

I was listening to a book in the car this week called, *I've Been Thinking* by Maria Shriver, and in one part, she was talking about "intestinal fortitude." I admit, I had never heard this euphemism before, and it just grabbed me. People with intestinal fortitude are calm in a storm and have strong stable energy, she explained. It is having courage or "guts" to accomplish hard tasks. It's an inner strength that carries us through our journey. When things look dim or downright scary, when we feel like failures and just want to quit, we need intestinal fortitude to carry on. Jesus certainly had intestinal fortitude to endure his suffering on the cross and to accomplish his work that God called him to do.

Our word from Jesus today is "Finished." What exactly was finished or ended at the cross? Scripture tells us that Jesus was aware of what was to be accomplished. He said in a prayer, "I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do" (John 17:4). And, as he took his last breath, he "knew that all was now finished" (v. 28). He gave his all in order for us to live. Jesus' death accomplished redemption.

Up until this point, people could be redeemed of sin "through a complicated system of sacrifices. Sin separates people from God, and only through a sacrifice of an animal,"¹ often a lamb or ram, could people be forgiven and be clean before God. But people sin continually, so frequent sacrifices were required. Jesus was the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin, which explains the why Jesus is often called the sacrificial lamb. With his death, the complex sacrificial system ended because Jesus took

all sin upon himself once and for all. It's done. It's finished. Jesus did it for us, and now we are redeemed. That means, we can freely approach God because of what Jesus did for us. We ask to be forgiven. The sacrifice has already been made.

The religious leaders and Roman soldiers thought they had finally accomplished their task of getting rid of Jesus. They pushed for the death penalty because getting rid of Jesus, once and for all, would put an end to this "Jesus business." They were sick of hearing about Jesus' miracles. They were tired of having to deal with the threat he caused to their power. They were just done with dealing with the revolution that was brewing. Putting an end to him would put an end to their problem. It would be finished.

Little did they know, that God would turn their finished business into something everlasting, something good, something better for the whole world. The Resurrection proved that not even death is the end. Death is not our end but our guide. Death is the beginning of a resurrected and redeemed new life.

The better question to ask is What wasn't finished? Jesus' ministry wasn't finished. His trained disciples carried that on. Here we are, two thousand years later, and we're still telling the good news. People's lives are still being transformed because of Jesus's work. They couldn't put an end to his ministry. It lives on through us.

God's presence doesn't end here. We can freely approach God, and we see this in the symbolism of the temple veil being torn from top to bottom after Christ's

¹ Life Application Bible Commentary, p. 380.

death. God's presence is no longer restricted in a temple, only for those who are authorized to enter the holy of holies. All of us have access to God now because of Jesus. And, Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matt. 18:20). They couldn't restrain God's presence any longer.

Jesus' love was not finished. They tried to destroy this radical love by destroying him. But the act of destroying, the crucifixion, was redeemed because Jesus faced death with love. Jesus' life wasn't taken from him. He gave it freely to prove that his love has no end. And, Paul assures us that nothing "neither death, nor life, . . . separates us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Jesus' love and work continues through us today. When we love like Jesus loves and serve like Jesus serves, Jesus' love and ministry is carried out through us. God gives each of us work to do, to carry out and accomplish, in order to glorify him and to spread the love of Jesus Christ. Just like he gave Jesus work to do.

There may be things in our lives that we are struggling with, that we are ready for it to be over and done with. We just can't see how we can continue to carry out our work or to accomplish it. We just want the struggle to be done, finished. It may be something that needs to die in order to be redeemed through a new, resurrected way. It may be something that we willingly give up, that we surrender, in order for God to redeem it. It could be a battle that simply isn't ours to fight anymore. Give it up and allow God to pour newness into a dead situation. Rely on the Spirit and intestinal fortitude to accomplish what God has called

us to do. Go find your place and begin your work. Because Jesus finished his, we begin ours.

Jesus was "thirsting" for his work to be finished. He longed to glorify God by accomplishing his work of redemption for all people. He willingly gave his life, so that we could always experience his love and presence. Jesus' arms were wide open, he poured out his life for us, he was gracefully broken. And, we celebrate that act this morning, through the sacrament of holy communion, in which we all receive God's grace.