**New Hope Sermon: “It is finished”**

To keep us consistently global I wanted us to start today with the African version of the Nicene Creed. It will provide an important perspective on the power of the gospel we are considering all semester:

“We believe in the One High God, who out of love created the beautiful world and everything good in it. He created man and wanted man to be happy in the world. God loves the world and every nation and its tribe on the earth. We have known this High God in darkness, and now we know Him in the light. God promised in the book of His Word, the Bible, that He would save the world and all the nations and tribes.

We believe that God made good his promise by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, a man in the flesh, a Jew by tribe, born in a little village, who left his home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and man, showing the meaning of the living Love. He was rejected by His people, tortured and nailed hands and feet to the cross, and died. He was buried in the grave, but the hyenas did not touch Him. On the third day He rose from the grave. He ascended to the skies. He is the Lord.

(Emily Choge Kerama, Telling our Stories: Salvation in the African context, p. 43 *So Great A Salvation.)*

Jesus Christ is Lord, indeed. What He accomplished in his death on the cross is the epicenter of the power of the gospel. Last week we looked at the nature of His sacrifice when He cried out “*My God, my God why have You forsaken me*?” Jesus was expressing His anguish as He took on Himself all the sins and guilt and shame of the world and God turned away from Him. Today I want us to look more deeply into the significance of Christ’s words “*It is finished”* on the cross.

**What was finished?**

Author Bryant Myers writes,

“The goal of the Biblical story is the reconciliation and redemption of all things, on earth and in heaven (Colossians 1:19) with Christ as the head (Ephesians 1:10). On the cross and through his resurrection, Jesus Christ brings restoration in all these areas distorted by sin:

* With God
* With others
* With and within creation.

Scripture teaches that all things created and sustained by Christ are redeemed by Christ through his death and resurrection. When sin entered the world, our relationships with God, others and the rest of creation were broken. But Col. 1 says” “*God was pleased to have all of His fullness dwell in Jesus, and through Jesus to reconcile to Himself* ***all*** *things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross*.” (Colossians 1:15-20. See also 2 Corinthians 5:11-21) All things! This is the amazing breadth of the gospel! So the salvation Christ procured is a holistic gospel.

**Today I want us to discover seven different things that Christ accomplished in his death.**

**1. First the atonement** – Christ paid the penalty of our guilt and shame so we could be reconciled to God.

“In Jesus’s final word It is finished (John19:30) gospel writer John uses a single word tetelestai to record his triumph, a phrase used often in this sense on ancient Greek receipts, ‘Paid in full,” The redemption that Jesus came to achieve was accomplished once for all.” (Wilkes p. 904) The 60 high curtain in the temple, separating the holy from the holy of holies was split from top to bottom, which is a sign that God himself abolished the separation from the Holy of Holies, signifying that the new and living way is now open for all people to enter into his presence through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (Heb. 10:20, Eph.2:11-22). (Wilkes, Ibid, p. 905).

2, **Second, the restoration of people to one another –the communal aspect of salvation**

A Latino scholar reminds us: “one of the main contributions of Liberation theology to Christian dogmatic theology is the conceptual expansion of sin as an alienating condition of relational brokenness. The expansion includes societal structures that threaten human flourishing and the very possibility of human life. To be saved is to experience God in Christ liberating people from personal sin (objectification of sin) in social and political life.: the impoverishment of the masses, marginalization of those on the periphery, the oppression and killing of women, children and indigenous groups; and the sex trafficking of millions under the logic of supply and demand.[Plus] groups who are doubly oppressed by patriarchy, political subjectation, and racism.” (“the Hope of life and salvation in Latin American Theology, Jules Martinez-Olivieri, in So Great a Salvation, p. 84)

Ephesians 2:14-16 says, “*For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall … so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.”* This is huge in our world that is still rent asunder by tribal warfare and nationalism, which exalts itself as it demonizes all other peoples.

3.**The breaking of evil powers**

Colossians 2:15 says, “*And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”* This isi a verse I urge you to memorize, beloved. When Satan’s attacks and lies are pressing in on you or your country or your family, you need to remember this truth and claim it as the word of your testimnony. Remember, *we overcome Satan by the word of our testimony and the Blood of the Lamb*. (Rev. 12: 9)

This truth is critical to hold from a global perspective. “The issue of traditional African belief in the invisible world has been neglected in the past as if the gospel had nothing to say about it…This is a serious failure in effective discipling of new believers. Too often it left them with the impression that the gospel had nothing to say about the invisible world and the menace it represented- apart from the prohibition of all contact with it.” Kerama, Ibid., p. 40 Check out Tokumboh Adeyemo’s book *Salvation in African Tradition*, Nairobi, Evangel, 1979).

