

Good Friday

Jesus Is the Finishing Touch

John 18.1-19.42

Good Friday

Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer

John 18.1-19.42 (a very few selected verses for this Diagnosis/Prognosis)

Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God." Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever.

There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in

linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

DIAGNOSIS: HE'S FINISHED!

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Jesus Is Accused for Pretending to Be the Son of God*

Jesus is arrested and put on trial before Annas and Caiaphas. No testimony is given, neither by the prosecution nor the defense. Yet, when Jesus is brought before Pilate, the chief priests and the Pharisees said that Jesus should be put to death. No reason is given, just the vague reference of, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." Not until Pilate says that he has found no case against Jesus do the entire people cry, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God." There is the crime, the crime deserving death—daring to claim to be the Son of God. Such a crime is easy to prove, because no human can claim to be God. It is impossible for those made of dust to be the Creator of dust.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *It's More than Claiming to Be the Son of God*

To be the Son of God means that one is under God, one is sent by God, and one speaks and acts for God. If Jesus had spoken and acted in conformity with how we usually think of God, then there would have been less of a problem. But Jesus' claim to be God became presumptuous and criminal when he acted contrary to how we usually think of God. We live under the law, a system from God that rewards us when we do good and, in order to restrain

evil, punishes us when we do harm. So we think of God as just and right, the final judge over who is good and who is bad, or even evil. Jesus acted in opposition to who gets rewarded and who gets punished. He sat and ate with those who, according to our thinking, should be punished by God. Jesus also dared to declare that because he was with those who deserved only discipline, they were no longer bad. He promised those who were bad according to the law that they were now good to God—all by his say so. But it was not just his say so, he was sent from God so it was God's say so. God was no longer acting according to the law. God was not acting according to the way that made the world work, that made our lives work, that set the rules that rewarded us. How could God be going against God's own system of law? That is impossible. Thus, Jesus could not be the Son of God. He was giving the ultimate good—forgiveness, goodness before God, and heaven—to the wrong people. We cannot accept that. We cannot believe that. It's not just Jesus claiming to be the Son of God, but his going against God's law that is the crime for which he ought to die.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Jesus' Claim to Be the Son of God Is Proved Wrong*

We executed Jesus for his crime. He gave up his last breath on a cross. Pilate could claim all he wanted that he found no case against this man. But we have proved Jesus wrong because he died. If he were the Son of God, he could not die. God, the ruler of the universe, cannot die. God rules over death, not death over God. By Jesus' death, we have proved him false. He was not the Son of God. He was buried in a tomb because he was dust. He was finished .

PROGNOSIS: THE FINISHING TOUCH

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Jesus Finished It!*

We are still under the system of law where good acts are rewarded and harmful acts punished. That is how we wanted it, not Jesus' way of giving, freely giving, mercy and forgiveness to those who do harm. But to our surprise and shock, Jesus is alive! He has been raised from the dead! How can this be? People, many people have seen him alive so it is true he has been raised. But if he has been raised, then he is the Son of God. He was right and we were wrong. We have killed the Son of God. Oh no! And we insisted on the system of law that includes punishing those who do harmful acts. We did the harmful act of killing the Son of God. We are doomed! God will condemn us, fully and forever for what we have done. What can we do? We are lost.

But Jesus had cried, "It is finished!" He had finished, completed, and put an end to the way of the law. He had fulfilled it. His way of giving mercy to those who did harm is now in effect because of his resurrection.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) : *We're Finished!*

Since Jesus' way of mercy is now in effect, and since the old way of law condemns us, we turn to Jesus, hoping that his giving of mercy is unlimited, that he would have mercy even on us who killed him. Indeed, Jesus died for the very purpose of giving mercy to those condemned by God. All are condemned. But now all are forgiven for Christ is risen! Jesus, by his death, finishes us to the way of the law and finishes his purpose of saving us by forgiving us. We are finished with mercy by the death of Jesus. We are completed with forgiveness by the death of Jesus. We live by Christ and not by the way of the law.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *We're Finished But Mercy Continues*

Christ has put us in his mercy. But when we walk in the places

of our usual responsibilities, the way of reward and punishment still happens all around us. Have they not heard that Jesus is the Son of God whose rule of mercy now replaces the rule of reward and punishment? Let us tell them! Let us be merciful to them! Let us forgive instead of punish. Let us bring mercy to those who do harm that they may be finished to the way of law and then finished in the way of Christ, that is, have that final, last touch that completes the work done to them. That last touch is forgiveness. And they will turn with relief at the comfort such forgiveness gives them, who feared their punishment but knew nothing other than justice. In the comfort of Christ's forgiveness, we no longer have to compete for who is right and who is wrong to God. We do not have to be better than others so that God notices us as the ones who are right. We do not have to beat others, win, prove ourselves correct, be judgmental, critical, or snobbish, sexist, racist, in order to justify ourselves as deserving rewards from God. God has given us all of God's love and all of God's heaven through Christ! We need do nothing to receive anything from God. All the work to get God's goodness is done: " It is finished." So said Christ.