

It's Sunday, But Jesus Is Coming!

- **John 20:1-8 (MSG)** [1] Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone was moved away from the entrance. [2] She ran at once to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, breathlessly panting, "They took the Master from the tomb. We don't know where they've put him." [3] Peter and the other disciple left immediately for the tomb. [4] They ran, neck and neck. The other disciple got to the tomb first, outrunning Peter. [5] Stooping to look in, he saw the pieces of linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. [6] Simon Peter arrived after him, entered the tomb, observed the linen cloths lying there, [7] and the kerchief used to cover his head not lying with the linen cloths but separate, neatly folded by itself. [8] Then the other disciple, the one who had gotten there first, went into the tomb, took one look at the evidence, and believed.
- What was the "evidence" that so thoroughly convinced Peter and John that Jesus was alive? To answer that question, you would have to understand the horrors they had seen in the previous 48 hours.
- They had been with Him at the last supper as He spoke mysteriously of "one who would betray me" and struck fear into their hearts as they asked "Is it I?"
- They had been with Him in the garden as He prayed in agony for so long that they finally fell asleep from exhaustion. They were there when Judas came to betray Him and they realized the horror of what His earlier words really meant. They tried to defend Him, but who could stand against a Roman legion? They felt a burst of hope when Jesus said, "I can pray to my Father and He can give me twelve legions of angels," then instant despair when He continued, "But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?"
- They had followed Jesus at a distance, lurking in the shadows and outside the gates as He was put through the mockery of six trials between night and morning. They heard with everyone else the fabricated evidence and outright lies against Him, and their hearts sunk at the resounding verdict of "guilty" that echoed from each trial:
 - Before Annas the high priest (John 18:13)
 - Before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57)
 - Before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:59)
 - Before Pilate (Matthew 27:2)
 - Before Herod (Luke 23:7)
 - Before Pilate (Luke 23:11-25)
- They had seen Jesus scourged until He could no longer stand under His own power, His skin literally ripped off in huge gaping patches. They had seen the makeshift crown of thorns pressed into His scalp until His face was dripping with blood; they had seen Him slapped, pummeled and punched until His countenance was permanently marred and He seemed only a grotesque caricature of a man.
- They had hoped beyond hope that when Jesus was taken before the crowds that this nightmare would finally be over. Surely the thousands He had taught and the hundreds He had healed would stand up for Him and convince the Romans that He was harmless to their empire! But with growing horror they watched the mob, under the evil influence of the Sanhedrin, turn a convicted murderer loose and scream "Crucify Him!" until Pilate was pressured to act.
- They had watched, engulfed by the angry mob, scared for their very lives, as Jesus was nailed to the cross and hoisted in the air, hanging naked and humiliated as He writhed in agony. They had watched his labored breathing and groans of pain, fully aware that crucifixion was really death by suffocation. They had heard the last cry, "It is finished," but all their ears heard was, "I am finished."
- They were there when a Roman soldier pierced Jesus' rib cage with a spear, one final injury that screamed the final verdict: He's dead! They were there when His unrecognizable body was unfastened from the cross and laid on the cold ground to be wrapped for burial. They were in the weeping, mourning, grieving procession that carried Jesus to a borrowed tomb. They were there when the huge stone was rolled in place. They had to take that long, long walk home to a life that no longer existed.
- You can chide them for their unbelief if you wish, berate them for their lack of vision, and scold them for not hanging around to see the miracle a few hours later. But you didn't go through the agony they did! You weren't there on Friday when Jesus died! They didn't have an inspiring drama, a stirring concert or a beautiful sunrise service to attend; there had never been an Easter Sunday. Only a Friday that was far, far from "good."
- Dr. Tony Campolo tells the story of a little preaching competition that he had with his pastor during services at the church where he attends. Dr. Campolo tells how he preached the perfect sermon, perfect in every way. He had taken the congregation to the heights of glory. And as he sat down beside his pastor, Dr. Campolo patted him on the knee and simply said, "Top that." The older black pastor looked at him and said, "Boy, watch the master."

It was a simple sermon, starting softly, building in volume and intensity until the entire congregation was completely involved, repeating the phrases in unison. The sermon went like this:

It's Friday. Jesus is arrested in the garden where He was praying. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. The disciples are hiding and Peter's denying that he knows the Lord. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. Jesus is standing before the high priest of Israel, silent as a lamb before the slaughter. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. Jesus is beaten, mocked, and spit upon. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. Those Roman soldiers are flogging our Lord with a leather scourge that has bits of bones and metal, tearing at his flesh. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. The Son of man stands firm as they press the crown of thorns down into his brow. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. See Him walking to Calvary, the blood dripping from His body. See the cross crashing down on His back as He stumbles beneath the load. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. See those Roman soldiers driving the nails into the feet and hands of my Lord. Hear my Jesus cry, Father, forgive them. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. Jesus is hanging on the cross, bloody and dying. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. The sky grows dark, the earth begins to tremble, and He who knew no sin became sin for us. A holy God who will not abide with sin pours out His wrath on that perfect sacrificial lamb who cries out, "My God, My God. Why hast thou forsaken me?" What a horrible cry. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. At the moment of Jesus' death, the veil of the Temple that separates sinful man from Holy God is torn from the top to the bottom. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. Jesus is hanging on the cross, heaven is weeping and hell is partying. But that's because it's Friday, and they don't know it yet, but Sunday's coming.

