

5 Days to Calvary: Holy Week Devotions

Friday

He Took Every Friday, Not Just the Good One.

The famous poem preached by S.M. Lockridge “It’s Friday, but Sunday’s Coming” is a familiar refrain for many Christians. It has worked its way into the vernacular of the church even outside of the Easter season. It has become a word of hope in difficult times, and it serves as a reminder that the death of Jesus was not the end of Jesus. This is true not only for Jesus but because of Jesus, which means we can confidently say with great confidence death is not the end for us because of Him.

What’s behind the phrase is relatively simple, but it is also profound. You could say that the expression means “it looks final, but there’s still a future.” And as we meditate on Good Friday, as we come to this, the most profound day in human history, the message continues to resonate. When things look finished there is still a future. Every Friday has a Sunday. Because of Jesus we know everything we are facing today is not the last thing that we will see.

We should be honest though: Good Friday is unexpectedly “good.”

The day we remember and honor the death of Jesus Christ is surprising in its beauty. It sneaks up on us in the middle of mourning, and as we’re grieving the death of the Son of God, we find ourselves almost inexplicably thankful and shockingly filled with joy. It’s this irony we see so clearly in the oft quoted Isaiah 53. We read it, we claim its promises, but taken on its surface this is an odd passage to get excited about. The bruises, the sorrows, the wounds, the stripes, the chastisement – none of it sounds appealing and yet we keep returning to it to receive comfort when we are in the midnights and valleys of our own lives.

It might be that Isaiah 53:6 is so comforting because of Hebrews 7:27. Speaking of Jesus the author says, “He has no need...to offer sacrifices daily...since He did this once for all.” If Jesus endured the horror and brutality of Friday “once for all,” it gives us great hope that even if we encounter trouble in the world our Savior has already dealt with the deepest struggles on that Friday. The stripes, the wounds, the chastisement, and the bruises were taken “once for all.” The confusion, the deep sorrow and the abandoning of abiding hope were taken “once for all” on that Friday. Jesus didn’t just die on Good Friday, He took with Him all of the death we

were cursed to walk in to the cross. Which means we have the great hope that every “Friday thing” we endure is temporary because Sunday is coming.

Author Paul Zahl tells a story about a pair of duck hunters in southeastern Georgia who were caught in a fast-moving and devastating brush fire. They saw the smoke cloud in the distance but by the time they realized what was happening they were unable to outrun the wide and consuming blaze. Thinking quickly, one of the hunters emptied the contents of a knapsack and found what he was looking for: matches. Not understanding the plan his friend looked confusedly at his friend because the hunter had begun to set fire to the ground where they were. Surely there were plenty of flames already, they didn’t need to add to them!

As the raging brush fire grew closer the hunter continued burning the grass and ground around them until they found themselves standing in a large, scorched circle. Then, with the heat and smoke beginning to surround them, they covered their faces and waited. Zahl writes, “The fire came near and swept over them. But they were completely unhurt. They weren’t even touched. Fire would not burn the place where fire had already burned.”¹

Read that last sentence again. Slowly.

Fire cannot consume what has already been consumed. And the writer of Hebrews, intimately acquainted with Jesus-centered, messianic theology by that time, writes, “for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). After reading the story of the hunters, after meditating on why this Friday is called “Good,” maybe this statement from Hebrews is able to truly sink in. The writer isn’t saying God is a consuming fire to cause us to run from Him. No, this description of the Creator, Father, King and Comforter is stated as an invitation to us.

Good Friday invites us to draw near to the God whose presence ignites our sin and renders it powerless over us. His fire scorches our doubt, guilt and condemnation until those old foes have completely lost their ability to burn us. The flame of the love of God as witnessed on the Cross of Calvary in the bloody body of Jesus is the place where we find that the old passing away is really the old being put to death, which also means the things being made new will never die. So, after all you’ve been through is heaped up into a pile of kindling, look at Jesus, look at the Cross. Your stack of brokenness, wounds, trauma, abuse, addiction, betrayal, failure, awkwardness, rejection, and sin has been left as nothing more than a pile of

¹ Paul Zahl, *Who Will Deliver Us?* (Wipf & Stock, 2008), pp. 42-43

Fridays. But as Pastor Lockridge so beautifully reminds us, your stack of Friday things is no match for what Jesus accomplished on that first Good Friday. Which means no matter how big or deep your Fridays are, the beautiful truth remains that “Sunday is a comin’.”²

² Justin Taylor, “*It’s Friday – But Sunday’s Comin’*,” *The Gospel Coalition*, April 18, 2014.