has a way of slowing us down. It removes the noise and pauses our tendency to rush straight to Sunday celebration without first facing what happened to Jesus on the cross on Friday. The sermon reminds us that the cross is not merely something we decorate a church with; it is something we stand in front of. And when we stand before the cross honestly, we realise that Good Friday is not only about what Jesus carried—Good Friday is also about what we have been carrying. The sermon names a human pattern: we are always carrying things and always lifting something up, meaning we constantly elevate things in our hearts to a place of ultimate importance or devotion above God. That is why Good Friday matters so much. The cross is not only the place where sins are forgiven; it is also the place where false gods are dismantled. It is not only where Jesus dies for us; it is also where what we have lifted up and carried all our lives dies with Him.

#### **2) What is sin really? - Sin Is What We Lift Highest**

From there, the sermon defines sin more deeply than “breaking rules.” Sin is deeper than behaviour; it reaches into what the sermon calls **worship-direction**. In other words, what direction do we point our worship—towards God, or towards other things? To show that this has been the pattern from the beginning, the sermon goes back to the Garden of Eden. The serpent does not start by tempting humanity with murder or theft; he begins with **elevation**. The sermon quotes: **“You will be like God.” Genesis 3:4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”** The point is that the temptation is essentially this: *you can lift yourself up*. **You** can define good and evil. **You** can decide what is true. **You** can become your own centre. That becomes the first idol the sermon names: **the self enthroned**. And once the self is enthroned, striving enters the world—inner

pressure to prove, the need to be enough, fear that you are not, and the desire to secure life without surrender. The sermon then shows that the same pattern repeats throughout Scripture. When Moses comes down the mountain with the Ten Commandments, the people have not lost spiritual appetite—they have redirected it. They lift up a golden calf: something visible, manageable, human-made, placed in the position of the living God. The sermon defines an idol as a substitute we can control, a god we can carry, a saviour we can measure. Then the message turns the mirror on us: this is not only an ancient problem; we do it every day, often in “respectable” and sophisticated ways. The sermon lists the kinds of things we lift up in the place of Jesus: the opinions of people; our image; our productivity; our ability to cope; the need to be right; the pressure to be strong; the fear of being misunderstood; and the outcomes we cannot control. The conclusion of the point is simple and pastoral: our hearts get tired because, as God’s creation, we were never meant to hold the weight of all this.

### 3) The Cross — The Great Replacement of Everything Lifted Up

With that understanding of what we “lift up,” the sermon brings us to Good Friday two thousand years ago. This is where the words of Jesus in John become the interpretive key. The sermon quotes Jesus: **“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.”** — *John 12:32*. The sermon explains that when Jesus says **“When I am lifted up,”** He is not speaking poetically; He is speaking prophetically. He is saying that the Father is going to lift Him up in the place of everything we have lifted up. This is why the cross is described as more than God speaking about idols—it is God **replacing** them. At the cross, God takes the whole human system of self-salvation—our proud, anxious, desperate attempt to lift ourselves up—and ends it by lifting up His Son. The sermon then explains what the cross meant historically: it was not simply a tool of physical pain and death; it was **public exposure**. It was Rome’s way of announcing that a person had been stripped of life and honour. It was shame in the open. And the sermon emphasises that Jesus chooses that place. He steps into humiliation, and climbs onto the very thing we fear most: being exposed, being rejected, being lowered, being seen as weak, being shamed. That is why the sermon returns again to what Jesus does and does not say. He does not say, “When I am admired...,” “When I am understood...,” or “When I am followed...” He says, **“When I am lifted up.”** Because He is taking the place of everything else we lift up. This is why the cross is offensive and beautiful at the same time: it tells the truth—“You cannot lift yourself high enough to become whole and saved”—and then Jesus answers with grace: “So I will be lifted up for you.”

