

# Easter Sunday

*It's no longer Saturday!*

The first Easter Sunday was so good because that Saturday had been so bad. The enemies of Christ were confident they had put an end to this movement. His work was now a total failure. On Saturday Christ was in the grave. His life was over, His tongue had been silenced, the miracles were finished, the crowds had dispersed, the threat to those in power was neutralised. On that Saturday, the only recorded activity was by the Pharisees, the enemies of Christ. They were no longer concerned with Jesus, but they were still worried about His disciples.

**Matthew 27:62-66** *"The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So, give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first. "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So, they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard."*

Their only concern was those pesky disciples. They were worried they might steal His body. But no concern was necessary because the disciples were in meltdown mode. They had scattered and were hiding in every available section of Jerusalem, for fear of a cross which may have their name on it. Saturday was a very hard day. Saturday had no courage, no hope. None of the disciples were thinking 'so what are you going to say when you see Jesus tomorrow?' or 'I wonder what Jesus is going to look like tomorrow?' No one was thinking they would see Jesus on Sunday. They were stuck in Saturday and Saturday was full of utter despair. You would think someone would have remembered one of the many times Jesus promised He would come back on the third day. Statements like,

**Mark 9:31** *"The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."*

Wouldn't you think someone would remember this and do the math? Let's see He was killed yesterday, today is Saturday, tomorrow is Sunday . . . okay, 1 day, 2 days, tomorrow is the 3rd day . . . *"you know fellas, I think we ought to get up early tomorrow."* But nobody connects the dots. Saturday has no hope, no courage and on Sunday, they come to embalm Him, not to talk to Him.

**Mark 16:1-3** *"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"*

That sure doesn't seem like an Easter parade, does it? There's no victory on the faces or in the hearts of the followers of Jesus. It may have been Sunday morning, but they were stuck in the hopelessness of Saturday.

Do you ever feel like your world is stuck on Saturday? Do you ever feel like you just can't find anything good? Every day is a rainy day, the sky is always grey. There are no silver linings, and the story always has an unhappy ending. There's just no more courage, no hope, no reason to be positive. Do you ever feel like your world is stuck on Saturday? Then when you put your hope in something or in someone, either they let you down, or worse of all, they die.

Death seems like the ultimate insult. I mean, you do the best you can, you pay your dues to the world, you really try to make a difference, you try to do what's right, you try to stay healthy, you try to eat right and exercise, follow the rules . . . but nobody out-lives death. In the end you die. I don't care who you are; from the wealthiest to the poorest. Even Elvis - died. Princess Diana - died, Martin Luther King Jr. - died, and there's just something about that which sucks our lives into a Saturday state of mind.

You find yourself at a funeral, and it hits you, this is it? I can't outrun it, I can't do anything to avoid it, it's going to happen . . . some day. The fact is, **if you don't have an answer for the grave, then you're stuck on Saturday for your whole life.** You may have your moments, but if you don't have an answer for the grave, let me tell you, you're stuck on Saturday, and that's why I love Easter. Because to every single person, Easter gives us this promise: death is not a dead end, it's simply an exit ramp, from this life to the best life.

Have you thought about how you will face your final moments? It's not a pleasant thought, is it? But what would it take for you to be able in your final moments, not to cower from death, but to face it, if not with excitement, then at least with courage? How would it be to face death unafraid?

Let me tell you how Jesus enables us to do that. He moves us out of a Saturday mentality, into a Sunday state of mind. He will take us from Saturday where death has defeated life, into Sunday where life has defeated death. He moves us from the last day of death into the first day of life. And all the Easter stories tell us this. One great story is about Mary Magdalene.

**John 20:11-13** *"Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?'" They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."*

Mary Magdalene buried more than a friend that weekend. She buried the only person who ever helped her. We don't know a lot about her, and some people make wild speculations about her, but look at this one sentence:

**Mark 16:9** *"Now when Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons."*

In Scripture the number seven suggests completion. And so, Mary Magdalene was completely afflicted. We don't know what afflicted her, it might have been some type of dependency or depression, but she was completely afflicted. People avoided her. We tend to avoid people like that, don't we? But Jesus didn't. He not only befriended her, but He also delivered her. And when she came to the tomb and found that the body was gone and that the stone was rolled away, it never occurred to her that Jesus was simply following through on what He said He would do. She missed that miracle. She obviously saw the two angels, but she didn't realize they were angels and so she missed them too.

There are times in life when despair is so deep and sadness is so thick and the walls are so high, that we feel like we just can't get out. These are tough times in which we feel the world is closing in on us. We feel if anything bad is going to happen, it's going to happen to me, the only luck I have is bad luck. And God could send miracle after miracle and blessing after blessing and we're told to count our blessings, and but just doesn't work. And we wonder what does Jesus do during those times. And here is the answer.

