

## *It Is Finished!*

One of the more interesting movies that came out this year was this movie, Arrival. Did anyone see it? It was an alien movie, and you were left wondering who were these aliens and what did they come for? And if you have yet to see it, sorry I'm totally going to spoil it for you in these next moments in order to make a point. The aliens came to be known as Heptapods, and it is the character Amy Adams job to communicate with them. She learns that their language looks like this, and she is able to have discussions with the aliens based on what she has learned. But this language also turns out to be their gift to mankind, for because of it's non-linear approach it leads you to understand the future. To understand all things to come, just as you understand all things past. This is problematic because what we know of her character is that she will have a daughter that will die, and this will lead to a bitter separation from her spouse. And these visions of a daughters death and bitter separation were presented before as flashbacks, and we learn they were actually flash forwards. They have yet to happen. But they will if she pursues the relationship with this character. And we are left hanging as an audience, wondering, "Knowing what she knows about the future, what will she do in the present?" Will she pursue the relationship with her husband to have this daughter, or will she refrain? And the answer is? Well, I have to leave somethings in suspense.

I present this movie and it's proposition to you, because I think this day it is still good for us to consider, "Knowing what we know about the future, what will we do in the present?" And some of you are like - well what do we know about the future? I have good news for you. As Christians we know quite a bit, because our God also chose to give us the gift of communication. Not in some non-linear language, but in this book called the Bible. He used men who wrote in the Hebrew and Greek language, to tell of us of time that had passed before us, and he also speaks of time to come. And though we still live bound by time, future and present don't weave together seamlessly like in that movie, we still know a ton about the future. We know Jesus will come back, we know there will be a new heavens and new earth, we know we will have new bodies in a place with no more suffering or pain, and we know that we win in the end.

And I have this sneaking suspicion we don't leverage our knowledge of the future, near enough to help us in the present. And this is the problem we need to get passed. So God he even told us how to use the future, he said, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." (Col 3:2) How would our knowledge of this win affect the peace we can have right now. How would this vision of future glory affect our purposes and pursuits right now. Set your mind on what is to come. One author Stephen Covey even picked up this principle and applied it to business, he didn't say leverage your knowledge of the future to help your present. No one principle he had was "Begin with the end in mind." You have an idea of where you're going to end up, so let your actions right now work toward that. We don't just have a fuzzy idea, but a solid one, and the end should speak to us now. This is what we want to do today, and I hope it speaks glorious life, hope, and encouragement to you right now.

But how do I know about this, and how I am I so confident of a future I've never been to? Because of the words of life Jesus is speaking to us today. We're in this series called the words of life from a dying man, and we see Jesus hanging on the cross - out of love for us! Out of love for you! You were that dear to him! So dear he would die for you, and greater love has no one than this, that he give up his life for his friends. And even as he dies, he gives hope and encouragement! Today we have a very short section, why don't we dive into it. John who was there records, "It is finished." There it is. It's only one word in Greek. Tetelestai. And if there was a statement that seamlessly speaks impact on past, present, and future this is it. In the past it meant salvation accomplished, in the present it means freedom for all captives of sin, and for the future it means the victory is secure and our destiny is determined. Turn to your neighbor and say, "Don't worry - it is finished!"

In South Dakota there is this beautiful national memorial called Mt. Rushmore. I have never been there or to the Black Hills in South Dakota, though I hear it is a beautiful spot. But what I have learned is as magnificent as the memorial is, it is an unfinished work. Gutzon Borglum began the work in 1927, the faces were constructed from 1934-39. But the Borglum died in 1941. At the time his son took over for a few months, but then construction stopped completely from a lack of funding. Mt. Rushmore was supposed so much more than faces, it was supposed to be the presidents from head to waist. But it what it is. This mountain speaks of an unfinished work.

And it reminds me of just how much in our lives is unfinished. I overheard a conversation of young people talking who said they are not looking forward to adulting. I heard they are also actually teaching classes on how to do adulting properly. As a fellow kid who never wanted to grow up and now is grown. I know a thing or two about adulting - and that is - it's never done. You're never done growing, learning, becoming better. I was looking at my journal recently, reflecting on where God has brought me in 3 years. And it's interesting as much as he molds me, the work is always unfinished. He's always refining it seems. I consider the life of a parent, and though there are peaks and valleys finished is never a word you use for parenting. So much of life is unfinished. It could be a house, where one project leads to another and another. A wish list. I get the Target adds and once I secure that one item another one moves to the top of the list. And we're never done. So much of life is unfinished.