### 4) The Sign Above His Head - Religion vs the Cross

Next, the sermon shows how even the sign above Jesus’ head confronts our religious assumptions. The sermon says the sign tears down our religious view of the cross, and then reads the passage in full: **John 19:19 Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews. 20 Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. 21 The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”** The sermon draws our attention to the wording: **“Jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews”**, and emphasises that it was written in three languages **on purpose**. John tells us the sign was written in **Aramaic** (local Jewish language), **Latin** (Roman authority), and **Greek** (international world). Pilate did not need to do that, but by doing so he turns the crucifixion into a **public proclamation**—to Jews, to Romans, and to the entire known world. Unintentionally, Pilate makes the cross a **global announcement of Jesus’s kingship**. Then the sermon highlights the reaction of the religious leaders: they hate it and want it edited. They want control over the narrative; they want it to say, “He claimed to be...” The sermon uses this as a heart-diagnostic for us today. Religion always wants to manage appearances,

and religion always wants to lift something up: reputation, status, performance, control, and the illusion of being acceptable. But the cross destroys every illusion; it strips away our spiritual costumes.

#### **5) The Word — Tetelestai (Not “I’m Finished” but “It’s Complete”)**

After looking at what is lifted up, and how the cross dismantles false worship, the sermon reaches the moment where Jesus speaks from the cross. The sermon reads: **“When Jesus had received the drink, He said, ‘It is finished,’ and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”** — *John 19:30*. The sermon stresses how history is cemented forever here. Jesus does not slowly drift into silence, does not fade out, and does not whisper defeat. He declares completion: **“It is finished.”** The Greek word used is **Tetelestai**. The sermon highlights the difference: Jesus did not say, “I am finished” (as in, “I am dying”). He said, **“It is finished. It is completed. It is accomplished. It is brought to its intended end.”** The sermon explains that this word carried real-world weight in that time period: it was used when a task was completed, a verdict carried out, a debt paid, an offering accepted, a work finished. So, when Jesus says **Tetelestai**, He is saying (and the sermon lists it clearly): Nothing is missing. Nothing is unpaid. Nothing is left open. Nothing still needs your striving to complete it. From there the sermon presses the personal implication: if that is true for us personally, then so much of what we have been lifting up can finally come down from our shoulders. The sermon connects this to anxiety and peace—how personal anxiety reveals what we have been lifting too high in our own strength. When peace leaves first, it is often because something has replaced the cross in our hearts. We have lifted the outcome, the opinion, the control, the fear, the reputation, the pressure—above Jesus. Then we wonder why we are exhausted. Good Friday is God saying, gently but firmly: “Bring it to the cross. Let it die where it belongs.”

#### **6) What We Do with This ? — “Take Up Your Cross” as Daily Surrender**

Then the sermon asks the practical question: now that we know this truth, what do we do? The sermon points to Jesus’ call: “Take up your cross and follow Me.” He explains that in moments of struggle—when temptation and the difficulties of life feel overwhelming—we need to take up our cross and follow Jesus. But the sermon clarifies what that means and what it does not mean. It does **not** mean we go looking for pain in order to carry it. Instead, it means we stop lifting up substitutes that we think can help us in this life. It means we stop making alive what is meant to die on that cross. It means we daily agree with the cross, praying: “Lord, I will not worship what cannot save me.” The sermon supports this with Jesus’ promise: **Matt 11:30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.** The direction is clear: because Jesus has completed the work, discipleship becomes a daily surrender of false saviours, not a new burden of self-effort.

#### **7) Communion — Our Agreement with Tetelestai**

Finally, the sermon lands at the communion table and explains why this moment is not separate from the message. Communion is not an interruption of the sermon; it is the sermon becoming alive in the moment. Communion is not something we do *for* God; it is something we receive *from* God. We come to the table not because we have performed well, but because Jesus was lifted up. We come not to add anything, but to receive what has already been completed. The sermon then gives the meaning of the elements in simple, worshipful language: the bread is not the symbol of our effort; it is the reminder of His body given. The cup is not the symbol of our improvement; it is the sign of His blood poured out. As we receive, we are also laying down what we have been lifting up: the need to prove ourselves, the pressure to be enough, the fear of what people think, the idol of control, and the anxiety that comes from worshipping outcomes. The sermon ends by returning to the quiet power of the cross and the finished work of Jesus, declaring again the final word: **Tetelestai - It is finished.**

