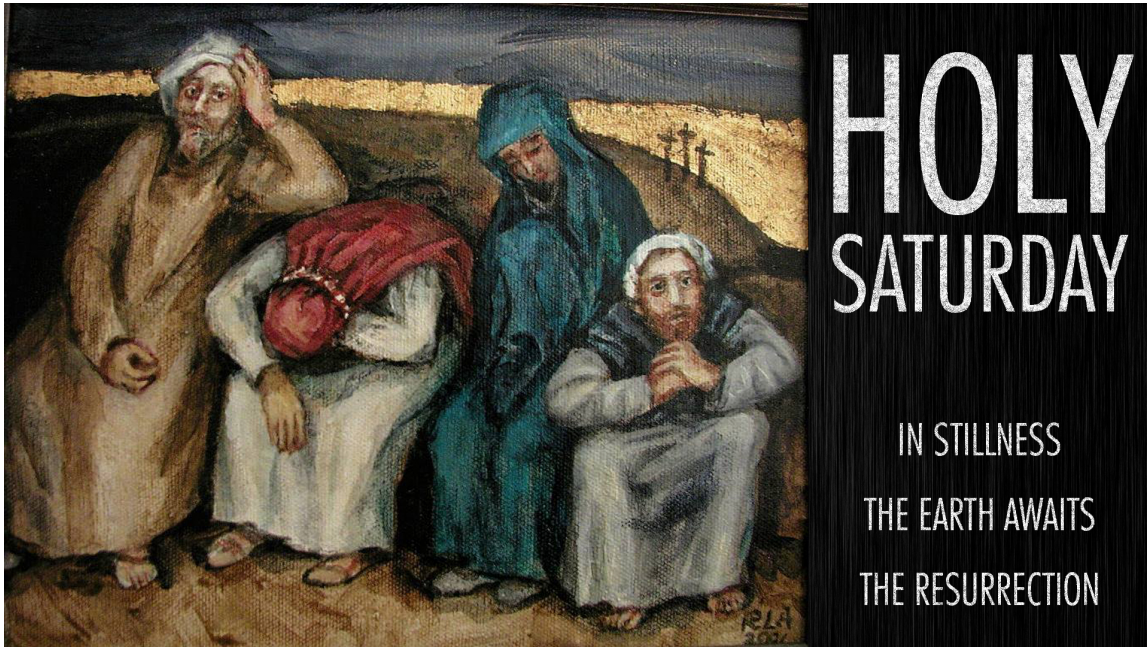


The Saturday of JESUS' PASSION WEEK, April 11, 2020

Turn off the outside "noise" for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God's Word.
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.



"Holy Saturday," by Roxolana Luczakowsky Armstrong, a Byzantine Catholic, is based largely on Eastern iconography. She has said that the painting came as a "personal mystical experience. It involves the special privilege of trust that the Mother of Jesus was given in that dark moment while her son was in the tomb. It is meant to invite the viewer to contemplation of the Passion and personal trust."

For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized.
COLOSSIANS 2:12b (NLT)

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.
When Christ, who is your life, appears,
then you also will appear with him in glory.
COLOSSIANS 3:3-4 (NIV)

HOLY SATURDAY is the day after GOOD FRIDAY, but before EASTER SUNDAY. **On this day, we wait.**

John Ortberg provides our meditation for HOLY SATURDAY. The following is adapted from his message "Saturday," given April 17, 2011 at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church.

YESTERDAY WAS FRIDAY, and it was an unbelievable, dense day. It goes from the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' arrest, then the trial with the Sanhedrin, then He's before Pilate, then there's the crucifixion. It's so dense. Everybody has a different agenda, and it's like all this darkness comes out. Jesus actually chooses, "I will take it all on Me." Friday is the darkest day in the history of the human race.

Then Sunday is this amazing day when the stone gets rolled away and this man comes back to life. Nobody saw Sunday coming. Sunday is the day where there is just the most death-defying, grave-defeating, fear-destroying, hope-inspiring, awesome, life-giving, transcendent joy in the history of the world. The world has still never really recovered from what happened on Sunday. Our world has not gotten over it yet.

This isn't Sunday. This isn't Friday. This is SATURDAY. The day after this but the day before that. The day after a prayer gets prayed but before it gets answered. The day after a soul gets crushed way down but before it gets at all lifted up. It's this kind of strange day, this Saturday. It's the in-between day. Not Friday. Not Sunday. In between despair and joy. In between utter confusion and blinding clarity. In between bad news and good news. In between darkness and light. In between hate and love. In between death and life. It's the in-between day.

It's kind of odd because so much is happening on Sunday. So much is happening on Friday. **Nothing happens on Saturday.** At the heart of the Jesus story, at the heart of human history are these three days: Friday, Saturday, Sunday. The first day and the third day are so packed with action, event, emotion, drama, detail, we could literally talk for a year and not scratch the surface. Some of the brightest people in the history of world devote their lives to those two days. They are literally the two most studied, written about days in human history.

Then there's Saturday. Even in the Bible (outside this one little detail about guards being posted to watch the tomb), we're told nothing about anything happening on Saturday. On Good Friday our sins get paid for. On Easter Sunday our hope is brought to life. **Saturday is the day with no name, the day when nothing happened.**

When C.S. Lewis wrote his memoirs about coming to faith in Jesus, he called it *Surprised by Joy*. It's a great book if you've never read it. It's about how his love of joy (longing desire) is what led him ultimately to faith in Jesus.

When he wrote the book, Lewis was a lifelong confirmed bachelor, 57 years old. He had recently met a woman who he ended up marrying (after the book was published). Anybody want to guess what her name was? It was Joy. So his friends said to him, *"You really were surprised by Joy!"*

After a lifetime of waiting for Lewis, he's given this gift, this unexpected love, only for a couple of years of happiness. It was really fleeting. She got cancer (it was tragic) and died a lingering, very painful death. So C.S. Lewis wrote another book. This one is not called *Surprised by Joy*. This one is called *A Grief Observed*. **This is a Saturday book.**

This is what he writes.

"When you are happy, so happy you have no sense of needing God, so happy you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be—or so it feels—welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become...What can this mean? Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?"

I'd like to end this with a prayer. It's from a book, a fabulous book, called *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday*, written by a guy named Allen Lewis. Took him years and years to write it. While he was writing it, he was diagnosed with the terminal cancer that would kill him. It didn't get published until after he died. He wrote it in between Friday (the shadow of death) and Sunday (the day of resurrection). It ended up being not just a book about Saturday. It was *his* Saturday. These are the closing words from a dying man. They are our prayer.

"Oh heavenly Father, hear our prayer for a world still living an EASTER SATURDAY existence, oppressed and lonely, guilty of godlessness, and convinced of God-forsakenness. Be still tomorrow the God You are today and yesterday already were: God with us in the grave, but pulling thus the sting of death and promising in Your final kingdom an even greater victory of abundant grace and life over the magnitude of sin and death. For Your blessed burial into which we were baptized, may You be glorified forever and ever, amen."

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For all who are grieving, waiting for the morning, may the love of God be with you,

Pastor Doug

P.S. Please be praying for God to pour out His love, kindness and grace on our guests and visitors this Sunday — our first **online EASTER CELEBRATION!**

We would love to hear from you! How are you doing right now? And we would love to pray for you! Email us at info@bethanyonline.net

P.P.S. Keep checking our “ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TODAY” at www.bethanyonline.net — we will try to post fresh encouragement **every day** during this crisis!

P.P.P.S. And watch our **LIVE-STREAM Worship Service** this coming Sunday at 10:30 A.M. for more encouragement.