

Many of you are familiar with Tony Campolo's classic sermon, **"It's Friday, but Sunday's Coming."** It was based on a sermon Tony once heard his African-American pastor preach on Good Friday. This pastor began his message by quietly saying, "It's Friday and my Jesus is hanging dead on a tree. But it's Friday, and Sunday's coming."

One of the deacons yelled, **"Preach, brother, preach!"** It was all Tony needed to start preaching louder.

"It's Friday, and Mary's crying her eyes out and the disciples are scattered like sheep without a shepherd. But it's Friday, and Sunday's coming."

And he keeps working on that one phrase over and over again. "It's Friday, but Sunday's coming. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming" until he reaches the climax of that great message. And he shouts out, "It's Friday!" and the whole congregation stands up and with one voice shouts back, "But Sunday's coming!"

Well, friends, it is my great privilege to stand before you this Easter Sunday 2025 and to declare to you, **Sunday's here! Easter Sunday's here!** Our greatest fears have been proved unsupported and our greatest hopes have been realized. Death has been defeated. Hate has done its worst and love has forever triumphed. **Sunday's here and Jesus Christ is risen from the grave.**

In our reading today, it was early Sunday morning. It was still dark. Mary Magdalene is making her way to the tomb. Mary Magdalene loved Jesus so very much. Mark tells us that Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary (Mark 16:9). We don't know what that means--the casting out of demons. Some people believe Mary Magdalene had been a prostitute before she met Jesus. We don't know. The "seven demons" may refer to a complex illness, not to any form of sinfulness. Whatever the seven demons referred to, it was life-changing for Mary Magdalene when she met Jesus, as it is for most people. She became one of his most devoted followers.

Mary Magdalene was present at Christ's crucifixion even though most of his followers had scattered. Now she is the first to come to his tomb on that first Easter Sunday morning. She is unprepared for what she finds there. The stone that had sealed Christ's tomb has been removed. His body is gone. Not knowing what else to do Mary runs to find two of Jesus' closest disciples, Simon Peter and John, and says to them, **"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"** Perhaps, they thought, grave robbers had stolen Jesus' body, or the Roman authorities, or some misguided religious zealots. Who knows who it might have been? But his body was missing. It's interesting. **Notice that none of those who had been closest to Jesus suggested that he could be risen from the grave.**

That's one sign that makes these stories **"Truly Authentic."** The reactions that took place during these events are "very real" --SO REAL THAT EVEN TODAY THESE EVENTS BRING THE "RESURRECTION" ALIVE TO YOU AND ME. Later Jesus' disciples would recall how many times he had said to them things like, **"I am the resurrection and the life,"** but when he actually **"rose from the dead,"** they were just as shocked as anyone else. **Such things as people rising from the dead were not part of their reality, just like it is not part of ours.** We would like to believe that the dead live on . . . that the grave is not the end. **But until one man rose from the dead, it was not something that THEY or WE could count on.**

But on that Sunday long ago a man emerged from a tomb . . . and then we knew beyond a doubt, **death had been defeated. Friday was over; Sunday was finally here-Here to have the Final Say in Our Lives.**

It is said that when Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) of England when she was dying exclaimed, **"I will give all my possessions for a few moments of time!"** Isn't that the hope of us all--especially for those we love--that there will always be more time? But what evidence do we have of that except for Easter Sunday? **Sunday's here and Jesus is alive!**

But do not be misled. **The Bible is very forthright. Fridays are still very much a part of life.**

Imagine what Mary Magdalene felt on Friday as she stood at the foot of the cross and watched her beloved Master be put to death. She heard the jeers and mockery of the crowd. **She had been there when they cried for a known murderer, Barabbas, to be set free, but the innocent Jesus to be crucified.** And there he was . . . stretched out on a cross with nails pounded through his hands and feet. His naked body hung between two common criminals, exposing his shame. The

soldiers mocked him, spat upon him, pierced him and left him exposed to the elements to die. *The Bible is very forthright in acknowledging FRIDAY'S EVENTS. They are part of living in this world.*

While Marshall Shelley was editing the notes for what would become *The Quest Study Bible*, his wife gave birth to their first child, a daughter who was severely handicapped both mentally and physically. Shelley, who is editor of *Leadership Journal* for pastors and a respected Christian leader, faced another test of faith eighteen months later when a second child was born . . . who lived for only one minute. And then, six months after that, his first child died. It didn't matter that she had limitations. There was an enormous hole in his heart.

Shelley says by this time he was full of some honest and hard questions for God. You can understand that. You've had those same questions if you've watched a loved one suffer. Marshall Shelley asked those questions. Afterward he said, **"God's not offended by [our asking questions]. In fact, He invites them—ALL OF THEM!"** We don't know how God renewed Marshall Shelley's faith after those two tragedies, but He did.

Don't think you are the first believer to face FRIDAY & Its Sufferings, Its Afflictions. That is part of life's fabric. And growth in our relationship with God can be a BIG PART of what FRIDAY Promises US!! Yes, the Bible is very forthright in acknowledging that life is filled with Friday's events.

But the Bible is equally clear that FRIDAY is not God's FINAL WORD. Sunday is God's ultimate answer to life's most profound questions ABOUT THE END. Death and darkness have been defeated. Christ is risen from the grave. **EASTER SUNDAY HAS THE FINAL SAY!!**

On that first Easter Sunday, Mary Magdalene, Peter and John were confused. Where is his body? Peter and John start a footrace to the tomb. John outruns Peter and arrives first, but, for some reason, is reluctant to go in first. He bends over and looks in but he does not enter. Maybe it's his fear of defilement. Maybe he doesn't want confirmation of what the women had reported. Maybe his heart cannot take the reality of Jesus' missing body. Something, though, holds him back.

