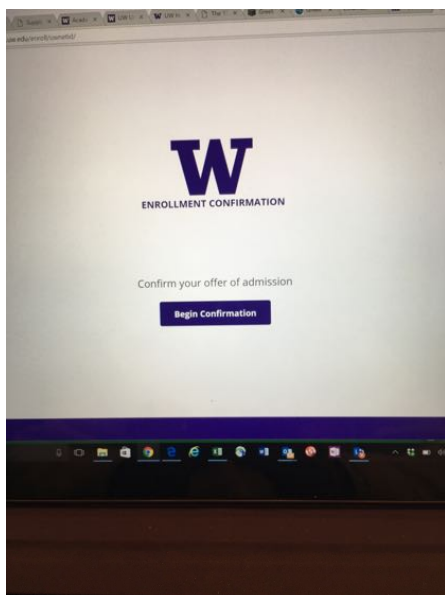
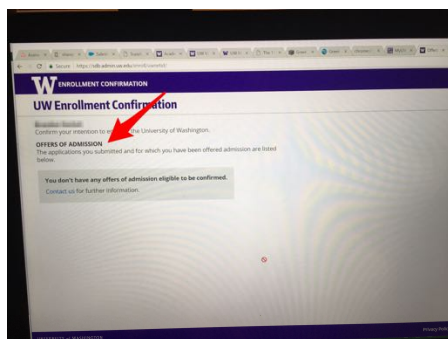


A friend of mine who's oldest child is a senior at Lake Washington High School has applied for acceptance at several universities. He's uncertain of his first choice but is leaning toward the University of Washington. His grades and test scores, however, are on the fringe of being good enough to get in. So he's been on pins and needles ever since he applied. Well, he recently got an email from the UW, with a link to click on to find out about his acceptance. He clicked the link, and it brought him to this page online:



It reads, “Enrollment Confirmation. Confirm your offer of admission.” And then there was a link (purple bar on the screen) to click on that said, “Begin Confirmation.” And with that, he started celebrating, and his family joined in! My buddy and his wife got out their phones and called their family...their son got out his phone and texted his friends. It went up on social media, they had a celebratory dinner, and everything.

And after nearly three hours of reveling in the glory of being accepted to the Harvard of the West, his dad asked to see what the UW had sent. So his son showed him. His dad then asked him if he'd clicked on the link to begin confirmation. His son said he hadn't, because he didn't want to start the process since he hadn't heard from a couple other schools that he was also hoping to get into, and he really hadn't yet made up his mind for sure where he'd like to go. So his dad convinced him that he could probably click on the link and not actually accept yet. So they clicked on the link and it brought up this screen:



After a couple of introductory lines, it said (marked by the red arrow I've added), “The applications you submitted and for which you have been offered admission are listed below: You

don't have any offers of admission eligible to be confirmed." He had not gotten in, after all. They had celebrated too soon. His son simply crawled onto the couch and laid there in a fetal position for the next couple hours.

When Friday came around and Jesus was crucified, there can be no doubt that many people figured that the party and celebration of Sunday had come too soon. This one man parade, with people waving palm branches and laying them on the ground as he rode in to Jerusalem...this celebration to welcome Jesus as king, as messiah, as the blessed one who comes in the name of the Lord...there can be no doubt that by Friday they felt like that celebration had been a bit too soon, like my friend's son and their family celebrating an entrance into the UW that wasn't actually there.

And as we continue our series on Jesus' last words that he said while on the cross, his words "It is finished" are closely tied to the one man parade as he came into Jerusalem on the Sunday before, and that we remember today, Palm Sunday. They go together more so than any of the other statements. By the way, the final statement of this series will be what we look at this Thursday at our Maundy Thursday service at 7:00, as we will begin a new series on Resurrection Day.

So these seven statements are the last things Jesus said to his disciples before his death. **And if it's true that people save the most important things they want to say until then end, then these seven statements are important words from Jesus.** And perhaps none are more important than these words, "It is finished."

Have you ever gotten to the end of something you were working on...maybe something you'd been building and shaping and refining for weeks, months, or even years...and at the end you cried out something along the lines of "Woo-hoo! It's finished!" Whether it was those exact words or not, perhaps you said something like that at the end of each school year as a kid...or if you graduated from college, maybe you said something like that when you got your diploma or maybe when you finished a project at school or work or when the kids finally moved out of the house in their late 20's. When summer finally arrives here in a few months and the gray clouds truly disappear, we

will all say something along the lines of “Yay! That grey weather is finished!” Of course, it will probably start back up again the next day...but we can enjoy it while it lasts.

Sometimes, we say a statement along these lines as more of a resignation. As in, “I’m done. I’m finished. I can’t go on any further.” Some people are saying that in regards to the Mariners one week into the season. Jesus’ statement is universally seen to be not a statement of resignation and giving in like that, but a statement of victory...**It’s a statement of completing a task he had been working on for his 3 years of public ministry, and even prior to that.**

Now, I want to take a moment to address the fact that the four gospel writers don’t all record Jesus’ last words as being the same thing, because that can be puzzling. Matthew and Mark record that Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and then breathed his last. They don’t tell us what he said...just that he cried out loudly. They also report that he cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” So they focus on what was said loudly.

Luke records for us the conversation with the two criminals, and then emphasizes that Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” and he then breathed his last. So we see those three gospel writers emphasizing what Jesus said more loudly, that was heard by everyone, or most everyone, who was gathered there.

John, on the other hand says nothing of Jesus speaking loudly, and doesn’t even record any of the statements that the other gospel writers said that Jesus said loudly. John’s gospel was written last (Mark late 50’s, Matthew/Luke 60’s, and John probably mid-90’s A.D.), and he didn’t need to repeat what had already been recorded. And so he focuses on what Jesus said privately to the few who were gathered right at the foot of the cross, and not what was heard by others who were at a further distance. He tells us that this up close group consisted of a few women including Jesus’ mother, and one of the disciples who is simply called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” which is often thought to refer to the disciple John and to be the author of the gospel according to John. And so it would make sense that he would particularly

record the statements that were directed at them, and that only they heard: “Behold, your son, behold your mother. I thirst. It is finished.”

So Matthew and Mark indicate that Jesus’ last statement was just to cry out – they don’t tell us what he said, just that he cried out – and Luke says that Jesus cried out “Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit” and then he dies. John gives us these words, “It is finished” as his last words. This “It is finished” statement was *probably* said *after* what the other gospel writers record that he cried out as his last statement, and that this was said quietly and more privately to those gathered at the cross.

So, what do we take from this statement “It is finished”? To fully understand, we need to look at the events of Palm Sunday nearly 2,000 years ago. Jesus came into Jerusalem on Sunday, and was crucified on Friday. So this is just a few days before the crucifixion. **Jesus was being lauded and praised by a large crowd of disciples who lined the road from the Mount of Olives that descended toward Jerusalem.** They are hailing him as “the Son of David” and crying out, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel!” The crowds that gathered were so large and so enthusiastic that the Pharisees mumbled among themselves, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him” (John 12:19). So this is another sizeable and energetic crowd that had gathered on either side of Jesus, lining the road as he came into town as a one-man parade.

Now parades, or I guess on that first Palm Sunday it would be more appropriate to call it a “procession” though the crowds that are lining the route would certainly give it a strong parade “feel”...these kinds of things are usually done when someone has done something great and that feat is being celebrated. When the Apollo 11 astronauts who had landed on the moon returned back to earth, there was a huge parade for them (**Picture Here**) in New York City shortly after. When a sports team wins a major championship, there’s always a parade with tons of people coming out to watch – the Seahawks parade after their Super Bowl victory a few years ago is



reasonably estimated to have been as many as 500,000 people.ⁱ

So these kinds of things are usually done after some major accomplishment. Certainly, Jesus had done some amazing things – healings of people, a few people were raised from the dead – including Lazarus just shortly before this – the feedings of multitudes, the profound teachings, and so forth.

