

The season of **Lent** began on Wednesday February 26<sup>th</sup> (commonly known as ash Wednesday) and continues on through April 11<sup>th</sup> and then on April 12<sup>th</sup> we will celebrate the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Most don't realize that in the season of lent you do not count Sunday as part of the 40 days — if you did you'd have 45 days of lent, just a side note.

Today we begin our lenten series, so given that ash Wednesday was February 26<sup>th</sup>, we are a little late, but that shouldn't surprise anybody we are Armenians and are usually late to everything. And during lent we'd begin a series on the seven last words of Christ, or at least some of them since we only spending four weeks on it, and we've started late. What has been assigned to me to preach the first sermon in that series from **John chapter 19, verses 28-30 Page 1135**. Where Jesus says from the cross, **I am thirsty**, hope I didn't spoil that for anyone.

How many of us know what the 7 last words of Jesus are?

1. **"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."** — Luke 23:34 ESV
2. "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." — Luke 23:43 ESV
3. "Woman, behold, your son!" — John 19:26 ESV
4. "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" — Matthew 27:46 ESV
5. "I thirst." — John 19:28 ESV
6. "It is finished," John 19:30 ESV
7. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" — Luke 23:46 ESV

Please take notice that we are **STARTING** with the **FIFTH** of the Seven Last Words of Christ. (pause)

Let me say again, our text is taken from the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of **John's** gospel, and it would seem important to sketch out, minimally the crucifixion narrative as it appears in John's gospel: John has a lot recorded that is not in the other gospels, be it the high priestly prayer, or the washing of the disciples feet, we're not going to really touch on those, for the purpose of brevity we begin with Jesus arrest in the garden; from there he is taken and questioned by the high priest; then handed over to Pilate for the purpose of corporal punishment. Pilate questions him and has mixed feelings about what is happening but eventually has Jesus flogged, hoping to appease the Jews. The soldiers will mock him, put a crown of thorns upon his head, and in an act of contempt put a purple robe, a royal robe upon him — which would have congealed with the blood from the flogging, so that when they eventually remove it his wounds would tear open again. In this state of humiliation he is brought before the Jewish leaders and people, only to have them cry "crucify him, crucify him" Pilate still has mixed feelings about this, but eventually acquiesces and delivers him over to be crucified. While upon the cross, the soldiers cast lots or throw dice for Jesus clothes. From the cross, he enlists the disciple whom he loved to care for his mother — which ties in the **third of the seven** last sayings of Christ, and leads into our text for the morning.

If we were thinking of the crucifixion event as John records it in terms of "movements" or "episodes", our text for this morning would mark the third movement in Jesus crucifixion; the **first being the soldiers dividing up the garments**, and the prophetic fulfillment therein; the **second** his entrusting his mother to the beloved disciple, and thus having provided for her we come to our text. Let us read:

**Read John 19:28-30**

After this or some translations have, Later — that how this episode begins, which if one has a linear mind when it comes to narratives, you're likely to ask, "How long after this, how much later?" And in truth we don't know — but it is likely some hours.

What is by far more curious is John's use of the word "**knowing**". What makes it curious is that a crucifixion is taking place, the experience is one of pain, agony and humiliation — it's a sensory and emotional scene, not one where Jesus is telling a parable or questioning his opponents in order to get them to think and teach them something, and yet, John uses a word of cognition, a word that involves the process of thought — "knowing". John is about to tell us that Jesus is thirsty, but what takes priority concerns what Jesus knows?

And it's not even that John writes, Jesus knowing he's dehydrated says from the cross, I'm thirsty. No, there is something else that Jesus is cognitively aware of during this moment of agonizing painful humiliation. What is it that Jesus knows? That it is finished. Back to that in a moment

Here is something to be aware of the word "know" is repeated over and over throughout the gospel according to John, we are constantly bumping up against that word Here is a small sampling:

(**There is another** who bears witness about me, and I **know** that the testimony that he bears about me is true. John 5:32 ESV)

(**Lifting up his eyes**, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself **knew** what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." John 6:5–7 ESV)

(**So Jesus proclaimed**, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I **know** him, for I come from him, and he sent me." So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. John 7:28–30 ESV)

But more importantly for our purposes are these next three text and please take notice of how this first one is connected to the previous one:

(**Now** before the Feast of the Passover, when *Jesus knew* that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. John 13:1 ESV)

Then dropping down to verse 3:

(*Jesus, knowing* that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin John 13:3–5 ESV)

When one combines divine foreknowledge concerning his own crucifixion from 13:1 in the previous slide, with the knowledge that the father has given him dominion over all things here in verses 3-5 — it's quite shocking that Jesus washes the disciples feet. We tend to use power

to bring others into submission, Jesus uses power here to serve others. And this functionally amplifies what John records about Jesus having loved “his own” to the end.

Then in chapter 18 during his arrest we have:

(Then Jesus, *knowing* all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am he.” John 18:4–5 ESV)

Collectively these three/four texts (and they are not the only ones) are meant to create a sense of anticipation regarding the *hour*, as Jesus draws closer and closer to the cross — then, upon the cross, Jesus *knows* that what was anticipated is now “finished” or more precisely that it is brought to completion. But more, in this grizzly act of barbarism, Jesus humanity expressed in his thirst and divinity, expressed by his knowledge of what is being accomplished, come together — Jesus physically dies, as a condemned man; *but* he knows that the crucifixion is the focus point of his life, this was the reason for which he came, Jesus knew this hour, his hour was coming.

