

Names of Wondrous Love – Alpha and Omega

John 19:30. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.”

With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

You might recognize the words, Alpha and the Omega, as the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Perhaps you have seen them before on the banners in front of church or in the beautiful carvings hung over the door as you exit the sanctuary. They are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet just as A and Z are the first and last letters in our alphabet. Two letters, but Jesus uses these two letters as one of his most powerful names. In Revelation Chapter 22, the Savior says, “I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (verse 13). The Alpha and the Omega: this is a name of Jesus. Well what does this name mean? How does it describe Jesus? Why is it such a name of wondrous love for our Savior?

Well, let’s consider how we use those two letters in our language. When a hardware store advertises, “We have everything from A to Z,” we know what it means. It means they have it all. “Everything you need you can find it here.” When a person walks into A to Z insurance in Renville they can expect to find all sorts of insurance coverage. You would expect sufficient coverage for everything - from your life to your home to your automobile. The claim A to Z basically says, “Everything you need, you can find it here.” This claim is made by more than a few businesses, and depending on the business this claim may or may not be so true. But when Jesus says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” it’s true. It is so wonderfully true. He is all we need for life and salvation. He is all-sufficient. There is nothing missing. In him we have it all. He is our one and only Savior.

The sixth word that our Savior spoke from the cross was in fact just one word and it speaks to this concept of completeness. Tetelestai – one word, just four syllables in the Greek language, yet this is a word of great significance to the world. We would not even be exaggerating to say that this is the most important word in the history of the world. “It is finished” he cried. Jesus wanted it to be clear, he wanted everyone to know, “It is finished.”

What was finished? What was “it”? Was he referring to his agony and pain? Was death now bringing him sweet relief from such atrocious injustice and unspeakable cruelty - the hatred and malice that first wounded his heart and then crushed his body? No, he did not speak these words in dying exhaustion. He did not speak them in the defeated whispers of a man finding relief from such heartless torture. His words are not the words a man who was surrendering to death, but the words of a soldier who has conquered in the battle. The gospel writers are careful to indicate

that Jesus spoke many of his last words in a loud voice. These words on which we meditate on tonight are not the words of defeated man, but these are the words of the Alpha and the Omega. These are the words of our Savior whose work is all-sufficient for our salvation.

Everything that we need has been supplied by Christ. He has supplied forgiveness. He has paid for sins. Jesus has suffered the agonies of hell that were reserved for sinners. With these words Jesus tells you and me and everyone that would listen, "I have endured the full punishment and anger of my Father over sin. I have shed my precious blood to redeem all mankind." "It is finished", he cried. The same word used by the ancient Greeks to show that debts were paid in full was the word our Savior carefully chose to proclaim from the cross. Nothing more is needed, not one more penny needs to be added to his perfect offering for sin. Every sin has been paid for and covered by his precious blood. Here is the only place that sinners, from the first sinner to the last sinner, can find all-sufficient coverage for the first sinner to the last. Full salvation, peace with God, the gift of heaven, all supplied for by one perfect Savior. There is nothing that we sinners could do to be saved, but in his wondrous love he has done it all for us. He is everything we need. He is the Alpha and Omega.

One day a man came to a pastor and asked rather sarcastically, "So pastor, what must I do to be saved?" Picking up on the man's sarcasm, the pastor answered, "It's too late." The man became alarmed and in a much more panicked and serious tone asked again. "What must I do to be saved?" Again the pastor answered, "It's too late." But this time he looked the man in the eye and then added, "It's already been done."

It is finished. We can be at peace. There is no need to panic. There is no need to wonder or second guess our salvation. There is no price that we need to pay to make sure that we are right God. There is nothing that we need to do. He did it all. It is finished. The debt has been paid in full. In Christ Jesus our salvation is complete. Jesus is our *Alpha and Omega*. He is our *A and Z*. He is our everything. He is the only Savior we'll ever need.

With lips moistened by a sponge soaked in sour wine, with a voice now prepared by this final drink to speak words of such importance, he spoke clearly, "***It is finished.***" And then, after speaking a few final words of victory and peace Jesus died. "***He bowed his head and gave up his spirit.***" Having completed the work that God had sent him to do Jesus gave up his spirit to his Father in heaven. He breathed his last and bowed his head in death. The perfect Son of God died. The one who was before time was, the one who is, and who will always be; he laid aside his glory and became a man for us. He went through all the pains of life. He felt the pangs of hunger and thirst for us. He felt sorrow and pain for us. He was tempted in every way and yet was without sin. The sinless Son of God willingly suffered the full fury of God's righteous wrath against our sin in our place and then having accomplished this work of salvation he died. He endured it all. He overcame it all for us. He who is the beginning and the end came

into this world when the time was right for the very purpose that we commemorate this evening. He came to lay down his life as a perfect offering for sin. And when that work was done he gave up his spirit.

Jesus once said to his enemies, ***“I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father” (John 10:17, 18).*** For the one who is the Alpha and the Omega death waited in the wings and only came forward when it was summoned by Christ. With his work of salvation completed Jesus announced his victory. He bowed his head. He gave up his spirit. He laid down his life, but he would take it up again for he has the power over life and death.

For us who stand at the foot of our Savior’s cross this Good Friday, death has lost its sting. Death has rightly been called the king of terrors. Death strikes fear into the hearts of even the strongest men and women because of the uncertainty that comes with it. You may know people who won’t mention, won’t even talk about the topic of death. Death has this reputation because unlike Christ Jesus we die because we have to. Our lives are snatched from us. Death comes to us all as that final result of sin and - perhaps the most terrifying part - when we die we will all face judgment. When we die our soul must stand before the judgment seat of a perfectly holy and righteous God.

Those fears are put to rest under our Savior’s cross because we are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are taken care of. We are protected, by the Alpha and the Omega. Even though death still growls it can no longer bite us. Jesus has stripped this beast of its power. Our Jesus has fully paid sin’s wage. Our sin has been replaced with his righteousness. Jesus has cooled God’s righteous anger and has warmed the Father’s heart towards us. You are at peace with God through faith in him. Jesus has opened heaven’s door. He has prepared a home for us in heaven. He has done it all.

And so when that time comes when we as God’s children must give up our souls, we hand them over to our Father who loves us because Jesus loved us first. When death comes for us we can fall asleep in peace because we know that he has done it all. Therefore we also know that we are not left without hope. We are not left in complete darkness but that light of Jesus shines in our hearts in life and in death; for just as the first Good Friday was followed by the first Easter so too another glorious resurrection will come at our Lord’s command and we will be with the Lord forever.

Our all-sufficient Savior had done it all. In his wondrous love he has paid our debt. He died in our place. He has opened the paradise of heaven to sinners like us. In life and in death, from the beginning to the end, we are covered by his wondrous love. This name of wondrous love, it is so much more than just two letters. It is the powerful name of our Savior. Jesus is our Alpha and Omega.