

Tonight we heard the reading from John's gospel of Jesus' crucifixion. Perhaps you were straining to hear "Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing...or...why have you abandoned me...or...today you will be with me in paradise".

But in John's gospel, those aren't words that we hear. John records none of these familiar, comforting but sometimes confusing words. Nor does John let us see Jesus wavering in any way – not physically, not spiritually, not emotionally.

Physically, he does not need anyone to carry his own cross. Nor does John tell us much of Jesus' physical beatings – just 2 lines at the beginning of ch. 19 about his harassment, beating and torture at the hands of the people and soldiers.

Emotionally and spiritually - Jesus utters no words to suggest he feels abandoned by God – nothing like Psalm 22 that we sang tonight. And before this night in John's gospel there is no Garden of Gethsemane prayer where Jesus prays so hard his sweat is like blood running down his face. John does, however, give account of a beautiful prayer on behalf of his disciples. He is taking care of his beloved band of rebels.

In our gospel tonight, Jesus continues his oversight of care for those that he loves. From the cross, he sees his mother, her sister, the disciple he loved, and Mary Magdalene. Just those 4 though, the others aren't close, they're on the outskirts of the crowd or in hiding – if Jesus notes this, or searches for them, we're not told. What we do know is that Jesus commands a new relationship between his mother and his loved disciple.

In John's gospel, the picture of Jesus tonight is sure and in control. John gives us a Jesus who is fully revealed as God and who knows himself to be God. In the gospel of John, Jesus knows everything that other people are thinking; knows everything that is going to happen. Jesus knows all and faces it all with unwavering purpose.

He is in control throughout, Christ victorious on the cross. When he knows he is about to die he says confidently, "it" is finished. Jesus is in control right up until the end – he gives up his spirit – it is not taken from him.

His purpose is clear throughout and he is unswervingly faithful to it. And now it's finished. This cry from the cross is triumphant.

*What* is finished? What is the 'it' in "it is finished?"  
The 'it' that is finished is his mission.

His mission was to complete the work that God started when God made all of creation and called it good. In coming to us through Jesus' humanity, God entered our world.

God, in Jesus, entered our world with a mission of love and mercy, yet God let our rules of order stand. Rules of our world based on greed, judgment, competition, fear, violence and retribution. In these days that we call holy, the powers of this world ran out of control – instead of reaching for justice and love – they reached toward retribution and sacrifice. This reach went all the way to the cross and stopped with the best it has to offer – death. The powers of this world put to death God's child. But that was not the final word.

In the cross and resurrection God showed that neither we, nor death, have the final word. Nothing is too great for God to overcome. God entered our world and met the best, and the worst of the power of the human race with God's great love and mercy.

All of the things that we have written on these little tiles all of Lent that we ask repentance and forgiveness for – they all go to the cross because the powers of this world still run out of control.

In the cross of Jesus, we have a place to put our sin, our shortcomings, our regrets.

On the cross, Jesus destroys our darkness, and you will see this outside when you leave tonight. Jesus destroys our darkest parts and brings us to new life.

Because Jesus finished what he came to do, death is not the end for us.

Because Jesus finished what he came to do all our own endings open to new beginnings.

Because Jesus finished what he came to do all our death-dealing ways are transformed in the light of his new life.

That is the promise for us this night—that because of the cross, our failures, our betrayals, our death-dealing ways are not the last word.

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Behold, the life-giving cross.