And on that horrible day 2000 years ago, Jesus the Christ, the Lord of glory, the only begotten Son of God, the only perfect man, died a hideous death on the cross of Calvary. Satan thought he had won the victory. Surely he had destroyed the Son of God.

Finally he had disproved the prophecy God had uttered in the Garden and the one who was to crush his head had been destroyed. But that was Friday.

Now it's Sunday. And just about dawn on that first day of the week, there was a great earthquake. But that wasn't the only thing that was shaking because now it's Sunday. And the angel of the Lord is coming down out of heaven and rolling the stone away from the door of the tomb. Yes, it's Sunday, and the lamb that was silent before the slaughter is now the resurrected lion from the tribe of Judah, for He is not here, the angel says, He is risen!

It's Sunday, and the resurrected Christ has defeated death, hell, sin and the grave. It's Sunday. And now everything has changed. Because it's Sunday, Jesus lives in my life, and he can live in yours. All because it's Sunday and the Lamb of Calvary did not stay in the tomb. He is risen and He lives forevermore.

(By the way, Dr. Campolo was forced to admit defeat at the hands of his beloved pastor.)

- What Peter and John saw on Easter Sunday morning was an empty tomb, but more than that – empty grave clothes! The body of Jesus, covered with sticky myrrh and resin, coated with overpowering spices, and wrapped like a mummy in the long strips of a linen shroud, had passed through the graveclothes leaving them intact! Jesus was indeed alive!
- Dr. Simon Greenleaf, Royall Professor of Law at Harvard University, lectured for years on how to break down testimony and determine whether or not a witness is lying. He said: "The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of [such] heroic constancy ... and unflinching courage. It is therefore impossible that [the disciples] could have persisted in affirming [these] truths ... had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact ... There is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than for just about any other event in history."
- The crucifixion of Jesus wasn't only a stupid move on the part of the Sanhedrin, but on the part of the devil! He couldn't see what was coming! He was playing right into the hands of the Almighty!
- **1 Corinthians 2:7** Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known [the hidden wisdom of God] they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

- But before we go on our way rejoicing in the resurrection today, let me ask the question that begs an answer. Let me ask the question that every skeptic and cynic is asking today as we gather to celebrate Easter. Allow me to be brutally honest and dare to mouth the words of our harshest critics for just a moment. **It's Sunday, and what difference has the resurrection of Jesus Christ really made in the world? It's Sunday, and what does it matter?**
- It's Sunday in North America and 4,000 unborn children will be aborted in the next 24 hours. One out of four children will be sexually or physically abused. Five thousand teens will attempt suicide; thirteen will succeed. Sixteen young adults will be murdered. Over two thousand unmarried teens will get pregnant. It's Sunday, and what does it matter?
- It's Sunday in North America and this weekend 5,000 parents will tell their children they're divorcing. One out of every twenty adults will not have a job to go to tomorrow. Over 85,000 people will die. Out of that number, 17,000 will die of some kind of cancer. It's Sunday, and what does it matter?
- It may be Easter Sunday, but throughout the world, people in the pews are still dealing with the effects of abuse and divorce, crime and violence, life-threatening diseases, unemployment or "under employment," depression, and grief from a the loss of a loved one. It's Sunday, and what does it matter?
- In fact, holidays sometimes have a way of compounding our sense of loss. Perhaps there will be one less person at Easter dinner because of a death or divorce. Maybe there is less on the table because of financial pressures. It's Sunday, and what does it matter?
- "It's Friday, but Sunday's coming" is not always comforting. But that's only half of the story of Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation provides – as Paul Harvey would say – "The Rest of the Story."
- **Revelation 19:11-16 (KJV)** And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.
- **Revelation 21:1-4 (KJV)** And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
- **It's Sunday, but Jesus is coming!**
- It's Sunday. Environmentalists warn of global warming, acid rain, depletion of the ozone layer, and carcinogens in our food. It's Sunday, but Jesus is coming!
And I saw a new heaven and a new earth ...
- It's Sunday. Political unrest and corruption affects virtually every country in the world. Christians are oppressed, persecuted, and executed by ungodly governments. It's Sunday, but Jesus is coming!
And in righteousness he doth judge and make war ... and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.
- It's Sunday. Today, two billion people throughout the world will go to bed hungry. Millions throughout the world are suffering from abuse and illness. Many more millions are grieving the loss of loved ones due to sickness and war. It's Sunday, but Jesus is coming!
And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:
- It's Sunday. Unfortunately, the actual celebration of Easter may actually distract us from the very One we seek to honor. We'll spend our time practicing for concerts and dramas, buying new clothes, and preparing Sunday dinners, and we forget the real meaning behind this momentous, miraculous day. It's Sunday, but Jesus is coming!
And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.
- **It's still just Sunday, but Jesus is coming!**