So how great to present to you a work that is finished. I present to you a superior mount. Golgotha where Jesus died. It's called the place of the skull and this picture from the area they found a hill that looks like it. But it is finished!! And out of all the things we might consider being finished on this day the stand out is our salvation. *Salvation is finished.*

I need to draw this out for you a little, and what this means, the implication, is that *you are free of guilt and shame.*

Can I have a volunteer who is comfortable doing a bit of weight lifting. Thank you for being brave and strong. So the goal for this one is to hold the weight tight until I tell you to stop. How does that feel. It's how guilt can feel at times, mounting pressure, building to a breaking point. It's how Jesus work on earth must have felt. Mounting pressure, daily attacks and temptations, culminating with his betrayal, denial, torture and death. Until he spoke the words tetelestai. You can release the weight.

And consider the weight off Jesus shoulders. It meant his hard work was over. You ever have a job that worked you to the point of extreme physical exhaustion? I remember 12 hour shifts at a butter factory, and doing roof work in the heat of Orlando sun. When I heard tetelestai - it's finished. Punched the clock, left - there was glorious relief. It was incredible. I would go home and flop on the bed, or in Orlando reward myself with a Slurpee on the way home. On a scale 1000 times grander was this proclamation of Jesus. See his whole life's work was done. He was done living perfectly in our place. He was done with his suffering, his betrayal, his humiliation. Done being forsaken. Tetelestai speaks of a work that is done.

And just as done is the weight of guilt off our backs. The mounting pressure of what was in our distant or not so distant past. I love the imagery from the prophet who said, "(You) hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:19. So God today has hurled the weight away. Guilt is no more, guilt is gone. He's thrown it away further than I can throw this weight. Yes it's good for us to be real with our sin, but we should be real with what God did to our sin. May the Spirit give you the glorious release because of Jesus finished work.

But there is more we are free from shame. In the mail the other day I received this glorious letter. Does anyone know what it is. It is the title to our car the prius. All mine baby, glorious red gas-saver, no longer the banks. This title was a sign that the car is paid for. Do you know tetelestai speaks of a finished payment.

You see there had to be a payment for sin. And it is something you and I could never pay. The debt of sin was way to great for a good deed to make up for it, for failing human attempts. No only the sinless Son of God could make the payment by his blood. But he did. And what he leaves us is a title. This title is printed on the back of your outline. It's the title for your forgiveness. And you use it every time the devil, the accuser comes around pointing his shame finger. Every time he tries to convince you you could never be loved because you are too unlovely, every time he tries to remind you how awful you've been. You use this title to remind him you are redeemed. You use this title to remind yourself who you are in the present. You are a child of God washed clean of all sin. Beautiful in his sight. His Bride.

I was reading a book explaining of how beautiful we will be in the world without sin. That future reality. It was a book called the Divine Romance. Talking about God's love for his bride the church, and about us who believe it said, "What you have seen...that girl...perfect...radiating the full riches of my life...that is what I always see." Even right now he see us beautiful free of guilt and shame. Yes there is a fullness that will be someday, but a reality right now as the bride of God. This is yours, and nothing can change that because tetelestai. How does the knowledge of the future affect our present? I hope it leads to overwhelming peace!

But there's more. I've been watching a bit of the March Madness, and has anyone heard how the Wisconsin Badgers did? They lost to Florida by a buzzer beater. And everyone likes a buzzer beater to win the game - that except the losing team. Like where is the silver lining in that? I know most coaches in the interviews talk about the hope for next season, or the progress they made - but really? It's not good news, and there isn't much of a silver lining. You thought you were going to win, but you lost, out done.

I bring this up because because life is like this sometimes. It's a struggle. You think things are going a certain way, and then a moment brings them a different way. And sometimes it's so bad it's hard to speak of a silver lining for the circumstance. I'm amazed at how much

struggle there is in the world. Struggle for health, struggle for emotional stability, struggle for things to go well at work and family. And if you're struggling today for whatever reason, I just want to remind you that you are not alone. Sin brought consummate struggle to this messed up world. I know that's not uplifting, but it's real.