Jesus doesn’t die as some accident of history; Neither Jesus nor God the father are caught off guard by what’s happening. God isn’t saying to himself, “Well, I guess I better figure out a way to make something good out this cross thing, turn that frown upside down. No, Jesus was well aware that the cross lay in his future, he spoke of it often, that is what brought him agony in the garden and why he prays that the cup to be removed from him. And we did it to him.

What makes the moment pregnant is the word that we translate finished, or as I said earlier, ‘brought to completion’ — scholars note that when that word is used in religious contexts, it has the sense of fulfilling one’s religious obligations. Thus, when John notes that Jesus knew that all was now finished — he is indicating that at the cross, **Jesus had fulfilled the religious purposes and obligations for which he came.** “Jesus knowing that all was now finished...” And this is emphasized by the repetition when Jesus eventually verbalizes what he knows, v. 30, it is finished — thus we hear it once from the author, and once from the lips of our savior. But I’m sure Nerses will cover that more when he speaks on the sixth of the seven last words of Jesus.

Moving on, *parenthetically*, John notes that when Jesus says he’s thirsty, it was to fulfill scripture. Which seems a bit strange, Jesus being thirsty fulfills scripture? I’m sure he had been thirsty before this, did that fulfill scripture too? It’s an odd comment by John.

To get around that rather difficult comment, some have proposed that the phrase be translated, **Jesus, knowing that all things** had been accomplished in order to fulfill Scripture, said “I thirst” — taking the whole idea of what is being finished is the fulfillment of scripture. And while that makes the text easier to understand, that is not what is being said, in fact no major translation of scripture that understands the passage in that manner, I looked through about 6 or 7 different translations every one treats Jesus statement of being thirsty as the fulfillment of scripture, just as in the ESV and the NIV do —

**After** this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” John 19:28 ESV

“Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” John 19:28 NIV11

So then the question becomes how does Jesus being thirsty fulfill scripture? And what scripture is being fulfilled? As much as surveying all the possibilities would be like a trip to Disney World, we are not going to survey all the possibilities, instead we will pursue the two most likely.

You will recall that among the seven last words of Jesus were these words: “**My God**, my God, why have you forsaken me?” — Matthew 27:46 ESV Here Jesus is reciting the opening words of Psalm 22. Within that same **psalm** people throw dice or cast lots for the clothes of this person forsaken by God — something that John records as having happened to Jesus. So given two references to Psalm 22 it shouldn't surprise us to also find these words: **my strength is dried up like a potsherd**, (crucifixion will do that to you) **and my tongue sticks to my jaws; Psalm 22:15 ESV** In other words, I'm thirsty. If the scripture that John has in mind that is being fulfilled is from Psalm 22, then Jesus thirst is an extension or picture of Jesus dereliction or abandonment upon the cross. **His thirst** is a picture of his forsakenness!

And if his thirst is a picture of his forsakenness, then there is quite a bit of irony taking place, because the inference is that his thirst is not simply physical, but spiritual, the sufferer is forsaken by God. Thus, if Jesus thirst has a spiritual element to it, we begin to see the irony for within John's gospel we have at least two episodes of Jesus responding to the thirst of those who are spiritually thirsty. The Samaritan woman of John 4 being the first,

Jesus said to her, “**Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.**” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” John 4:13–15 ESV

Jesus is responding to the spiritual thirst of this woman.

But additionally, in John 7:37 Jesus on the last day of the feast of booths declares “**If anyone thirsts**, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” John 7:37–38 ESV

The one who offered to quench the thirst of others, is now hanging from a cross, thirsty. He saved others why doesn't he save himself?

Psalm 22:15, My strength is dried up, my tongue sticks to my jaws — it is quite possible that this is the text John has in mind that is being fulfilled.

But there is another possibility — in Psalm 69 David records these words: **They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. Psalm 69:21 ESV**

But if these are the words John has in mind, in what sense are they being fulfilled? While psalm 69 seems to be tapping into the events of John 19 more directly than Psalm 22, what would it mean for it to be fulfilled — because there are many things within that psalm are not resonant with what is taking place, for example Jesus wasn't given any poison food; nor like the psalmist, does he cry out for vengeance, which is what follows in the very next verse of psalm 69. If the fulfillment is that of Psalm 69, how then is this word being fulfilled?

This gets into a very long discussion about the various ways in which the New Testament authors speak of fulfillment — whereas we tend to always think of fulfillment as predictive, I see a handsome young man in your future; New Testament authors were not quite so wooden in their concept of fulfillment. And if you want to get a better hand on some of this I commit to

your reading the commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, the introduction is enough to open up ones understanding of scripture. That having been said, if psalm 69 is what John had in mind — we are likely to connect with the overall, big picture, theme of the psalm, that being the cries of the one who suffers unjustly. Thus the fulfillment lies in how the theme in scripture is played out in both the palm and in the crucifixion of Jesus — we apply our understanding of Jesus through the theme of the one who suffers unjustly, ultimately he becomes the sacrificial lamb dying unjustly in our place. He cries for relief, and instead he gets sour wine.

The righteous one suffers — and in his suffering his religious obligation is brought to completion, Jesus knows that it is the cross and his suffering upon the cross that accomplishes this and thus in the cross of Christ, God's wrath against our sin displayed. The sacrifice for our sin being brought to completion.

Lent — beginning with Ash Wednesday is meant to be a time of devotion, of prayer, fasting, self-examination and confession.

For as the songwriter says: "It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished.