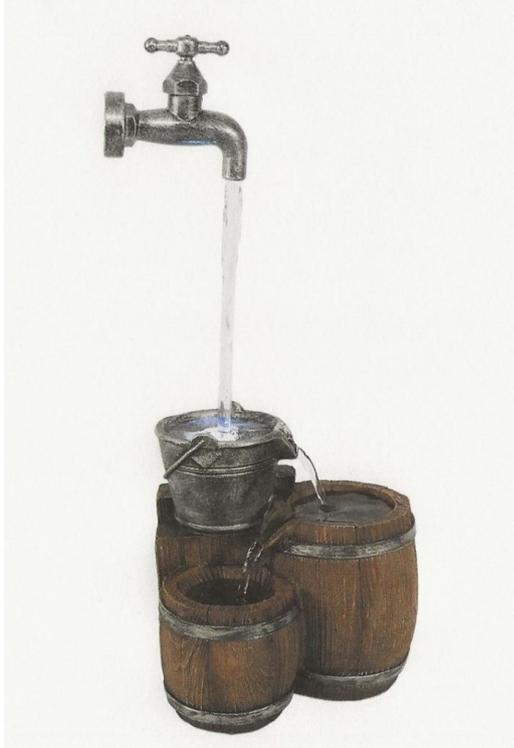


# **“It is Finished” by David Lloyd**



## **Palm/Passion Sunday**

**April 2, 2023**

I first heard of Jesus in Galilee. People were talking about this man who was healing people who were lame, or blind, or had leprosy. When he met people possessed by demons, he commanded the demons inside them to leave. And the demons obeyed him!

So, I had to see for myself, and I tell you, it was amazing. There was something about him I'd never seen or heard before. He healed people and he told stories that made you think. When you did, you'd see a new way of living, like he was opening your mind and heart.

So, I took a leap of faith, left my work behind, and joined

the small group that went with Jesus everywhere. When we'd come into a village or town a lot of people wanting to be healed and a lot of people who just wanted to hear his stories would show up. Jesus performed miracles so amazing if I told you about them you wouldn't believe me. Groups of Pharisees would come to debate him, but Jesus knew Torah so well that sometimes he just left the Pharisees stunned into silence. I have no idea how everyone got fed, but somehow there was always enough. We always found a place to sleep, either on the floor in people's homes or in a stable. We were living by faith in Jesus, and it was good.

Jesus trained us in his new understanding of Torah. When he thought we were ready, he paired us up to go out into the villages and preach what he had been teaching and heal those who needed healing. Sometimes my partner and I could feel spiritual power just flowing into and from us. It was like there was a fountain of energy and love flowing in each of us, a fountain that couldn't ever run dry. It was like we had been blind and now we could see, as if each of us had been somehow born again to do our lives over and do them a lot better, as if before we'd met him we had been dead men walking and now we felt alive as we'd never felt before. Those were the greatest moments of my life! But sometimes we felt powerless, dried up, blind, stuck in our old lives, and just dead inside. When that happened, we couldn't wait to get out of that place. When we finally returned to Jesus and shared our good and bad experiences, he was so happy. I tell you, we were full of faith.

When we were way up in Caesarea Philippi, he asked us who we thought he was. Peter dared to say what we all were thinking: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." But then Jesus got it into his head that we should leave Galilee and go to Jerusalem. We all were thinking, "Not a good idea." But

none of us dared to say it aloud. He told us that the Temple authorities would make him suffer, and he would be killed, and on the third day he would be raised to life. That made no sense to me. Peter denied that any of this would happen. But that made Jesus so angry he called Peter Satan!

Then Jesus told us if we were to be his disciples, we had to deny ourselves, take up our crosses and follow him. Crosses, he said, as in Roman executions! That brought me up short. I loved Jesus and the rest of the men, and my new life, but I'm not ready to die. We looked at each other, but nobody said a word. So, we started our journey here.

By the time we got here our mood had picked up. We were staying with friends of his in Bethany. He'd planned a special entry into Jerusalem like the coming of the king of peace as foretold in Zechariah. And it was spectacular! People were taking off their cloaks and laying them down on the path before Jesus while others were breaking branches off trees and laying them down on the path. And as they were running ahead of him to put more branches down they were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" But later that day a man told me that at about the same time the Roman governor was coming in another gate on horseback from his palace at Caesarea Maritima, with hundreds of Roman soldiers marching alongside. The man said, "They were there to keep the peace. We just looked at them, and didn't say a word."

The next day Jesus took us to the Temple, the biggest and most beautiful thing I've ever seen in my life! He made a whip out of some rope, kicked over a table of money changers and cracked the whip to stampede the livestock out of there. Coins went flying and the people went crazy trying to pick them up! We left before the guards showed up. Every day this week we went to the Temple and Jesus sat teaching in front of large crowds, which was nice. But a lot of what he said was criticism of the Pharisees and the Temple authorities. You

could see they were angry but to my surprise the guards never bothered us. Every day the mood of our group got a little quieter, a little more worried. We were sure Jesus' words would get us all arrested by the Temple guards or the Roman soldiers.

That Wednesday as we were leaving the Temple, Jesus reminded us that Passover began in two days and that he would be handed over to the Romans to be crucified. We had hoped he would do something – anything – to prevent that and here he was talking about it again.

The next day we went to the upper room of a house for the Passover seder. While we were eating Jesus told us that one of us would betray him. None of us would do that! And yet...we were all homesick for Galilee, we were feeling such hatred from the priests, and we knew some in our group were ready to start a rebellion. And Jesus knew all of our weaknesses so maybe one of us would betray him. We didn't dare look at Jesus or each other, so each of us said, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?" with our heads down. We didn't see Judas slip out.

Jesus took some bread, gave thanks, and broke it, then handed it to us, saying, "Take and eat, this is my body." What did he mean by that? I was so upset that my mouth became so dry I could barely swallow the piece I took. Then he took a goblet of wine, gave thanks, and passed it to us, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I won't drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Abba's kingdom." None of us knew what he was talking about. I still don't know what he meant.

We finished eating, sang a hymn and went to the Mount of Olives. Jesus told us, "Tonight you will all fall away on account of me, and he quoted Zechariah, then added, "But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Of course,

Peter immediately said, "Even if everyone else leaves on account of you, I never will." Jesus looked him in the eye and said, "I tell you, before the cock crows tonight, you will deny me three times." That made us suspicious: was Peter the betrayer? So now Peter had to defend himself, and he said, "Even if I have to die with you, I'll never disown you." Well, that made the rest of us look bad, so of course we all had to say the same thing. And Jesus just looked at us.

He took us into the garden of Gethsemane and told us to sit while he went over somewhere else to pray, just as he had in Galilee. It had been a long, confusing day and I closed my eyes – just for a minute – and then suddenly there was a crowd with torches, swords, and clubs, and Judas was with them! Until that moment we hadn't known that Judas had gone to the chief priests and had made a deal to betray Jesus. He stepped forward, greeted Jesus with "Shalom, Rabbi!" and kissed him. And as Jesus said, "Friend, just do what you're here to do," the crowd surrounded them and arrested Jesus.

One of us, Peter, I think, had a sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Put your sword back where it belongs. Those who live by the sword die by the sword. Don't you think I can call on my Abba God to provide over twelve legions of angels at a moment's notice?" Jesus was so brave; he rebuked them for arresting him at night with weapons instead of at the Temple where he'd sat in public every day. We weren't brave at all. We fled into the darkness and out of the garden. Not that many hours before I'd said I'd never disown him and here I was abandoning him! I felt sick with fear and shame. What had happened to my faith in him?

I don't remember where I spent the night. The next morning someone told me that the prophet from Galilee had been taken to the Roman governor. By the time I got there, people were shouting out that they wanted Pontius Pilate to free Jesus Barabbas, I couldn't believe it: they wanted the rebel Jesus

the son of Abbas (or you might say, Jesus son of his father) freed, and they were shouting that Pilate should crucify Jesus of Nazareth (Jesus the son of his Abba, Jesus the Son of God). But Pilate agreed and his soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium.

That was the last I saw of him. I couldn't bear to watch Jesus die so I left, and came here to the same upper room where we had our last meal with Jesus. At about three in the afternoon there was an earthquake and I knew that Jesus had died at that moment. And something in me died as well: my faith in him.

It's all over. No one will listen to us now. Everything Jesus stood for, everything we believed in is dead. Peter said, "Maybe we..." and I interrupted him, "Peter, it's over. You know it as well as I do. Being with him and with all of you was the best experience of my life, and we did great things in Galilee. I'll never forget it. But those days are gone. He's dead. I'm done. When it's safe, I'm going back to Galilee." The others nodded in agreement.

That fountain in me that couldn't ever run dry – it's run dry. The scales that had been removed from my eyes, they're clouding my vision again. I am too exhausted to live this life, let alone do my life over. I feel like a dead man walking and can only barely remember when I felt alive as I'd never felt before.

It is finished.