



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 29, 2013
Good Friday: Tenebrae
Sermon Text: [John 19:30](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

Gospel: [John 19:17-30](#)
[Psalm 2](#)
[Psalm 22:1-21](#)
[Psalm 27](#)
Lesson: [Lamentations 1:1-5](#)
Lesson: [Lamentations 1:6-9](#)
Lesson: [Lamentations 1:10-14](#)
[Psalm 51](#)

The Alpha and The Omega

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

All through Lent, we've been looking at Names of Wondrous Love. The Name of Wondrous Love we look at this evening is printed in your Service Folder. The Name The Alpha and The Omega. I don't know how familiar you are with those words, Alpha and Omega. You might recognize that they are the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet. Like the A and the Z for us in English. You might also know that they are on the windows in the balcony of our church. But what do they mean?

What does it mean in [Revelation 22](#) when Jesus calls himself this? He says, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*" What does it mean? Why is it a Name of Wondrous Love?

When Jesus tells us he is the Alpha and the Omega, it's kind of like those that use the phrase "from A to Z" in their advertising. Maybe a hardware store says they have everything you need from A to Z. Maybe they do. I have to believe that sometimes they don't. When Jesus tells us he is the Alpha and the Omega, he is not using it as an advertising marketing gimmick. He is telling us that he is everything. He is all sufficient. He is everything we need. He is the One who has done everything that we need. As you and I read about God's wrath and hear his calls to repentance on this day in which our sins killed Jesus, it's a Name of Wondrous Love when our Jesus says to us, "I'm everything to you. I've done it all." Because he has all we need for salvation. That's one of the things he tells us.

[John 19:30](#) that I just read to you, ending what had just happened, was to fulfill Scripture. Jesus had said, "I thirst," and just scarcely had a sponge with some sour wine then put on his lips when we hear him speak. He says, "*It is finished.*" Three nice words in English. In the Greek New Testament, it's just one, one four-syllable word, that says it all. It is finished. It's not an exaggeration when you say that the Greek word or those words in English are the most important words that you'll ever hear, because when Jesus says, "*It is finished,*" you need to know what he means by "*it*" and then you'll start understanding why it's the most precious sentence you could ever hear.

He's not talking about his suffering. He's not talking about the torture he endured. He's not talking about the agony that he endured. He's not talking about having to put up with these people that were taunting him in front of him. He's not saying, "Finally! I'm done with all this suffering." That's not what he's talking about at all. If that was the case, these would be words that were probably whispered, eked out by the collapsing lungs of a dying man. But the Gospel writers tell us it wasn't that way. He got his lips wet with that sour wine and he said in a loud voice in a triumphant cry, "*It is finished.*"

If you were standing there, you would have heard him. If you would have looked at him, you wouldn't have seen the cry of a man who said, "I'm finally done. It's over." This isn't a kid putting the last of the final exams on the professor's desk saying, "It's finished." This is someone who is trying to let everyone know "I've done it all."

The "it" is not his life. It's not his suffering. It's none of those things. The "it" here is what he and the Father and the Spirit before the creation of the world had said had to happen. They knew mankind would sin. They knew mankind would need a Savior. This is saying salvation was completed. Jesus is saying, "I won." He's saying it to Satan. "All your temptations that fell short, you lose." He's saying to us, "I've done it all. I was perfect in your place. All the times you sin and the punishment it deserves, I took it in your place. You don't have to be punished for your sins because I was punished for you." It's finished. Our fear of having to face the agony of the fires of hell forever are gone because Jesus was separated from the Father.

If Jesus, after saying those words "*It is finished,*" would have used his full divinity, the full power of being God, and looked back to the first sinners of Adam and Eve and looked to the last sinner that ever will walk the face of this earth before Jesus' returns, he would have seen them all covered by his perfection and by his blood. "*It is finished.*" Sin has been paid for.