But there was still more to come. Many of the people believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he would establish his kingdom, though they thought it would be an earthly kingdom, like they'd had before with King David and others. But then a few days later, Jesus ends up crucified on the cross. And undoubtedly for the people who followed him, for those who cheered him on as he rode the donkey into town: **They had to wonder, “Did we celebrate too soon? Was that parade all for naught? Is Jesus not the Messiah, who we thought he was?”**

Whenever I think about the state of mind the people must have been in at that time, I think of celebrations in our day that happen too soon. I already mentioned my friend's son and their family...but one that always comes to mind and I just had to share this, is a particular play in football that happened in a Super Bowl over 20 years ago, where a player started celebrating and parading into the end zone a little too soon...I'm sure some of you will remember this, because it's quite famous. Watch this **Video**. If you're reading online, you can watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqG6lgYirf0>

So for some folks there at that time, who didn't have the benefit of the resurrection that we do had to be wondering, “Was that parade like Leon Lett strutting into the end zone – A little premature?” **But Jesus' statement “It is finished” lets us know that the accolades and the party weren't too soon at all.** Palm Sunday appropriately celebrated the amazing accomplishments, miracles, teachings, and the hope that he brought to the people through his ministry...and it also foreshadowed the completion of his earthly ministry as he went to the cross, *because the cross was no accident*. It was absolutely part of the divine plan, and Jesus knew it was coming, even if it caught the people off-guard. And then the final celebration and real party comes with the

resurrection, though even that took Jesus' followers a while to actually comprehend and celebrate fully, which is pretty understandable.

So these words, "It is finished" are grand words. It's a statement of completion. They are not words of resolution or relief. **They are words of victory.** It's done. The task is complete. The mission that Jesus came for is accomplished. And praise God that Jesus accomplished through the cross what he came for, because this finished work has incredible meaning and importance for us today:

It means that your shame is finished.
 Your embarrassment is finished.
 Your guilt – it is finished
 Your pain, your sorrow – it is finished
 Your tears – it is finished
 Your brokenness – it is finished
 The fumbles of life – it is finished
 Your addiction – it is finished
 Separation from God – it is finished
 Earning your salvation – it is finished
 The battle with Satan – it is finished
 Jesus' mission – it is finished (though still continues through the Church)
 Your lack of peace – it is finished
 Your lack of joy – it is finished
 Your lack of love – it is finished
 Your lack of patience – it is finished
 Your lack of kindness – it is finished
 Your lack of goodness – it is finished
 Your lack of faithfulness – it is finished
 Your lack of gentleness – it is finished
 Your lack of self-control – it is finished.
 The eternal impact of your sin – it is finished
Because Jesus took it all to the cross and it got nailed there with him.

Yet we say, "But that's not my experience." "I lost self-control yesterday. I wasn't gentle even just this morning. I've been unkind. I struggle with

patience. I hurt. I've shed tears. I've sinned. I've felt shame." Yes, we still have the full range of human experience while we walk the face of this earth in free will, from mountain highs to valley lows; from holiness one moment to hard-hearted sin the next. But from Jesus' perspective...from the perspective of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: It is finished. You are a new creation, blameless and spotless and washed white as snow; That's how God sees you. On the cross Jesus accomplished what we can never accomplish.

And when we believe and trust that Jesus' death really makes a difference for us in our relationship with God our Creator, we will experience the full effects of "It is finished" when our lives here on earth are finished.

So, these are words of victory and a task completed. The celebration on Sunday was not too soon. Jesus didn't go and crawl up on a couch in the fetal position because the celebration was pre-emptive. Victory wasn't fumbled away as he paraded into town. Rather, he validated the celebration and completed his mission, and in utter exhaustion at the end of the journey he uttered words of victory that are our words of victory too: It. Is. Finished. Let's pray...Amen.

ⁱ <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/700000-at-seahawks-parade-doesnrsquot-add-up-experts-say/>