

GOOD FRIDAY 2015

In 1972 there was a movie called *The Candidate*. It featured Robert Redford running as a candidate for the Senate in California. He wasn't given much of a chance to win, but told to go out there and give it a good shot. Redford did that and won the nomination. At the end of the movie after Redford has won he is sitting down talking with his campaign people and he says, "Now what do we do?"

That line has always stuck with me because there are times in life when we pursue a project with such gusto that we can forget why we were doing it in the first place. You remember the craze last year when everyone was dumping water on themselves and others for a challenge. It became viral. Yet, I am sure that if you asked many of those people why they did that, they would have no idea that it was supposed to challenge people to raise money after they made a contribution to combat ALS.

Jesus' last words on the cross are "It is finished." You might think that it was similar to the ending words of that movie or that pledge. It's over. Now what? However, with Christ those words mean so much more. Jesus is not simply declaring that his life is over. He is declaring that his mission has been accomplished. He is declaring that the plan of God for humanity has been made complete or perfect.

Jesus came to this earth to reverse the sin of Adam and Eve. God had made them perfect and they were without sin. Our first parents didn't want for anything yet they were tempted and fell to the notion that something was lacking in their lives. They couldn't imagine why they were forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. So, they turned their backs on God and went their own way. They grasped at power and thought they would be gods. Instead, they succumbed to fear which would lead to violence and isolation.

Jesus came to show us what the plan of God looks like when we are obedient to the Father. When we do not grasp at power but trust in the power of God that obedience can even lead to a cross. Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them. He touched lepers and even cured them on a Sabbath. He challenged the religious leaders to lift the burdens on the poor, the outcast, and the sinner. Jesus did everything he did to give honor and glory to God. For this was he rejected by His own and nailed to a tree.

Yet, by not grasping at power, by not calling down angels to destroy the Romans and those who crucified him, and by not running away he showed us how to face fear and trust in God. It was in this perfect obedience and love that He reconciles all of humanity by His death on the cross. By His blood we are saved and our sins forgiven.

Jesus fulfilled the mission of the Father and left us an example of faithfulness to follow. Yet, too often we are like the crowds that jeer at the misfortune of others. We ridicule the weak or curse those who are holy because they challenge us to turn away from sin. Jesus' quiet death on the cross and the eerie silence that follows haunt us. We wonder what allows a man to live in such a way and what gives him the courage to die in such a way. Jesus' mission is complete. "It is finished." Our mission has begun. Let us follow in his footsteps and embrace the cross so that our mission will be complete as well.