

### **The Saturday In-between (Mark 11:1-11)**

Good Friday and Easter Sunday are important “named” days on our Christian calendar. Our lives are framed by these days as we live on the nameless Saturday in-between. Known as the day of vigil or waiting, that day has no name. What the disciples experienced on a small scale – three days in grief over one man who had died on a cross – we now live out on a much larger scale. Human history is lived out in-between the time of promise – Good Friday and the crucifixion – the fulfillment of that promise – Easter and the Resurrection.

We believe that God remains steadfast in his love for us and continues to be actively involved in human history – creating and recreating. Even so, we live out our human history in the midst of pain and suffering in the world. We are asked to trust that in the fullness of time God will make something holy, beautiful, and good out of a world that includes war, poverty, corruption, injustice, abuse and overcrowded prisons. Even in the richest nation on earth? But it’s still Saturday here on planet Earth and we are waiting. The burning question is, “Will Sunday ever come?” Please pray with me.

God of the Eastertide, we do live our lives on Saturday, the day with no name, the day of waiting. Open the scripture to us this morning that your grace through the sacrifice and struggle of Jesus Christ may be made real in

the Saturdays of our lives. Lead us through those Saturdays into the fulfillment of your promise – eternal life. In Christ Jesus we pray. Amen.

The idea of Saturday as a nameless day on the church calendar comes from the book, *The Jesus I Never Knew* by Philip Yancey.<sup>1</sup> Do you ever wonder where the *good* is on Good Friday? The answer lies in Easter. Good Friday can only be deemed good because of what happened on the other side of the Saturday in-between – Easter. Our Easter hymn this morning reminds us that on Easter Sunday Christ opened up paradise. Easter tore a hole in the cosmos and exposed a world that was spiraling downward in the midst of its humanity. God once again entered into history in a powerful way with the Resurrection and God’s promise in the New Covenant – eternal life.

Christians the world over are rejoicing today, reveling in the joy of the Easter celebration. In spite of the joy of Easter it is important for us to remember that tomorrow the human drama continues. Tomorrow we will return to living on Saturday, the in-between day with no name. Even with the assurance of God’s promise that the kingdom is coming, it is still Saturday here on planet Earth until that Sunday dawns.

The picture Yancey paints for us who live on the Saturday in-between the crucifixion and the Resurrection is rather

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<sup>1</sup> Citation: Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Zondervan, 1995)

gloomy. He uses it as a metaphor for the time of waiting, waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise. He suggests that the day in-between Good Friday and Easter Sunday is the reality of our lives – the way we live our lives – always waiting for the kingdom to come.

He tells the story of a woman whose grandmother is buried under a 150 year-old live oak tree in the cemetery of an Episcopal church in rural Louisiana. According to the grandmother's wishes, a single word appears on her headstone: "Waiting." Yancey goes on to reflect that even though "Jesus casts a vision for a better kingdom now and in the future, as long as it is Saturday, the fulfillment of that vision still awaits until Sunday dawns,"<sup>2</sup>

Saturday, that nameless day in-between, is more than a day of waiting. Saturday is also a day of transformation. Jesus was placed in the tomb on Friday as a broken man. The Christ emerged on Sunday with new life – no longer human but now divine. As he appeared to the disciples and others, he looked like the same man who died on the cross, but he was somehow changed. He was transformed.

Transformation does not come easy. We know from Jesus that transformation requires sacrifice. Transformation implies change from one attitude to another. Transformation requires obedience to the will of God. Transformation requires struggle. Just as it was for Jesus in the tomb on Saturday, so it is for us on our Saturday – we must also be transformed.

In this way, Saturday is also a day of struggle. Some of us who participated in the prayer vigil yesterday meditated on what took place inside the tomb on Saturday. We can't possibly

know what happened in that tomb, but like the balance of Jesus' ministry, it surely must have involved struggle. Whatever happened, I believe Jesus didn't simply sit inside the tomb waiting for Sunday. And neither should we spend our lives waiting – living on Saturday – the day in-between God's promise and the fulfillment of that promise.

While we can't begin to know the mystery of Saturday in the tomb, we can certainly know what is happening inside our own tombs. As we live on the Saturday in-between Good Friday and Easter, we experience our own trials and tribulations. We must wrestle with our own faith on the Saturday in-between God's promise and the fulfillment of that promise.

God never promised that living a life of faith would be easy. With Jesus as our model for a life of faith it is easy to see this is true. But God did promise us a life of abundance. Not necessarily abundance in terms of the material trappings of our human life, but abundant life in the Spirit. We struggle with matters of faith – what we believe and why we believe it. We all struggle with living in a world that includes war, poverty, corruption, injustice, abuse and overcrowded prisons. We struggle with the realization that it's still Saturday here on planet Earth and we are waiting. We struggle with that burning question, "Will Sunday ever come?"

In our struggle to live out the Saturday in-between we can become disillusioned by the realities of the human drama. That burning question of "Will Sunday ever come?" takes over our lives and consumes us. And we struggle with our faith. It is at these times we need to be reminded that struggle is not only necessary but it is a

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

good thing. Struggle is built into the nature of our humanity and it serves a purpose in life, just as it is with the butterfly.

The transformation from a fuzzy caterpillar to a beautiful butterfly is rooted in struggle. The butterfly depends on struggle for its new life of beauty. You may have heard the story of the little boy who lovingly and caringly raised a caterpillar. As the butterfly began to emerge from the cocoon, the boy was excited, but soon he became concerned.

The butterfly was struggling so hard to get out! It looked like it couldn't break free! It looked desperate! The boy was so concerned he decided to help. With a scissors he snipped away at the cocoon to make the hole bigger. His plan worked and the butterfly quickly emerged effortlessly from its cocoon.

When the butterfly came out the boy was surprised. It had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. He continued to watch the butterfly expecting that, at any moment, the wings would dry out, enlarge and expand to support the swollen body. But it never happened!

The crippled butterfly soon died. You see, the butterfly was supposed to struggle. In fact, the butterfly's struggle through the tiny opening is purposely designed to push life-sustaining fluids out from its body and into its wings. Without the struggle, the butterfly can't fly.<sup>3</sup>

As we live through the Saturday in-between Good Friday and Easter we need to embrace the struggle of waiting. There is joy in waiting. Jesus is our model. As Jesus was transformed and

raised to new life out of the struggle in the tomb, so too will we be raised. With the assurance we find in the Resurrection we live not in the shadow of the crucifixion, but in the light of the Resurrection.

That dark question, "Will Sunday ever come" fades in the dawn the Resurrection. Every day is a new day – a little Easter. We live on the Saturday in-between with that assurance that Sunday is just around the corner.

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from  
<http://instructor.mstc.edu/instructor/swallerm/Struggle%20-%20Butterfly.htm>