

*Sermon preached by Rev Rachel McDougall*

*St Paul's Canterbury*

*Good Friday 2023*

*It is finished*

It is finished.

Final words of completion, accomplishment fulfillment, they are the last words of the word made flesh.

Last words can be significant. Many do not get to make them.

There are final words that ring in your ears.

My father's final words as the three of us were gathered around his bed were 'I love you all'.

The last thing he wanted us to know was that he loved us.

The last thing people wanted to say to those closest to them was I love you on the plane destined to crash in 9/11.

It is finished says Jesus.

All that has come before has led up to this moment.

Lifted high on the cross Jesus' final words are of completion, finishing what he came to do as the word of God, the word who became flesh.

Jesus has spoken much in his life in word and action of God's love for all. He has revealed himself as the light of the world, the bread of life, the good shepherd proclaiming God's love for all as the way the truth and the life.

He has lived his life in love, in healing, in reaching out to make others whole.

Now the love song of his life is complete, has come to an end lifted high on a cross for all to see.

His final act is to give up his Spirit, to hand it over to God and to us – the Spirit of love will continue.

The completeness of Jesus' love and life is there for all to see.

What a contrast to us in our humanity!

So much around us that is incomplete, unfinished, left undone, broken.

Our lives are full of contrasts, of bits and pieces of love and loss, confusion and pain, despair and joy.

There is so much in us that is incomplete.

It is finished says Jesus.

Somehow in God all that is incomplete and broken can be made whole as by his bruises we are healed.

Jesus' Spirit of love is given up and handed over to us to soothe our battered hearts and meets us in all that is incomplete and undone.

His breath promises us the gift of a new beginning that hope can be reborn.

Jesus' last act is an act of trust and love in God – that his death on the cross is not the end of the story.

Somehow all will be well and all manner of things shall be well.

Suffering and pain, betrayal and denial, squabbles and disagreements can be redeemed in God's love.

It is finished.

It is complete - declaring the end of evil powers doing their worst.

The end is love for love's sake.

It is arms outstretched on a cross and the Spirit given over.

It is complete, fulfilled is my love for you says Jesus.

As we behold the wood of the cross today and touch its roughness and see it in all its reality, be reminded of how real and true is God's loving embrace of you.

As you hold your stone and ponder its weight ponder on what feels unfinished in your life, what is incomplete.

Ponder on what drags your life down like a stone and consider whether today is the day it is finished, that it can be let go of at the foot of the cross.

Let it go as Jesus gave up his last breath., let it go into the loving arms of God and be with God in the silence of love offered and given for you and for me.

It is complete and whole and lasting – my love for you says Jesus.

Loving to the end, loving to completeness is what we see on the cross.

Feel the embrace of this perfect complete love holding you and find yourself made whole in the balm of divine love.

It is complete this love for you, it is real it is here.

It is complete says Jesus – My love is complete for you.