When Peter arrives at the tomb, however, he plunges right in--so like Simon Peter. He sees the grave clothes and the burial cloth. After a period, John goes in, too, and also sees the grave clothes. The scene has a different effect on John than it did on Peter. It may be that John perceived the missing body and the position of the clothes as a sign that this was not a robbery. The grave clothes were in good order. If thieves had gone with the body, the clothes would not have been so well arranged. Whatever the reason, Luke makes a point of saying that "John believed." It may be that John was already beginning to remember the things Jesus told them.

The grave clothes, which are in good order, should serve as a metaphor for us, too. It should remind us that while we are mourning, **God has already ordered things for our good.** Christ triumphed over death and the grave. He has defeated our final enemy. The reality of the resurrection instructs us that there is victory on the other side of our pain--that it is not over until God says it is over. God in his great love is coming to redeem us.

William H. Hinson, in his book *Solid Living in a Shattered World*, tells about a man named Sutherland whose story was detailed in *Time* magazine many years ago. Mr. Sutherland's son was missing in action in the Second World War. There was no word whether the boy was dead or alive. Mr. Sutherland was alone in the world, so he held onto the hope that somewhere, somehow his son was still alive.

One Easter Sunday morning as he was walking through King's Cross Station in London on his way to church, **Mr. Sutherland saw across the multitude, a familiar face--a face he thought was his son's.** They locked eyes for a moment, then the man that he believed to be his son turned and walked hurriedly away and was lost in the crowd. **Mr. Sutherland was convinced that his son was alive and had amnesia.** He withdrew all his savings and spent everything he had traveling across England/Scotland, posting pictures of his son and his own name, address and phone number.

Every Easter Sunday morning Mr. Sutherland returned to King's Cross Station to search out every face to see if he might find his son again. He had been doing that for ten years when the *Time* article was written.

There is a great deal of sadness in that story--the kind of sadness that produced the missing children's network in our own land and lingering concern over soldiers missing in action in such conflicts as Vietnam. But there is also a lot of love in this story--a love only a parent can know. **I have no doubt that Mr. Sutherland did one day find his boy,** though probably

not in the places he had been looking. **He found him when he himself was in the arms of his heavenly Father. For you see, the Father's love is the best assurance we have that SUNDAY IS COMING.**

The Bible is very Clear in acknowledging the FRIDAY EVENTS in our life. However, it is equally clear that SUNDAY IS COMING & GOD HAS THE FINAL WORD.

And that brings us to today--Easter 2025. We are those who live on the other side of the RESURRECTION. We are those who have the privilege of knowing that God is with us and that neither life nor death can separate us from God's love. **How are you living out that GOOD NEWS in your life?**

So many people nowadays are filled with hopelessness and despair. So many are filled with anger and fear. **Are we not Easter people?**

Have we not gotten the word that, though there will always be Fridays until the day the Lord takes us home, **SUNDAY IS COMING?** REMEMBER, God loves us so much that He will not leave us in grief or the grave.

One of the finest preachers of the 20th century was John Claypool. In an Easter sermon he told of a dream he once had. It was close to Easter time, and he dreamed he had died. In his dream he found himself moving through a cool, dark tunnel. And then he came out in what he could only describe as ***KINDLY LIGHT...WHERE...He was accepted. He was embraced. He was welcomed.*** Suddenly a voice spoke his name and said, ***"Welcome. I have some questions of you."***

He thought to himself, ***"Here is going to come a catalog of all the complaints against my living."***

But the voice said to him, ***"Can you weep for all the pain you've caused others and you've caused yourself; for the way you've abused power or neglected power; for the things you've done that you wish you hadn't done and the things you have left undone you wish you had done?"***

John Claypool said he began to remember many of the things in life for which he had deep regret and there was a powerful sense of sadness in his being.

But then the voice said, ***"Let me ask you a second thing. Can you laugh at all the funny stories that you heard, all the hilarious things that you've witnessed, and the good things that have happened?"***

He began to think about all of the goodness and mercy that he'd experienced. A great sense of laughter began to well up deep from within him and it seemed as if God Himself was laughing about him.

But then when the laughter had died down **the voice said,** ***"I have another question to ask you. Do you want any more of it, this life that I want to give you? Do you want more of it?"***

Claypool said he remembers thinking there's nothing automatic about this answer. "Here's the pain of life. Here's the wonder of life. Do I want more of this bittersweet reality that I have experienced? From somewhere deep within me the words rose up, ***'Yes, yes, I do want more of it.'***"

And with that the VOICE: THE LIGHT said, ***"Welcome. That's what I want to give you. It is my good pleasure to give you life abundantly. Therefore, enter into the joy of your Lord."***

And at that, in the dream, he says he seemed to plunge further and deeper into a great ocean of light.

You know what day it was in John Claypool's life, don't you? It was Sunday, Easter Sunday.

SUNDAY'S COMING for every person who believes that Jesus Christ has overcome the grave. This is not a denial of life's suffering and sorrow. Even Jesus, the innocent Son of God HAD HIS FRIDAY! But remember this whenever you are going through a sorrowful/painful time. This is only Friday. Also, remember, Friday is not God's final word.

SUNDAY IS GOD'S FINAL WORD. EASTER SUNDAY! Jesus Christ is risen from the grave! Hallelujah!

Amen