

John 19:16-30
(Psalm 69:16-21; Revelation 21:5-7)

Introduction

The greatest argument against the Bible's description of God is the problem of evil: How can we believe that God is both all-powerful and all-loving in a world filled with suffering and pain? Yet the Scriptures are clear – as is life, when we see it with our eyes wide open: The evil is ours, not God's. We do these things to ourselves and to one another. To save us from ourselves, God becomes one of us and lets us do such things to him. His power is most gloriously displayed in what seems the consummate sign of weakness: He suffers at the hands of men and dies a painful and shameful death. Yet, God's sovereign power and amazing grace are most on display here.

What do I mean? Just this: At every turn, John reminds us that this is not some awful surprise, some terrible turn of events. No, for this Jesus came into the world, to die this death for us. He is not an unwilling victim, but a self-sacrificing victor over sin and death – over everything that would separate us from God's love. Note in these verses how, in the face of suffering and death Jesus never loses his sense freedom, his sense of responsibility, or his sense of mission.

Body

1. First, notice Jesus' sense of freedom.

His life is given, not taken. "He went out, bearing his own cross" (v.17) and "he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (v.30). All that happens, from Pilate's sign, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (v.19) to the soldiers dividing his clothing (v.23f), to the offer of sour wine to drink (v.29), are done by those around him in unwitting fulfillment of prophecies about the Messiah. Jesus recognizes this, and freely gives himself in a perfect act of love toward God and man.

Do we freely take up our cross daily to follow him? Do we recognize God's sovereign care for us in the midst of pain?

2. Then, notice Jesus' sense of responsibility.

In the midst of unimaginable physical and spiritual suffering, Jesus sees his mother standing nearby and takes responsibility for her welfare. What incredible tenderness, what a model of love.

How often in pain do we neglect our first responsibilities?

3. Finally, notice Jesus' sense of mission.

Most fascinating to me is the connection between his cry, "I thirst" (v.28) and his cry, "It is finished" (v.30). Over and over again throughout his ministry Jesus invited those who were spiritually thirsty – from an outcast, immoral Samaritan woman to the house of Israel gathered in Jerusalem for a feast – to come to him for living water, to find their deepest thirst for love and life and meaning satisfied in him. Now he hangs in agony from a cross, drinking the cup of the father's wrath toward our sin, and he cries out, "I thirst." A moment later, he cried out that his mission is accomplished: "It is finished."

In the book of Revelation, the same themes are connected: first in Revelation 16:17, when a voice from the throne of God cried out, "It is done." The seventh and final bowl of God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, and man's rebellious city drinks it to the dregs. Then, in Revelation 21, with man's city judged, man's enemy Satan destroyed, and the city of God come "down out of heaven ... as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:2), the voice from the throne says, "Behold, I am making all things new. ... It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment" (21:5f).

This is the mission of God, the mission he has entrusted to us, his disciples: to die to self and live to Christ, to take up his mission and declare his victory over sin and death – "It is finished! It is done!" – to offer the water of life to a world that is dying of thirst.

Conclusion

What is distracting you from taking up this mission? Where are you allowing the pleasures and pains of life to keep you from realizing that redemption is accomplished, fulfilled in Christ: "It is finished!" What are you longing and thirsting for? He drank the cup of the Father's wrath, that we might drink the cup of blessing.