4**. The destruction of the power of death**

2 Timothy 1:10 says “but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” At the cross, we find death and victory over death. Death is a certain reality for all (Hebrews 9:27.) The fear of death puts one into bondage (Hebrews 2:15.) But Jesus’s death delivers from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15.) And, Jesus’s resurrection guarantees our personal victory over death (1 Corinthians 15:51-55, 20.) There is no need to fear death – Jesus already won that victory! Christians dealing with the end of life issues need to have these promises reaffirmed to them over and over.

5. **The possible healing of all sickness, disease and infirmities**

In the midst of a chapter detailing Christ’s healing ministry, Gospel writer Matthew links this to Isaiah. Matthew 8:17 says, “*This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases*.’” This means that Christ’s authority over sickness and infirmities is available to all believers. These infirmities can no longer be a tool Satan uses against us. Christ has nailed the sicknesses and infirmities to the Cross and risen over them. This is the reality we want to affirm every day, but especially on our monthly Wed. night healing service. I hope we will se many members and new friends experience Christ’s deliverance and healing of their diseases as well as their infirmities (or weaknesses) in these times. Remember, that is coming up this ‘Wed. April 3rd.

**6. Creation is restored to its former glory**

Colossians 1 describes Christ as the Creator and Sustainer of the world. He is the co-creator and holds all things together by the word of His power. That includes every molecule of creation. But humanity’s sin, has caused a brokenness within creation itself.

This is emphasized in Romans 8: 19:

* *“For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering.” .. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when* ***it will join God’s children*** *in glorious freedom from death and decay.* See also (Romans 8: 19-23. See also Isaiah 65: 17-25, 2 Peter 3:5-14; Revelation 21. Isaiah 49: God brings restoration).

Not only will creation be restored, but our relationship with God’s creation can be “restored to a healthy relationship of godly governance and stewardship instead of deification or exploitation.” (Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, pg. 82, 341). This will replace our destructive relationship with creation which many big businesses and politicians are denying, even as global warming is wrecking increasing havoc in the world.

7. **The wholeness of people within themselves**

And finally, Christ’s salvation provides wholeness or Shalom for people who believe in Him. Jesus promised to his followers that *he had come to give them abundant life*.Jn. 10:10 That abundant life is what the Old Testament called Shalom. Shalom is a Hebrew word for completeness, well-being, and health. Our emotional ill-health is the reason why professional counselors and pastor/shepherds are so needed in the healing of peoples today. And needed in all countries – even when there is still resistance from a cultural perspective to going to a therapist.

**Summary**

It is finished means that Christ’s death has made atonement and relationship with God possible. He has made possible the restoration of our relationship with other peoples. He has broken the power of death and the fear of death which has kept people in bondage for centuries. He has broken the power of all evil forces, (what the Bible calls principalities and powers), which are controlling the world and have kept people in bondage. He has opened the door for deliverance from sickness and all our infirmities. He has made the restoration of creation possible and restored the possibility of shalom, abundant life, to all who believe in Him. Seven areas where His death has finished God’s redemption of the world and everything in it. To reiterate Col. 1:15: “*God was pleased to have all of His fullness dwell in Jesus, and through Jesus to reconcile to Himself* ***all*** *things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross*.” (Colossians 1:15-20) All things. Hallelujah!!.

So let me conclude with these thoughts:

Tim Keller said, “After creation God said ‘It is finished’ and He rested. After redemption Jesus said ‘It is finished’ – and we can rest.”

Christopher J.H. Wright said, “’It is finished’ means that Jesus had accomplished all that God’s mission had sent him to do. It did not merely mean that his life was over like, ‘I’m finished.’ It was a statement of achievement of purpose – God’s purpose to deal with sin and guilt, to defeat all the powers of evil, to bring about the reconciliation of enemies, to defeat death itself, and to accomplish the reconciliation and liberation of the whole creation.”

And J.A. Schep said, “The resurrection is God’s ‘Amen’ to Jesus’s loud cry: it is finished.” More on the implications of the resurrection at Easter. But before that, we will look next week at how the tearing of the veil in the temple, which happened when Christ died, is another illustration of the power of the gospel. Let’s pray. Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson 3/31/19