

Fifth Sunday of Lent



Fulfillment

"It is finished."

John 19:30

Opening Prayer

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
To reach the end without delay.
We would like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something
Unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress
That it is made by passing through some stages of instability—
And that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you;
Your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
Let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
As though you could be today what time
(That is to say, grace and circumstances
Acting on your own good will)
Will make you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit
Gradually forming within you will be.
Give our Lord the benefit of believing
That his hand is leading you,
And accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
In suspense and incomplete.

(Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ)



Thought to Ponder...

Imagine what it would look like for all things to be made right.

Fulfillment

In the Old Testament, God used prophets to foretell of a coming Messiah (saviour). For hundreds of years, various prophets (Micah, Jonah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, to name a few) told people about God, about God's plans, and about a Saviour who would fulfill God's plan. These prophets said some broad things, (the Saviour would be a bearer of peace), and some really specific things (the Messiah would be a distant relative from the tribe of Jesse). They also talked about how God's people needed to act as they waited for the Messiah to right the world and bring peace and justice.

Jesus came into the world as God's self-incarnate. The Saviour of the world came in a way that nobody expected, lived a beautiful life of pointing people toward God, died a horrific death, and as he did, he uttered, "It is finished." God's plan has been fulfilled. We have not yet seen the full fruition of God's plan, but we have seen the glory of God in God's triumph over sin and death—the prophecies fulfilled.

Read the Story: John 19:30

Questions for Reflection

1. Have you ever left something incomplete? Why didn't you complete it? What does it feel like when you don't finish something?
2. What is it like to wait? Are you a very patient person? Why or why not?
3. Imagine that you are one of God's people who is a follower of Jesus, and you hear him say, "It is finished." What might be going through your mind?

Practicing Jesus' 7 Last Words


Choose one (or more) of the following activity options to do this week as you consider fulfillment.

Re-creating Eden: Gather some arts and crafts supplies together and let the group or yourself go wild, each creating their own version of what it might look like when all things are made right. This can be an interpretation of heaven, earth, fulfillment, salvation, etc. Let everyone be as creative as they can be on this one. Then share your creations with one another.

Movie night: Watch a good versus evil movie (Narnia, The Lord of the Rings, Marvel, etc). After watching, talk about the tension you feel when things are not right in the movie and how different you feel once good wins! How does this relate to the story of Easter and the fulfillment of prophecy?

Worship: Read Revelation 4 together, part of John's vision of what it is like to meet God when all things are fulfilled. Then listen to Revelation Song by Kari Jobe (it is available on YouTube) and think and talk about your thoughts about worship. Why do we worship God? How might worship be part of this life and the next? Is worship only music?





Reunion: Think of someone that you haven't seen in a long time, and then visit them or contact them in another way. What was it like to reunite? What feelings did you have? Talk about how fulfillment is kind of like being reunited with a loved one after a long time.

Song stop: Listen to a popular children's song (like "The Wheels on the Bus," "Mary Had a Little Lamb" or "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"), but stop the song halfway through the chorus. See if people can sit with it uncomfortably for a minute without trying to finish the song. Then talk about what it is like not to have a song resolved. Why do we long to reach the end? Why is fulfillment important? Now consider what it might have been like for God's people to be waiting for hundreds of years for God to fulfill God's plans and for Jesus to utter the words, "It is finished."

Closing Prayer

Merciful God,
You hear the cries of your people
Put an end to all that divides us
For you call us to be one
End gang violence
Mend the broken hearts of mothers whose children have been killed
Bring quality education and good jobs
Fill the bellies of the hungry by empowering us to share what we have
Heal our world: physical, spiritual, and soul
Make us signs of your grace to our neighbours
Amen.

(From *Liturgies from Below*,¹² Heal our world)



12 Carvalhaes, Claudio, ed. *Liturgies from Below: Praying with People at the End of the World*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020. *This book has dozens of participants from different organizations globally, but the individual prayers are not credited to particular people, they are collective from individuals associated through the Council for World Mission.