

**San Jose First
United Methodist Church**

24 North 5th Street
San Jose, CA 95112
<https://sanjosefirst.org>

408-294-7254
Church Office Hours
Mon, Tues, &
Thurs 9:30am–4:00pm

Rev. Jeffrey D. Hall
Senior Pastor
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Pastor Gerardo Vazquez-
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Associate Pastor
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**Pastor's Reflection, Good Friday, 2020
Rev. Jeffrey D. Hall**

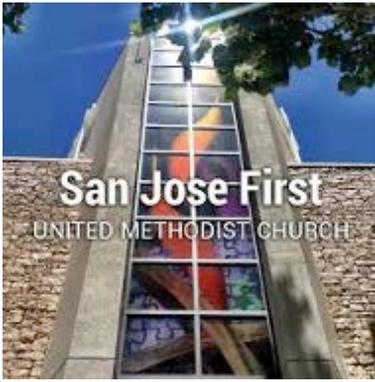
A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:29-30

Michael Renninger recalls a hospital visit he once made. The smell was of human frailty and bodily function. Of sweat and urine. Many of us, he said, don't like hospitals for that reason. And on this particular day, the smell of the hospital hallway was exceptionally unpleasant. He owned the fact that he did not want to be there at all. "I had been a priest well over a decade, but I had never been called upon to do this. I was going to baptize a baby at the hospital. But it's not what you think: The baby was not sick. It was the baby's grandmother who was sick. In fact, she was dying, and we were no longer sure she would be alive on the date the baptism was scheduled at the church. So, we walked down that smelly hospital hallway, and we all gathered in the hospital room. And, there, on the grandmother's bed, we would baptize her grandchild."

The grandmother was propped up in her bed. Renninger placed a large plastic bowl on her lap, on top of her legs that could no longer move. Water was drawn from the sink. The door was closed to keep out the noise in the hallway. "I had trouble reading the Baptism prayers," he said, "I had trouble because I kept looking at what was in front of me. Here was this child, now beginning its life. Here was her grandmother with her life soon ending. One life beginning. Another life ending. Death at hand for one, Death conquered for the other being baptized on that same bed. Life and death. Welcoming and letting go. Beginning and ending. As I prepared to leave, I stood near the husband of the dying woman. He was hugging the father of the baby we had just baptized. And through their own tears, I heard one of them say, "It's finished." To which the other replied, "But it's not over."

It's finished...but it's not over.

In the Gospel of John, the very last words of Jesus are "It is finished." And, on so many levels, that is exactly right. By any ordinary measure Good Friday appeared as total failure. It is death on a cross. It is the crucifixion of hope. Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God. Signs and wonders followed. Less than a week ago the crowds were shouting Hosanna. Today they cry for blood. The time had come to face the facts: it is finished. Jesus seemed to have failed. God's plan, God's love had been nailed to a cross and left hanging lifeless.



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Barbara Brown Taylor notes at that same hour a parade of Passover animals into the temple began. Their owners slaughtered them while priests caught the blood and poured it on the altar. So there were two bloody places in Jerusalem that day: Golgotha and the temple. Both presided over by religious professionals who believed they were doing God's will. That was one thing the clergy and politicians agreed on. By putting Jesus to death, they were doing God's will. Life, Hope, and Love crucified. And it still happens today. It happens in ICU's where a patient breathes their last breath on a ventilator alone. It happens on blood-soaked battlefields. It happens when police shoot unarmed black men. It happens in every mosque, or church, or synagogue blown up by terror.

Yes, when sickness moves over the face of the earth; when the plight of unemployment and poverty cover the land; when our marriages fail, when our hearts get broken, when our dreams die, when we cry out to God and the heavens are silent – all of this and more can feel like Good Friday has had the last word.

We can feel like it is finished. But, thank God, it is not over.

It's not over because crooked and weak politicians will not have the last word. Self-righteous religious leaders and religious systems bankrupt of justice and peace will not have the last word. Hate, fear, and violence will not have the last word. Death will not have the last word. For in the beginning was the Word and the Word was God and he will not be silenced.

It is true: It is finished. But, it is not over because God will not allow it to be over. God did then, God does now, and God shall always have the last word. Just wait three days, and you will hear it.

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
Jeffrey