

Good Friday  
St. John 19:30

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

It is finished!  
What comfort for all suffering souls!  
The night of sorrow now reaches its final hours.  
The hero from Judah triumphs in his might and brings the strife to an  
end.  
It is finished!

Such is the beautiful alto aria penned by JS Bach in his St. John Passion. As the choir sings through St. John's Passion narrative, as you just heard it read, Jesus has been crucified, and the end had come. The salvation of mankind accomplished, Jesus speaks His last words—His second-last word as they are collected from the various Gospels—"It is finished!" With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. He breathed His last and died.

As the Kantor from St. Thomas Church in Leipzig put it, "What comfort for all suffering souls!" Jesus proclaimed victory and died, and this is for your comfort. And for more than your comfort, the victory which He won was over your sin, your death, and the devil.

It's a tear-inducing sight...gruesome and traumatic. The Son of God had died after being brutally tortured. He died because of you. That should have been you that was beaten to within an inch of your life. That should have been you nailed to the cross and suffering on there—struggling to breathe as you deal with the pain of the nails through your hands and feet and the stripes on your back rubbing against the rough wood. That should have been you who died. You're the sinner, not the Man who died there. As the one thief said to the other, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." (Luke 23:40-41)

So, yes, weep, dear hearers. Weep at the brutality of it all. Weep at the exchange that has taken place. But, as He has bid you (cf. Luke 23:28), do not weep for the Man who dies in your place.

In the first place, He assumed your place on the cross willingly. He went to your death in your place out of a desire for you, that you would not die and suffer for your sins. Why? Because if you had, you would remain dead and eternally separated from Him and His Father. God would not have that, as the prophet Ezekiel exclaimed. (cf. Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11) So, if He would not have you die eternally, then He who is eternal needed to die in your place.

In the second place, since He who died in your place is eternal, His death was only temporary. Yes, what you heard tonight is not the end of the story. In fact, the end of the story hasn't even been completely revealed, though God certainly knows what it is. No, a mere three days after the events of the Passion you heard, the new tomb He was laid in would be devoid of a body, only the burial cloths remaining. And this Jesus, the Hero of Judah who proclaimed victory when He said, "It is finished," would appear to His disciples and the women and many others, fully alive, in His own body, still bearing the marks of His Passion—the scars of the victorious battle, the stripes by which you are healed.

So, again, weep, dear hearers. Weep at the brutality of it all. Weep at the exchange that has taken place. But, now, in light of the ultimate end of the story, do not weep for yourselves.

Certainly, it is enough to think that you ought to weep because it should be you who died on the cross, but you can rejoice because it wasn't. Jesus willingly took your place so that you would not have to, so that you would be in Him the righteousness of God, so that you would live, so that your death would not be eternal death, but that after death, you would have eternal life in Him. Jesus died

and rose again, therefore you will not die, but live, and after death, rise to life eternal. Rejoice and be comforted.

Rejoice and be comforted because the end of what you see depicted before you is the forgiveness of all of your sins. He bore your sins, you no longer do; He died, you live. He bore the full wrath of God; you who are in Christ do not—you are forgiven for all of your sins.

Your soul's suffering is ended. Sure, there is still torment as you grieve over the sinfulness you still struggle with on this side of eternity, but there is joy and comfort in knowing that the victory over these things is won. Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. The Hero of Judah has triumphed in His might—the might of His blood of propitiation—and ended the strife. The night of sorrow is over, and you have comfort for the sake of Jesus Christ.

It is finished!

What comfort for all suffering souls!

The night of sorrow now reaches its final hours.

The hero from Judah triumphs in his might and brings the strife to an end.

It is finished!

Do not weep, but rejoice and be comforted. It is finished!

In the name of Jesus. Amen.