

Grace and peace to you from God Our Father and from the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Jesus our Sacred Head, amen.

It is finished... *Telestai* in the Greek literally means paid in full. Besides here in the Bible, that word is found written on shards of pottery used by the ancients as proof of purchase like we use receipts for goods and services that we purchase today. When Jesus said the word *Telestai*, he wasn't saying I give up on this life... I'm a goner. It's more like Jesus was saying, "With this last breath, as I give up my spirit to death, I have paid the debt for all sin for all time." It's like that feeling you get when you can finally tear up the sales contract after paying off your 30-year mortgage or when you've made the last car payment and it's finally all yours. Once that last payment has been sent in you're finally free. With Jesus' final breath all humankind is finally free from the age-old debt we owed because of our sin. Jesus paid the bill in full.

I know, last night I said Jesus was the Passover Lamb allowing the angel of death to pass us over and grant us eternal life and now I'm saying Jesus is the Sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Well, guess what, it doesn't have to be either or. In the Bible we have four Gospels and each one tells the story in its own unique way. God inspired all four Gospel writers so that we could get all four pictures of Jesus and four separate accounts of God's great act of salvation. It doesn't mean one Gospel is right and another wrong. We have the

Bible God intends for us to have. It's like looking at a diamond from different angles. We get to see the sparkle of our diamond, Jesus, from at least four different perspectives.

I find it hard to even speak about the luster of a diamond on such a grief stricken and somber day. Images of Jesus beaten to a pulp, bloodied from the cruel flogging with his blood oozing down his face and back mixed with the spittle from the soldiers who spat on him as they mocked him. We sang about his sacred head now wounded by the crown of thorns pushed down into his scalp. I don't know if any of you have ever had a cut on your head, but I can tell you they bleed profusely. By the time Jesus got to Golgotha, he was barely recognizable as a human, let alone as the King of anything...

I remember when the movie, The Passion of the Christ came out several years ago. There was a controversy about showing all the blood and gore. That was the first time I ever really understood just how cruel his punishment really was. Then I imagine his mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved standing at the foot of the cross watching the life slowly ebb from his broken and battered body. The horror of Mother Mary watching her son die, while the religious leaders, the soldiers, and some of the crowd continue to mock him. The sheer humiliation of this man who only wanted to do good for others is the result of human sin.

This scene that we just read and sang about, all the beatings, the flogging, and the dying, was brought on by our sin. That's what it looks like when the sin of the entire world is heaped onto one man. Pretty grotesque, isn't it? That's the price for our sin...

I heard the testimony of the blacksmith who fashioned the nails the soldiers used to hang Jesus on that cross. I don't know how many of you watched that video we made a couple of weeks ago, but in that testimony the Blacksmith said he was saddened because he didn't think Jesus deserved such treatment. Well my friends, the Blacksmith got it right, Jesus was surely innocent, but we were not. And to the Blacksmith I would say this. Please don't be saddened because you made the nails. It wasn't the nails that held Jesus onto that cross. He could have called to God and the entire heavenly hosts, including all the angels and archangels would have come down and rescued Jesus in a New York minute. If He had only asked... But He Did Not! It wasn't the nails that held the Son of God to that cross. No Sir it wasn't the nails—It was his love for you that held him there. Jesus knew his life was the price that was owed for our sin and He was not going to back down until the last breath was paid in full. *Telestai...*

Why would God go through all of that for the likes of me, and you? The God who had no beginning and has no end chose to set aside heavenly riches and glory to become human and suffer for us. Why and how it all works we're no

more capable of understanding than your dog can understand trigonometry. You can explain the formulas, show charts and graphs and read definitions all day long, but at the end of the day, your dog won't understand trig any more than when you started. That's where we stand in relation to the universe and the wisdom of God.

Given that Jesus' death somehow paid for my sin in advance, what can I do now, but grieve and love Him all the more. May the precious life of Jesus, given for you and for me be the source of our hope and faith. May we return the love He showed for us on this Good Friday by loving God and loving God's creation. May we all be overcome by God's love so that hatred and oppression give way to peace and brotherhood of all humankind. Thanks be to God that Jesus was willing and able to pay the price for our salvation in full on a hill called Calvary. *Telestai...*
Amen.