

“It’s Friday but Sunday’s Coming”

Ezekiel 37:12–14

Psalm 130:1–8

Romans 8:8–11

John 11:25a–26

John 11:3–7, 17, 20–27, 33b–45

Homily for March 26, 2023

Lent 5

We are heading ever closer to the Triduum. But here two weeks out from the marking of the central events of our Faith we have in today’s Gospel the Passion and Resurrection brought together. The Passion reminds us that there is always that Friday called “Good”. But, the Resurrection proclaims that Sunday’s coming.

Lazarus’ death anticipates the Lord’s passion and ours. But his being brought back to life affirms the glorious conviction that only Christians have, that while it’s Friday, Sunday’s coming.

Now think about this conviction with me for a while this morning.

It's Friday. Mary, Jesus' mother is crying her eyes out. That's her son up there on the cross. He's dying the agonizing death of crucifixion as a criminal. But it's only Friday, and Sunday's coming.

"The apostles were really down and out. Jesus, their leader, was being killed by evil men. But it was only Friday and Sunday’s coming.

"The Devil thought he’d won.'You thought you could outwit me,' he said, 'but I've got you now.' But Devil remember, it was only Friday and Sunday’s coming.

"It's Friday and evil has triumphed over good. Jesus is dying up there on the cross. The world is turned upside down. This shouldn't happen. But it's only Friday and Sunday’s coming.

Mary Magdalen was beside herself. Jesus, the one who had loved her like no other and had brought her from sin to grace could not believe it! Now he was dead. But remember Mary, it's only Friday and Sunday’s coming.

Jesus was told that his friend Lazarus was sick, and please Lord would you come. Three times we are told in this passage that Jesus loved Lazarus, Mary and Martha.

- So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.
- Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus,
- So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!

So much love and yet when told that Lazarus was ill, Jesus did not go to them right away but stayed two more days where he was. But Jesus why? Why did you not go sooner? The one you loved was ill and by the time you got there Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

Oh the ways of Jesus can at times seem bewildering to us. Have you ever been with Martha, who upon Jesus' arrival cried out:

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Moments later Mary sees her Lord and kneeling at his feet, declares:

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

John paints this passion scene for us, so that we can enter in this Friday experience.

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34 He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus began to weep.

Jesus began to weep. That is because in a world like this we cannot bypass Friday. In a world like this even the Son of God begins to weep. In a world like this we cannot bypass death. In a world like this even the author of life has to die.

Yes in a world like this, we can even wonder, is Sunday coming? There were some who at that grave side asked this very question:

Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Davidic Kingdom established by David all those centuries earlier. David and Jesus have much in common. One thing is their tears and grief. When David was given the news of his son Absalom's death, we are told he went into his room and wept. Indeed, the text from 2 Samuel sounds much like John 11:

"And the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept"

Jesus was deeply moved. 34 He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus began to weep.

Israel's greatest king and the King of Kings both wept. We cannot avoid the passion in a world like this. Friday is for real.

C.S. Lewis wrote a book called *A Grief Observed*. In it he describes in his poignant prose the experience of grief:

"When you are happy, so happy you have no sense of needing Him, so happy that 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."

Do you know this experience that is so deep that it leaves a mark on your soul the way the nails left marks in the Lord's body? Can you think back to that day when you got the news?

I can; it was Monday, June 7th 1971, just after 7 AM. I was ten years old. A dear friend of our family broke the news: “Your dad has died”.

For you it might have been, “your son has been killed”. Your daughter, wife, mother, husband. A miscarriage and the hope and anticipation of new life --- gone! So many of us know or we will know the passion of that tomb where the odor of death hangs heavy in the air. The door is shut - the stone is in front of the tomb.

All is silent.....

But listen to these words, spoken from the one who began to weep. “Martha”, says Jesus, “it is Friday but listen to me Martha, whom I love, Sunday is coming”.

I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?

Here it is. Death tells us that it’s Friday, “but listen to me now” says Jesus, “Sunday, Sunday is coming”. “Friday lasts for a time” says Jesus, “but when Sunday comes, it is coming for good”!

And while you and I were not present at the tomb, St. John wants us to use our imaginations and take to heart what happened once the tears had been shed.

He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Now get this. Those Friday grave clothes will give way to Lazarus’ Sunday best. Friday may last for a season, but Sunday is coming forever!

Why did Jesus not go to Lazarus sooner? It was because we could have this story here today. Jesus says as much:

“This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it.”

Jesus did this miracle for you, and you and you and me - and for us. We are to take this to heart and know that because Jesus came from the Father that door bolted shut and locked because of death has the bolts now sliding back and the door is swung wide open. That tomb with the rock blocking its entrance where Lazarus was laid has been rolled back. And look, there is Mary Magdalene on Easter morning, by that other tomb with the stone rolled away. There she is, do you see her, talking to the gardener, or so she thought. But then she hears that voice and her name: “Mary”, and she says “teacher”. It was Friday but now Sunday has come.

Without these stories, without Jesus’ delay on that day all those years ago; without his cross and the Resurrection that followed, all there would be is Friday. But we know that because of Lazarus, Sunday is coming.

Let us allow the full force of these days touch us as we move ever closer to Holy Week. Don’t bypass the Passion and the Cross. And yes, get ready for that most glorious Sunday of all, when

Jesus declared death is defeated and life has won. That day when Jesus said evil will never have the last word. I am the last word and the eternal word.

That is because while it might be Friday, Sunday's coming!