

**Text: John 19:30**

**Theme: Jesus' Empty Tomb Shouts, "It is Finished"**

**Date: April 16, 2006 (Easter Sunday – Festival Worship)**

In the Name of our resurrected Lord and Savior, Dear Easter Christians,

Did you ever notice how some things we say just demand to be punctuated with an exclamation point?

For example: someone has a new baby and they say, *"It's a girl!"* or *"It's a boy!"*

Or you return from a doctor's visit and you say to a friend or family member,

*"I just saw my doctor. He doesn't know how, but my cancer is gone! Completely gone!"*

Or you're at basketball game and the clock is ticking down, the shot is off and you say,

*"Can you believe it, he made a half court, buzzer-beater shot!"*

Or if you're listening to a Brewer's game on the radio and you hear, *"Get up! Get out of here! Gone! It's a homerun!"*

On Good Friday, just before Jesus died, he cried out, "It is finished." By that, Jesus meant he had finished his work as the Savior of the world. He had "paid in full" the price for your sins and mine, and the sins of the whole world. If ever there are words that deserve to be punctuated with an exclamation point, they are the words *"It is finished."* But that hardly seemed to be the case when Jesus first spoke them. With darkness covering the land like a death shroud from noon to three there was no apparent celebration or exclamation.

Yet the exclamation point did come! Three days later from the very place where the disciple had laid the lifeless body of their master! With an earthquake! A rolled away stone! And angelic messengers! The exclamation point for our Christian faith came on Easter morning. Can you hear it? On this resurrection morning **Jesus' empty tomb shouts with the loudest of exclamations, "It is finished!"** Today the Word of God assures every one of us that 1) Our sins have been paid for in full, and that 2) Our eternity in heaven is guaranteed.

### **1. Our sins have been paid in full**

Can you imagine watching a TV documentary about the life of Jesus Christ and after all of his miracles and messages, his travels and betrayals, after the darkness spread over the land, and after the agonizing cries of crucifixion echoed from the hillside, the TV screen faded black in silence. The documentary was over. Not another word was spoken; Not another image was seen; Just a silent black screen.

How would you have reacted to such an ending,? At first maybe you may have been shocked and asked yourself, *"What did I just see?"* Then you may have become angry and felt cheated because you know there was more to Christ's life and purpose. You might have asked, *"Where is the resurrection? Where is the empty tomb? Where are the angels? Where is the exclamation point?"*

But what if Jesus' story had ended on Good Friday? What if there was no empty tomb of the resurrection morn? Wouldn't you and I be plagued by a lot of nagging questions? Questions like *"Did the Father really accept Jesus' payment for my sins?"* *"Do I really have a living Savior who will come back one day to take me home to heaven?"*

If the story of Jesus Christ ended on Good Friday we would have much more to worry about than some nagging questions. Our eternal welfare would be at stake.

\* If there was no empty tomb, then you and I would have a God who doesn't keep his promises. Like the promise he made through the prophet Isaiah: *"Though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied"* (53:10,11). We understand this verse to speak about the resurrection of Christ. But, if Christ has not been raised, was the prophecy just a pipe dream? \* If there was no empty tomb, Jesus himself would have been made to be a liar for he said, *"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days"* (Jn 2:19). If Jesus has not been raised, was this nothing but a empty boast? \* More than once, our Savior told his disciples, *"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise"* (Mk 9:31). What's up with that? If Christ has not been raised, was the master just trying to shield his students from the truth? \* What if there was no empty tomb? St. Paul covered that "what if" scenario almost two thousand years ago when he wrote, *"If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins"* (1 Co 15:14,17). In other words, without the exclamation point provided by Easter, our Christian faith falls like a house of cards. Without the empty tomb, Jesus' words *"It is finished"* are nothing but a whisper. Maybe even a whimper. If there is no empty tomb, maybe all Jesus meant was *"My life is over. My hopes and dreams are finished. I have lost."*

Then we would have to be *“pitied more than all men” (1 Co 15:19)*. Because then we’d be living a lie and a life with no hope.

But, thank God, Jesus’ story didn’t end on Good Friday! Thank God it didn’t end with a silent black screen. All the eyewitnesses agree. There was an earthquake. The stone was rolled away. Angels were present. There was an empty tomb that shouted the exclamation point of Jesus’ Good Friday words *“It is finished!”* On Easter morning, Jesus Christ, the carpenter’s son, was once and for all *“declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead” (Ro 1:4)*.

On Good Friday, Jesus Christ said he had paid in full. On Easter morning, the Father issued us a receipt for the payment made by his Son. (Grocery store receipt) That’s what Paul is getting at when he assures us, *“He was delivered over to death because of our sins and was raised to life because of our justification” (Ro 4:25)*. Jesus’ empty tomb shouts that our sins have been paid for in full! And it shouts, our eternity in heaven is guaranteed.

## 2. Our eternity in heaven is guaranteed

One of the most nagging and gnawing questions that mankind has wrestled with over the ages is, *“What will happen to me when I die?”* People do all kinds of crazy things in an attempt to find peace with their answers. Some try to earn favor with God by good works, some try to acclaim power and prestige among their peers, some just ignore the whole issue in the hope that nothing will happen when they die, they’ll just be buried and forgotten about. But the exclamation point of Jesus empty tomb answers this most important questions for all people once and for all, *“What will happen to me when I die?”*

The empty tomb shouts to us and all the world, *“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Co 15:20-22)*. This is what the empty tomb shouts to us: *“Because I live, you also will live” (Jn 14:19)*. Jesus’ resurrection makes his promise of life in heaven a guarantee. This is what the empty tomb shouts to us: *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another” (Job 19:25-27)*. This victory chant of Job, the Old Testament believer, is our victory cry! This is what the empty tomb shouts to us, *“It is finished!”* Jesus did it all. Jesus left nothing more to do to secure our eternal welfare in heaven. Jesus lived a perfect life for us. Jesus died in our place for the guilt of our sin. Jesus now has defeated death by his resurrection. Jesus has erased every question about what will happen to us when our physical body dies. We will go to heaven with Jesus, first the soul, and then on the last day, a resurrected and glorious new body, for all eternity.

*“It is finished!”* It wasn’t just the empty tomb that shouted this message that first Easter morning!

Angels shouted it, when they told the women who came to pay their last respects, *“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!” (Lk 24:5,6)*

The gospel writer Matthew tells us there were believers raised on Good Friday who came into the city after Jesus’ resurrection. They *“appeared to many people” (Mt 27:53)*. Can you imagine how the appearance of the resurrection dead added to the exclamation point to Jesus’ work.

Jesus himself added an exclamation point to his work when he appeared to Mary, to the women, to Peter, to the Emmaus disciples, to the Twelve, to the five hundred, to James, and later to Paul. Every time our Lord shared the greeting *“Peace be with you,”* his words from the cross shouted once more.

Then came the disciples’ turn. *“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all” (Ac 4:33)*. Another exclamation point!

Then came Paul and the powerful resurrection chapter that is 1 Corinthians 15.

Then came John and the dazzling visions of heaven contained in Revelation.

Then came countless other believers down through the centuries. By their simple faith, by their devotion to their Lord, each one in his or her own way used Jesus’ words from the cross as the victory shout of faith: *“It is finished!”*

Now it’s our turn. It’s our turn to shout the message of Easter, *“It is finished!”* Our sins had been paid in full and heaven is God guarantee. Now it’s our turn to live the exclamation point of Easter. Amen.