And we are not the first to struggle. Consider the whole of Jesus' life. Rejected, misunderstood, tried, tested, until crucified. Consider the lives of the disciples - most of who died a martyr's death. In fact I was recently reading about Saul who turned to be Paul, and I was re-reading his conversion story. He had rejected Jesus, until Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. And Jesus commissions him to spread the good news, but one line stood out to me. It was the line that said, "I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." (Acts 9:16) Kind of an erie line isn't it. To take it further I was reading a Bible scholar who said, "The nearer Christ, the nearer the cross, and the heavier our afflictions." (Zeisius)

And so Paul endured, stonings, floggings, imprisonment. And so we are familiar with the struggle. But, but. Paul is the same one who said, "We are hard pressed on every side, **but not** crushed; perplexed, **but not** in despair, persecuted, **but not** abandoned; struck down, **but not** destroyed." (2 Cor 4:7) I got to tell you sometime about the greek here. In greek there are two words for but, de and alla, one - de - a small but implied transition. The other but is the hold the phone, pause, major swing coming here. What Paul uses here is the alla, or the big but. Like hold the phone on the struggle, there is a but that got in the way. In view of this, some one needed to remind you, you may be in the struggle but you are not defeated. You may have had down days, but you will be uplifted. You may wonder how it gets better, but I promise you it does. See I have this gift to see into your future and my future because Jesus proclaimed it is finished!! It is finished friends! And some day - so will the struggle. I've come to tell you. *You may be down, but you are not defeated.*

I was reading another author on this same thought, and he said, "I can't promise that you will have exactly the kind of victory you want in this life (though it may be more possible than you think!). But I can definitely tell you that, if you are traveling through this life with Jesus, then in one way or another, at one time or another, all your defeats will be overwhelmed in Christ's victory." (Steven Furtick)

Knowing what we know about the future, affects our perception of the struggle. And knowing what we know about the future should also affect our purposes. Kind of like Amy Adams, will she or won't she pursue the relationship with the guy, knowing what she knows.

I go to the gym and the book Body for Life came up once or twice. It is a good book - I would recommend it. I have read it, but gave it another read. And I remember reading the great incentive one man gave to become in shape. He gave a 12 week timeline, and the one who followed the program and got in the best shape would receive his red lamborghini. I was reading online and they have offered it again, and here is the same red lamborghini. They gave it away in 2016. But man what an incredible incentive to get into shape, to follow through the 12 weeks. I don't know about you, but I would work out for a red Lambo.

Has not God given us an even greater incentive by saying "It Is Finished." He has said that for eternity we live with him in victory. We know we will receive the crown of life. And so I believe it shapes what we do now. It shaped what Paul was all about. Look what he said, "24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a

way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.” (1 Cor 9:24-26)

But these words are convicting aren't they. Because how many of us are guilty of being aimless even though God has determined and defined our destiny? Are there any aimless pursuits in your life right now, things you're running after not informed by what is coming. How many of us are just running after momentary pleasures. Trying to stack up experience after experience to be happy as if those experiences and momentary pleasure were the end all and be all. How many running after possessions. I was reminded this week just how much time you can invest in taking care of a house investigating a water softener, or running your household. How much running after earthly accolades and rewards. As if that were the finish line. And it isn't. And it's not that pleasure, possessions, and prizes are bad. It's just that there not the main prize. And pursuing those things over a pursuit for God and his will can keep us from what is coming. So what we want to run from today, is the sin of pursuing other things more than we pursue God. For he told us to love him, with all our heart, all of our soul, and all of our strength.

And look again at the culmination of Jesus life on the cross. This was not aimless, but intentional. This day had been awaited by him for years. This day's purpose was to win you and I. And on this day he crosses the finish line of his struggle. If he was aimless he would have come down, if he was aimless he'd have run, but because he was intentional he won. Because he was intentional we win, and we stand in grace knowing we are forgiven. Forgiven of our aimlessness.

So I was thinking how does this now speak to us, and I believe we should in light of what is coming, *replace the aimless with the intentional*. If we know what is coming it sets the tone of purpose for our church. We are not aimlessly worshiping and gathering and inviting people in. No, our church, the church is a lifeboat in the midst of a world going down. It's the ark amidst the flood. As we work together me as pastor and you as church we are not aimless. We're on a mission to get as many people safe with in the lifeboat as possible, that they may know the rescuer Jesus. When we work outside here, we do it with purpose. To give God glory, that others may see our good deeds, and they might be winsome and want to know Jesus the fuel for our passion. It informs raising the next generation who I could honestly care less, how smart they are, how successful they are, and even how good they are at adulting. Because my main concern is that they find their place safely in this lifeboat in the world that is going down.

Amy Adams was going to make the decision to pursue the relationship knowing what was going to happen. The knowledge of what was coming gave her intentionality. How much more are we. Knowing the victory coming going to be intentional about our day to day activity. Oh may God bless us! And may we be so thankful that he has overcome, and that it is finished. Amen.