

It is Finished!



Isaiah 53:1-6 1 Cor 15:1-11 John 19:28-30

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Lent is an old English word for “*springtime*”, and has roots into German that mean the “*lengthening of days*” --- a reference to daylight increasing as you leave winter and move into spring.

In Church usage, **Lent** is the 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday¹. These 40 days are preparation for Holy Week – culminating in Good Friday and Easter Sunday. These 40 days are humble, sacrificial, and penitential², as we remember **our GREAT SIN**, and **the Lord’s greater mercy** in saving us through His Son Jesus. In public worship, the penitential character of **Lent** is seen in the purple color on the Altar, and the intentional omission of the word “Alleluia³” in public worship.

¹ Sundays are not counted as days of Lent, they are counted as days in Lent, because they are not penitential, but days of celebration because of the Resurrection.

² **Q:** Do Lutherans have to give up something for Lent as some other denominations require?

A. From the perspective of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, “giving something up for Lent” is entirely a matter of Christian freedom. It would be wrong, from our perspective, for the church to make some sort of “law” requiring its members to “give something up for Lent,” since the Scriptures themselves do not require this. If, on the other hand, a Christian wants to give something up for Lent as a way of remembering and personalizing the great sacrifice that Christ made on the cross for our sins, then that Christian is certainly free to do so—as long as he or she does not “judge” or “look down on” other Christians who do not choose to do this.

<https://www.immanueljoplin.com/2024/02/what-is-lent/>

³ In this context, “Alleluia” – which means “praise the Lord” – is considered the loftiest and most joyful word we use as Christians; therefore we “give it up” during Lent as a sign of sorrow and repentance. The hymn “Farewell to Alleluia” is the mournful closing song of Ash Wednesday --- as our 40 day journey begins. This stands in marked contrast to the joyful Easter hymns that are full of “Alleluias!!” to mark the tremendous joy of salvation as we celebrate that the Crucified One has risen from the dead!

For our **Lenten** preparation this year, we're going to focus on one of the words that Jesus spoke from the cross. In the original Greek language, it is one word; in English, it is 3 words. Here is how the Gospel of John records it for us:

When He had received the drink, Jesus said, **"It is finished."** With that, He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit. John 19:30

The word that Jesus used is pronounced **τετέλεσται / Tetelestai** --- it is one of the most important words in the New Testament. It means that a debt has been **paid in full**. It is a common Greek word that has been found on countless ancient commercial documents. The idea is the payment has been received; the obligation has been completed.

In this word picture, your sin has caused a **debt** between you and God. Your disobedience, rebellion, and immorality leave you **owing** God something; your **in-debt** to Him, and you **cannot pay**. We might say that you are **"upside down"** with God. The payment for your sin requires your life; and it must be a perfect life. **There is NO WAY** you can **"repay"** God for your sin, rebellion, and immorality.

So Jesus pays your debt for you. *He who knew no sin became sin for us;* He took your place under the debt of your sin and He paid it for you. First, He lived a perfect life, and that perfect life was accepted by God the Father on your behalf. Then He died, and His death was to pay for your sins. Its like Jesus paid a ransom for you; a redemption price which cost Him His very own life.

Remember how Martin Luther says it?

Christ has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death ...

[Small Catechism](#), Martin Luther, Second Article of the Apostles' Creed

It is finished means your debt has been **paid in full**; it's one of the last things Jesus said to signal that everything has been accomplished for your eternal salvation!

In this word picture, the **Resurrection of the Lord Jesus** is seen as God the Father accepting the payment for sin and confirming that your debt has been “**paid in full!**” It truly is *Tetelestai*! **It is finished!**

What's fascinating about this word *Tetelestai* is that it is in the **perfect tense**. The perfect tense means that *it is finished, and it remains finished for all time!* There is a lasting effect to the work. Nothing else is needed. Jesus' work was done once, and for all people. Jesus' work has completely earned your salvation. 100%. Nothing else can be added.

That **perfect tense** is pure grace for you. It reminds you that salvation is Jesus' work alone, and not ours. You cannot add anything to it; not your good works nor your good intentions; neither your money nor prayers. This is a gift given to you; it is not your decision to accept it. *Tetelestai* means *the work of salvation is finished, and it remains finished forever*. Your salvation is secure because it depended on Jesus alone, and never on you or your efforts! The **perfect tense** of this word teaches us that salvation is by grace alone, by faith alone, through CHRIST ALONE!

This word *Tetelestai* reminds us why the cross of Jesus is so very important to us. Jesus' death is the salvation event, it's where your sins have been **paid in full**, *once and for all!* St. Paul says that this is the most important teaching in the Christian faith!

For what I received I passed on to you as of **first importance**: that Christ **died** for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was **buried**, that He was **raised** on the Third Day according to the Scriptures ... 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

As conservative Lutherans, we take these words seriously. This is the **Gospel**: Christ's death, burial, and resurrection that brings us the forgiveness of sins⁴. As Lutherans, we echo Holy Scripture and we publicly confess this:

The **first and chief article** is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification" He alone is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" The Book Of Concord, Smalcald Articles, II.1

The gospel is the center of the Christian faith; it is the content of Christian preaching and teaching; it is the message that we take to the ends of the earth.

When Jesus, the Son of God, hung on the cross He declared, "**It is Finished!**" Forgiveness has been earned; the debt of sin has been paid; the work of salvation is finished, *and it remains finished forever!*

Amen!

⁴ St. Paul is really affirming what Jesus has already taught in the Gospel of Luke: "Jesus told them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the Third Day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His Name to all nations.'" (Luke 24:46-47)

God the Father,
we thank you for sending Your
Son to do the work of salvation for
us. **As we begin our Lenten
journey,** keep us mindful of our sin
and its terrible consequences,
**how it separates us from You and
disrupts our relationships with
others. Humble us, and lead us to
repentance, and true faith in Your
Son Jesus Christ, who on the cross
proclaimed “It is Finished!”**. We
pray in His Name and by the power
of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Isaiah 53:1-6

Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

⁴ Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance^[a]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas,^[b] and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 11 Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

John 19:28-30

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.