

Title: “At Life’s End”

Chris Ryan

John 19:30

4/3/2026

Service Readings: *Isaiah 52:13—53:12, Hebrews 4:14–16, 5:7–9, John 19:17–30*

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

There was a time when Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden. It is something so familiar that you imagine it even though you weren’t there. You imagine the feeling of the blades of grass beneath your feet and the “feet” of God walking with them. You can almost hear his conversation with them. How wonderful it must have been to talk with God! Can you imagine it? And then suddenly the picture changes. Adam and Eve fall into sin. Would he turn away from them?

God told Satan, but Adam and Eve also heard it. And we hear it too... God said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15). That’s where we are tonight. From sunny skies of paradise to the dark, black clouds of Calvary. From intimacy with God in the garden, to separation from God, to judgment and death. Tonight the serpent’s head is crushed, evil is defeated, but at such great cost! God’s Son is hanging; God’s Son is calling out, “It is finished.” But let me ask you, *what* is finished?

Tonight, the scene is dark as we mourn the result of our sin, and what that sin caused our Savior to endure. We mourn the fragmenting of our relationship with our Creator. And we miss those walks through the garden. We remember the suffering and death of our Jesus. We remember what He taught us and what His life means to us. In a world where it’s easier to tear down and start over, our God has made himself the God of restoration. But on the cross he called out, “It is finished” and he gave up his spirit and he died.

There was a philosopher named Nietzsche who is famous for having written “God is Dead.” The words “God is Dead” were intended to be provocative but Nietzsche’s intent behind the words was to say that God may as well be dead if God makes no difference in a person’s life. You see, his statement didn’t mean that God ceased to exist. He meant that for many, God had become irrelevant, silent, absent, even unnecessary.

But what does that actually look like? Not in a philosophy book but in a human life? What does it *look like* when God is dead to you? It doesn’t look like open rebellion most of the time. It looks quieter than that. It looks like a life where God is no longer listened to. A life where his Word becomes optional, a background noise. Maybe even something just for Sundays.

It looks like a life where sin no longer troubles the conscience. Not because there is no sin but because the voice of God that once named it has been muted. It looks like a life where prayer disappears, not in a dramatic rejection, but in neglect. Days pass... then weeks... and God is simply not spoken to. It looks like a life where suffering has no meaning. Because if God is absent, then pain is just pain: random, cruel, and empty.

It looks like a life where hope no longer exists. Because if God is dead, then the future is closed. There is no restoration. No resurrection. No new creation.

And maybe most frightening of all, it looks like a life where you are *left alone* with yourself. To justify yourself. To fix yourself. To save yourself. To create for yourself a moral code and find a community that will affirm it, that will justify it, that will tell you that *your life* is being lived right and lived to the fullest.

And here is where Good Friday cuts deeper than Nietzsche ever imagined. Because tonight we do not just *feel* like God is dead. We watch him die. On the cross, the son of God hangs in darkness. The one who walked with Adam in the garden, the one who spoke creation into being, the one *who is life itself*, bows his head and gives up his spirit.

This is not metaphor. This is not philosophy. This is crucifixion of Jesus. And here is the terrible truth: If you want to know what it looks like when God is dead in a person's life, look at the cross. Because there you see what sin actually does. It doesn't just ignore God. It doesn't just push him to the margins. It kills him. It forces us to face the reality that we were not supposed to live in isolation from him, but in community. And it forces us to face the reality that what happened in the garden continues today. We turn from him and make our own way. Your sin. My sin. The sin of the world. If you want to know sin looks like, look at the cross.

But, when Jesus says, "It is finished" what is finished? Not God. Not his love. Not his promise. What is finished is the separation. The curse spoken in the garden. The enmity between God and man.

What is finished is the power of sin's accusation and death's claim over you. Because the death you see on the cross is not the death of God's *relevance*. It is the death of *death itself*.

In the beginning, there was a garden and God walked with His people. And we lost it through a tree. Through sin, through rebellion, through the turning of our hearts from Him, we were driven out, away from His presence, away from true life.

And tonight, there is another tree. Not the tree of life but the tree of death. And on that tree hangs the Son of God. And it looks like the end. It looks like God is gone. It looks like everything has fallen apart beyond repair.

But listen. "He said, *It is finished.*" And because it is finished there will be a garden again. A new heaven. A new earth. A holy city where God dwells with His people: not for a moment, not for a walk in the cool of the day, but forever. No more isolation. No more death. No more mourning. No more crying. On that day we will live in the community God always desired for us. We will walk with each other and we will walk with him. The lamb who hangs on the tree is the lamb who gathers his people unto himself.

So no, God is not dead. Not for you. Not for me. Because *in* the death of Jesus Christ, death itself has died. Because *in* the death of Jesus Christ, life in God's community is realized.

So go from this place, not as those who are abandoned, but as those for whom Christ has finished all things. For the crucified Lord has accomplished it all. And in Him, you are held, even now.

Amen.