

All Things Ended

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[0 : 00] It was finished, he said. But what was? The clouds were hanging limp in the sky like those wisps of smoke that clogged the lungs after a fire has burned itself out.

! Tear-stained faces watched a man displayed, his torn body nailed to a tree. That was itself torn from the ground and weeping over its own foul fate.

His face was contorted with pain as his laboured breathing slowed. Blood from a hundred tiny wounds staining the wood he leant against.

The wood was fading to thoughtful silence as they watched this man die.

There was something of strange dignity in it that spoke to the soul. His mouth twisted in an effort to open and utter a hoarse whisper that the wind caught.

[1 : 42] It almost didn't catch their ears, muffled by the dying of other men and the clamour of the silence of the watching crowds. It is finished!

He whispered and bowed his head and died. That whisper was the loudest thing they had ever heard.

It is finished! Some scoffed at the noble understatement, assuming the man in his strange gentle vigour was referring to his attempt to reshape Judea in his own image, referring to his life.

It was indeed finished! And what an ignoble end to this wandering preacher! Another backwards prophet had found his grave.

Yet, as the women who loved him and his greatest friend in the world listened to the words, It is finished! Something rumbled in their guts.

[2 : 48] What was finished? More than they knew for now, but grief-stricken hearts would give to theological reflection in time. Of course, it helped that he came back to tell them.

It is finished! But what was finished? It is finished! Have you noticed that the darkness always seems to beat the light?

That the sun rises slower as the years pass, that hope is hard to find? There hung that day a darkness deeper than the longest watch of the night, as though all light had been extinguished and a gritty veil was placed across every eye.

Could we ever hope again? Each moment was shadowed, the hills never again rimmed with eastern fire, every dawn falls.

It is finished! He mumbles from swollen lips. The light will blind the darkness. Hopelessness ends.

[4 : 02] Have you noticed that we cannot give ourselves, get ourselves to God? That we're exiled forever from the garden where he walked with a man and a woman in the cool of the day.

That day, the cherubim stood at the garden's gates, heads wearily bowed, flaming sword held aloft by those whose wings burned with fire.

Those angels had long stood to keep all who would attempt it from ascending the hill, from the garden, from that most holy place among the trees.

Entry is rare and dangerous for all who attempt it. It is finished! It is finished! It is finished! He gasps from bloodied lips.

The guardians put up their swords. The curtain that they were woven on is torn in two. Exile ends. It is finished! It is finished!

[5 : 03] It is finished! Have you noticed that the work is endless and cursed? That we are caught in a trap of labour we cannot get out of, and have been since our father and mother left the garden?

Each day is a grind like the millstone across the kernel of corn. day after day a labour reduces the husk that remains of life to a powder blown away on the wind that Friday long ago all those momentary joys that make hard days endurable the brief lifting of burdens all those sure and certain brightnesses that relieved the drudgery of a world where enslaved princes make bricks from straw

that Friday all those joys fled to leave a world to turn in endless toil it is finished he growls from weary lips and the powder of so much living is baked into bread the curse ends have you noticed that we can't choose to do good but however hard we push ourselves we end up doing exactly what we know deep down is terrible for us that we're trapped chains binding our emaciated arms that trying to do the good requires us to pull the weight of a thousand temptations and myriad failed attempts to live righteous lives we cannot move we cannot act we cannot hope for our arms and hearts and minds are locked in a prison of our own foolishness we are weighed by guilt weighed by shame and weighed by the burdens of the law's demands it is finished he spits from cracked lips chains break shame is shamed guilt guilting and law read its rights sin shatters under the weight of righteousness our imprisonment ends have you noticed that life lacks meaning that we do the same things over and over and over as though that will change something.

That our days are dank with the stench of the swamps in which we dwell. We struggle, we suffer, we die. Not a jot of it carries significance.

There is no purpose to our pain or meaning to our misery. Our lives are nasty, brutish and short, and the heavens are as uncaring as the sea.

We are treated to the blank stare of cold, unfeeling stars until we simply stop looking. It is finished, he calls from twisted lips.

[8 : 24] There are no more meaningless actions, and a reckoning is coming where everything sad will come untrue. Meaninglessness ends.

Have you noticed that there is a slithering enemy that hates us and wants us to die? The curse that the dust was entrusted to speak was hurled against every woman, every man, every day that they lived.

It says thorns will crowd your dreams, thistles will choke your hopes, pain will wrack your bodies as you strive to work.

The dust spoke in horror and its own words as a serpent slithered by. That slithering snake snapped his teeth at every foot he found.

It is finished. That man on the tree rumbles from angry lips, and a bruised heel came down.

[9 : 30] That serpent ends. Have you noticed that however good things are, they end in death? The inevitable end of every life is to be pushed into the earth, into the cold embrace of soil, to be returned to our mother in the ground.

But our foolish attempts to beautify the brutal do not convince our hearts. Death is wrong. It is final. It cannot be overturned.

It has the last word. It is finished, he shouts. And the earth shakes at the sound, for the Christ has conquered death, and he has the last word.

All of our enemies end. Then as our last enemy is trampled to death, the rumble under his words continues to shake, and all the pillars come tumbling down.

Everything is our mate. There, on the sixth day, the last day of the making week, he says, it is finished. And creation was.

[10 : 56] Until he made it anew on the third day. Hopelessness, finished. Meaninglessness, finished.

The curse, finished. Sin, finished. Guilt, finished. Shame, finished. Exile ends.

The enemy, ends. Death dies in the death of Christ. And old creation ends. It was the end of all things.

Thanks be to God.