That's why The Alpha and The Omega that tells us "*It is finished*" are words for the Names of Wondrous Love. He's done everything from A to Z to pay for our sins. There is not one thing that you and I do to add to it. The word in the Greek would have been what the tax collector would have written on your tax bill. Paid in full. That's what Jesus is crying out. That's why Paul can write in his letter to the Romans, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Jesus did it for the whole world, but for those who are in the circle of Jesus Christ, who are connected to him by faith, there is no condemnation. That's why he is the Alpha and the Omega. There is not one little penny that we add to this to pay for anything. He has done everything that needs to be done to pay for all sins of all time.

A guy who is a little bit of a smart aleck once said to a pastor, "So, exactly what do I have to do to be saved?" The pastor, knowing this guy was a smart aleck, decided to give it right back to him and said, "You're too late." This got the guy's attention. He sat up a little straighter. His head snapped back and he looked at him and said, "What do you mean? I'm too late? What do I have to do to be saved?" The smart aleck stuff kind of seeped out through his toes. The pastor again replied, "It's too late." Then he

added, "It's already been done. Jesus Christ did everything to save you. God the Holy Spirit longs to give you the gift of faith through his Word and through his Sacrament. You don't do anything to be saved. The only thing you could do, if you ever want to do anything, the only thing you could do is reject the word of Jesus Christ." That's why we say he is The Alpha and The Omega. He's done everything from A to Z. He's the only Savior we'll ever need.

But look at how different our Savior is from us. He faced death with the cry of a victorious soldier. Then it says Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit. That's different than us, right? That's exactly what Jesus had said he would do earlier. He said, "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." Through his death on the cross he proved it. He gave up his spirit. You and I, unless Jesus returns first, will all have to face death. We might try to think we are going to eat well and we're going to take the right medicines, we are going to see the right doctors and we are going to prolong our life, but in reality the Lord already knows the day of our death. We can scramble and struggle and do all these things, but there isn't really a whole lot we can do. But Jesus gave his life.

A little bit after he got his lips soaked with that sour wine, after he said "*It is finished,*" he said, "Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit." He gave his life up and he knew exactly where he was going. He went back to the Father.

When death comes knocking at our door, it's a horrific thing. It's been described as the king of terrors. There is really only one thing that makes death so terrible. Even those who deny it and say there is no afterlife, in their heart of hearts through their natural knowledge of God, they know in death that they are going to face judgment because there is a holy God who demands holiness. That's what really makes death the king of terrors, this idea that we have to face judgment. But because Jesus died in our place, because he lived in our place, you and I can face death with confidence.

We sit beneath the cross of Christ on this Good Friday, and we look at it and we see what he was willing to do for us. We see that this is our Savior who is dying there in our place. He shows us how to die. Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. He shows us to trust in him, to trust in the Father, to trust in the Spirit and stay close to them and not drift away, not wander away. Stay close to them and then we'll always be ready to face death whenever it might come. Just like Easter followed that first Good Friday where Jesus rose from the dead, so after we die, our Easter will follow. We'll rise from the dead.

That makes a difference right now. That gives us cause to rejoice right now. That gives us cause to think as we face the struggles of life that the God who did not abandon us to our own sins, but the God who loved us so much that he endured the agony of hell itself, he's not going to abandon us now as we face the struggles of living in a sinful world. If you think he has abandoned you, how arrogant are you to think that these words that he said applies to everyone else but you, or to think that you somehow

have some claim on how he should bless you in the way you want to be blessed. We have to get over this arrogance. He's a lot smarter than we are. If he chooses to allow difficulty into our lives, he's got a purpose. I don't need to see it. I just need to stand by it and know that he loves me with this depth of love.

God is not that hardware store that runs out of stuff. He has everything from A to Z, from Alpha to Omega, and his plan is perfect. It was perfect before the creation of the world. It accomplished your salvation. As you await your final deliverance for all of eternity, do not doubt that it is still perfect. Amen.