**John 20:14-15** *"At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?'"*

Do you see what Jesus did? He didn't give up on Mary. Most of us would have. We'd think, 'look, there's angels sitting there talking to you, the tomb is empty, come on Mary, get the message.' But Jesus didn't. The empty tomb and the angels didn't open her eyes. So, Jesus took matters into His own hands, and He came and spoke to her. He didn't tell her to get herself together and to toughen up. He spoke to her with tenderness, *"Mary, why are you crying on this first Easter morning?"*

He came to her like a gentle Shepherd. Why would He do this? I'll tell you why – because He is Jesus, and Jesus does that. He's ever patient, ever caring. He's the heart of God. He's so patient with you and me. The prophet Micah asked this question about God:

**Micah 7:18-19** *"Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us ..."*

Once again, Jesus will have compassion on you. I know there are some of you who are passing through seasons of life in which there is great sadness, you're in the valley, it's like being in a slump, and it's really hard. Maybe it's the economy, maybe it's family issues, maybe it's your health, maybe it's a job, maybe it's just one problem on top of another. At some point, when we hit the valley, we tend to think God must really be mad at me. And we start to feel bad about feeling bad. We think, *'If I really had it together, I'd get out of this thing. And I'm tired of feeling bad, and if I'm tired of feeling bad, then God must really be tired of me feeling bad. He's probably just mad at me.'* And stories like this one are in the Bible to let us know that is not the case - they remind us that God is patient and long suffering with His children.

God is more patient with you, than you are with yourself. He comes and He brings you a message which says, Saturday has come, it's here, it's today, but Saturday is always followed by Sunday. Am I wrong? What was yesterday? What's today? Look it happened again! Saturdays are always followed by Sundays. Or as the Psalmist told us:

**Psalms 30:5** *"Weeping may go on all night, but joy comes with the morning."*

So, be patient, God is patient, be patient with yourself. Eventually that season passes. Saturday has gone and Sunday is here. When a Saturday comes, do what Mary did, notice her words to the angels *"They have taken my Lord away. . ."*

She kept calling Jesus her Lord. In tough times, Jesus remained her Lord. Anybody can call Jesus Lord on the good days. When we are stuck in the Saturdays of life, it's not as easy to call Jesus Lord. But when we can continue to call Jesus Lord on Saturday, how good it will be when the Sunday comes.

Listen to the end of the story . . .

**John 20:15** *"Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."*

Listen to her devotion to Jesus. Did you catch what she just said? She was so devoted to Jesus, that she wanted to get His body and bring it back. But also note, she still didn't get the point of what was to happen on day three. And Jesus was so touched by her devotion.

**John 20:16** *"Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (Which means "Teacher")."*

When she heard Jesus call her name, she knew who He was. Someday we will hear Jesus call our name and some day in heaven when you hear Jesus call your name, all the pain of life on earth will have been worth it. Someday, let's talk it over in heaven. See if I'm not telling you the truth. When you hear Jesus call your name, you'll say whatever struggle it took, He didn't forget, He knew my name. And when I heard Him call my name it was all worth it.

Listen to your heavenly father, your heavenly king, He knows you and He knows you by name. He doesn't just see humanity, He sees individuals. He sees us all, and He knows us by name. You call Him Lord; He calls you by name.

The Bible says, if we're willing to confess His name on earth, He will confess our name in heaven. You need to hold onto that. He has moved into Sunday, and He wants you to follow. It's not Saturday anymore. It may be Saturday in your state of mind, it may be Saturday in your outlook and in your emotions, but God has already flipped the page on the calendar. We've moved out of the state of death and sin, and we've moved into the era of life and grace. That move took place 2,000 years ago. And anyone who wants to follow God from Saturday to Sunday can do so.

We believe that because there was a movement in the tomb containing Jesus on that Sunday morning. And the eyes that had fallen shut on the cross opened beneath the shroud, and the hands that had fallen limp behind the nails straightened and strengthened beneath the veil. The lips which had grown quiet on Saturday spread into a soft smile on Sunday. Because there was much to smile about. The penalty for sin had been paid. It is finished.

Death had lost its sting. That dead end street is simply an exit ramp from this life to the next life. It is no longer Saturday. Saturday's sadness turned into Sunday's joy and the beauty of Sunday stood up in the tomb and the beauty of Sunday stepped out into the Sunday morning dawn and told person after person what some of you are hearing Him say for the first time in your life:

*"Sunday is here! You don't have to be afraid of the grave any longer and you don't have to live in guilt anymore. Your sins are forgiven, your death is defeated. It's no longer Saturday!"*