

# The St. John's Pulpit

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## WHAT IS YOUR IT?

Gospel of John 19:29-30

Sermon 6 of 7 in Lenten Series

“Seven Words for Everyday: Jesus’ Words from the Cross Empower Us for Everyday Living”

Sunday, April 9, 2017 – Sixth Sunday during Lent; Palm/Passion Sunday

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When I was a child, my mother taught me how to clean my room. To check on me, she walked by my door and often found me sorting through my baseball cards. She would look at my room and ask, “*Do you think you’re finished?*” I wish I had known then that I was multi-tasking.

We all multi-task. And, because we multi-task, we often fail to celebrate finishing well. Of course, last Monday night, 55,000 Tar Heel fans celebrated finishing well on Franklin Street, in Chapel Hill. But, when you finish mowing the yard, there are still other tasks to finish. Although you finish cleaning the house, six other tasks are on your ‘To do list.’ I visited one of our members at work last week and he said before he finished one project, six others had been added to his list. I no longer have a ‘To do list;’ I have a ‘Never going to get done with list.’

When a person is approaching the end of their life, they become more reflective. They often give attention to those persons, interests or details which they have – or feel as though they have – neglected. Even when someone is confronted with mortality, through a diagnosis or a health crisis, they can become more focused on relationships and commitments they value most. Countless times I have ministered to persons who are taking an inventory of their life and listened to them walk through memories of meaning while asking, “*What am I leaving unfinished?*”

Some of Jesus’ final words were, “*It is finished!*” What was finished? His life? His ministry? His suffering? His obedience to God? His sacrificial death? Was this an exclamation of triumph or tragedy? Had Jesus achieved the completion of everything on his messianic ‘To do list?’ Was the world now entirely whole? Did the fullness of humanity now understand the nature, character and mission of The Living God to be Love? Had he taught his disciples all they could learn? Was Jesus’ truly finished; if so, shouldn’t his closest followers and friends have understood his purpose better? Jesus said, “*It is finished.*” What was ‘It’ for Jesus? What had he finished?

## **CONSIDER JESUS’ UNDERSTANDING OF HIS LIFE.**

A. Jesus introduced his ministry with words from Isaiah, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. (Check) He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives (Check) and recovery of sight to the blind, (Check) to let the oppressed go free, (Check) to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor*” (Check). Jesus had finished what he came to do.

- B. One day, as people complained that Jesus was giving his time to serve the wealthy tax collector, Zacchaeus, Jesus responded, I have *“come to seek and to save the lost.”* Over and over and over again, Jesus did just that; he finished what he came to do.
- C. Jesus came as a teacher about the ways of God. He called disciples to follow him, to learn of him and to obey him. For three years, Jesus taught them and incarnated God’s ways; he finished what he came to do.
- D. Jesus came to nurture his followers to be a community of loving one another. At their last meal prior to his death, Jesus gave them the eleventh commandment, a mandate to *“love one another.”* He said their love for one another would be the defining characteristic that they were his disciples. Jesus had finished what he came to do.
- E. On one occasion, Jesus said, *“I came into this world for judgment...”* He said this so the Pharisees would hear him. Jesus came so people would understand there is a choice – a judgment to make – as to whether a person will open their lives to the Spirit of The Living God or not. Many times, Jesus explained the implications and repercussions of this choice. Jesus had finished what he came to do.
- F. Jesus said, *“I came into the world to serve, not to be served, and to give my life as a ransom for many.”* Many times over, Jesus took on the role of the servant and he gave of himself so that others could be freed from their bondage to self-centeredness, sin, shame, guilt, oppression, and on and on. Jesus had finished what he came to do.
- G. Jesus came to reveal the Truth about The Living God and God’s kingdom of love. When Jesus appeared before Pilate, he said that he came to reveal a kingdom not of this world. Then, Jesus said, *“For this reason I was born and for this reason I came into the world, to testify to the Truth.”* Jesus had testified to the Truth about The Living God and God’s kingdom of love.  
**Jesus committed his life to love God and neighbor and had finished what he came to do.**

### **CONSIDER YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR LIFE.**

Why are you here? What is your purpose? As you multi-task your way through life, what is your ‘IT?’ Is your ‘IT’ to be a disciple of Jesus? At the end of your life, do you want people to make a list of good characteristics about you because the primary thing about you is that you are an obedient learner of Jesus? Be careful that your Christian discipleship is not merely one thing on your ‘To do list.’

Beloved, if your ‘IT’ is Christ-centered discipleship, then you will be maturing in the teachings and life practices of Jesus; they will shape and form every dimension of your life. Jesus didn’t make discipleship one of several commitments for your life. Jesus taught that your desires, thoughts, attitudes, choices, words, actions, habits, relationships, stewardship, etc. will all reflect your love of the Lord your God and your love for your neighbor. When your ‘IT’ is Christ-centered discipleship, you invest your life in humility, generosity, prayer, commitment to the will of God, investment in the mission of God, being attentive to the needs of others, nurturing a

loving community, sacrifice, service, teaching others to observe Jesus' teachings, forgiveness, reconciliation, redemption, welcoming the outsider, embracing those who are refused by organized religion, and offering a joyful witness in the world by reflecting the light of the humble Jesus whenever and wherever darkness shows up.

This morning, think of those persons who have influenced you the most as to the meaning of loving God by being a follower of the way of Jesus. They did not or do not 'fit' discipleship into their busy schedules. They are Christian disciples. Write down a few sentences that describe how Christian discipleship is or was their 'IT.' I promise you that when these persons approach the end of life, they consider their Christian discipleship and say, "*IT is finished.*" May this phrase be among your last words so you can celebrate finishing well! Amen and AMEN!