*When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.* (Jn 19:30)

“It is finished.”

We hear this gospel, these words each year on Good Friday. I find it interesting that none of the other gospel accounts tells us that Jesus said, “It is finished.” Not Mark, who we heard last Sunday, not Matthew, not Luke. In John, we don’t hear loud cries of, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” or the surrendering words, “into your hands I commend my spirit”. The Jesus that John presents to us simply says, “It is finished”.

As we sit with this scripture today you may find yourself, as I do, having to to resist the impulse to go straight into post-Easter comfort mode. But I urge us to set aside that beloved empty cross and stand for a time with the people there at this moment, at THE CROSS, where Jesus speaks and breathes (this very air we breathe) for the final time. What was the impact of those three words for them? “It is finished.”

Mary, the mother of Jesus is there. How could she have ever imagined this? She remembers kissing her boy’s brow as she put him to bed. *Now a crown of thorns mars that brow.*  She remembers guiding his tiny hands and feet as he learned to walk. *Now those hands and feet are nailed to a cross*. Perhaps she is thinking, “thank God his pain and misery is finished”.

And there is Mary Magdelene, who followed Jesus to the end; Mary, who did not run away; Mary who does not hide her grief and devotion for the teacher who saved her life and her very being. *This man has changed her life; it would never be the same again…… she would never be the same again*. Is Mary wondering, “Now that it is finished, where will I go?”

As Jesus releases his last breath, slumping forward, ……… interest wanes……. the crowds move away ……the spectacle is finished.

The Roman soldiers show visible relief that their terrible task is finished for another day.

And what about those that are not present to hear Jesus’ final words? I think it’s a safe bet the Roman and Temple authorities are certain they have finished off the movement of this radical revolutionary from Nazareth once and for all. No doubt, convinced they have prevented an uprising, they will be sleeping well tonight.

What about Peter, devoted, bumbling Peter, who Jesus loved so very much? Peter, who was the first of the disciples to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, is now guilt ridden, full of fear and in hiding. His dear, dear friend and rabbi has been put to a horrible death. Peter must be miserable and horribly grief stricken. Was all that Jesus did for naught? Was every thing they did together lost? How can the disciples, now dispersed and in hiding, possibly continue without Jesus? Peter cannot believe it is finished.

Finished, over and done with. Jesus is gone. Mary, his mother will go to live in the household of the beloved disciple; ……perhaps Mary Magdalene will accompany her. The disciples will go back to their former professions: tax collector, fisherman, or whatever it was they did before they came together. And, the Romans will continue as a superpower and will go on to kill thousands more as revolutionaries against the empire.

So, standing there, confronted with the crucified Jesus, we can ask only one question……….**God, is it finished?** Over and done with? Are you finished with us? What now? Does the world go back to the way it was before You walked among us as flesh and blood? Is that what Jesus is saying?.............. **Is it finished?**

Here is something for us to consider. Jesus did not say, *I am finished*, proclaiming his death. He said “It is finished”. There are many things that Jesus did, many signs he performed. This is about the work and will of God, which Jesus came to do. He spent his days healing, teaching, speaking truth in the midst of oppression…… all in complete surrender to the will of God. In the end, this “it” is about accomplishment, *not about finality of God’s plan*. IT is about finishing God’s purpose in the here and now of Jesus’ time on earth.

Jesus talks throughout the gospels about what he is called to do. Several weeks ago we heard Jesus tell his friends, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Barbara Brown Taylor describes IT in this way, Jesus *“saw what kind of explosion it would take to break through the thick rock around the human heart. Teaching would not do it. Neither would prayer or the laying on of hands. If he was going to get through, he had to use something stronger than all of those, and he had to stake his own life on its success. Otherwise, why should anyone believe him?”*

Jesus’ death quakes the whole world. It is God’s divine disruption, God’s overwhelming act of love and redemption, and God’s promise of new life after death.

The IT becomes for us a call to action. It is more than an invitation, it is a command to be transformed, to say NO to continuing the patterns of death and denial in our lives and in our society, and to fully embrace the Love poured out for us;…….. no matter the pain, no matter the loss we are confronted with on this Good Friday. And as the seed is broken open transformed and is fruitful and abundantly multiplied, we are forever changed, just as those around the cross are changed…….. even if they do not know it yet………. *even if we do not know it yet*.

Franciscan priest Richard Rohr wrote this about Jesus’ crucifixion, *“Nothing changed in heaven on Good Friday, but everything potentially changed on earth”*. Their association with Jesus *forever changed the people that surrounded him* when they joined in his ministry to accomplish the realization of God’s Kingdom on earth. Now, as they remained there at the foot of the cross or as they shivered alone and afraid in their hiding places, they continue to be unknowingly transformed for the rest of the work to be done.

Perhaps it is like that today for you. I know it can be for me. It can be so challenging to see past the stone rolled across the tomb to the heart of God that lies within. *It can feel like Jesus is in the tomb and that is where he will stay.*

 From now until the Great Vigil of Easter tomorrow night is a truly liminal space we in which we exist. Rohr tells us it is, *“a time of in-between – when everything actually happens and yet nothing appears to happen. For all of us this is the necessary handing over of time, when soul and Spirit rejoin with body. The tomb is like a temporary womb. Greatness does not just happen unprepared. It must be waited for, needed, desired, and an inner space created.”*

We need this time and space where we recall that all is not as it should be in God’s world. It is a time to lament those things in us and around us, which are contrary to the gift of Love we are given. It is a time to consider our response to that Love.

Jesus lived, walked on this Earth, and reached out to the poorest among us in purse and in spirit. And then….. he gave himself over to be subject to greed, jealously, fear and ultimately to death. Jesus did all of this that we might know the very real impact of Sin, and that we might then truly embrace the joy and the pain of loving one another as He loves us.

Jesus has finished the work God sent him to do in his time here on earth. Our relationships to God and creation are forever changed and are forever continuing to transform because of it. And this is God’s **BIG IT** my dear friends! Jesus, the Word, God incarnate, One with the Beloved Creator from beginning, to beginning, and forever, **is not finished with us yet**. Amen.