

Silent Saturday Meditation

What does this day mean for us? We often give this day, between Jesus' death and His resurrection little or no thought but this was an important day. We call today: Silent Saturday because Scripture is mostly silent and therefore, we do not want to speculate but we can determine a few things from Scripture and from our thinking about our own humanity. May this day prepare you to celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

The first thing we should consider on this day is the first followers of Jesus. We know there were the twelve disciples, others listed who followed closely, and 500 who would witness Jesus' eventual ascension. But what would be going through their minds as the stone was rolled in front of where Jesus was buried, as His tomb was guarded, as darkness fell on Friday. Did they feel alone? Abandoned? Hopeless? Without direction? Afraid for their lives? Confused? Ashamed? Angry? Vengeful? Sad? Did they cower? Cry? Question? One of their group was a traitor. Were there others? After all, they all had fled; Peter cursed. Judas committed suicide. What was going to happen now? Sure, they were aware of the Scriptural teaching of the Resurrection in the last day and of course they may be sitting in a room with Lazarus who was just recently deceased... but did they consider? Could they fathom? How did their conversations go? What did they do? Who spoke first? Who spoke well?

This was the final Sabbath Day and Jesus rested. He was in the grave. He had finished His work. For most people, it looked as if it were all over. He was dead and buried. But like a seed must die when it is planted in the earth in order to spring to new life.

[PRAY] "Teach us to take refuge in You when we are afraid; teach us that death is not our end and teach us to hope always in You and in Your resurrection. God of hope, teach us how to wait with faith. When the hours drag on give us strength to endure. When we are tempted to despair, remind us that You are not done. Help us trust that You are working in ways we cannot see. Faithful God, when our minds are confused and our hearts are weary, remind us of what is true. Re-anchor us in Your Word. Open our eyes to see Your hand, even in the shadows. Keep us close while we wait. Amen."

What about the people who cried "Hosanna" six day ago and "crucify" yesterday... were they amused? Ashamed? Shocked? Did they care at all?

[PRAY] "Let us pray as you did Lord Jesus. Forgive them for they do not know what they are doing... forgive us Lord we pray for not knowing and for not doing, forgive us for not being forgiving. Forgive those who yell crucify with their lives and help us to be a people of forgiveness who abhor the horrors of sin and seek to live out the praise of Hosanna in our own lives. Amen."

Jesus united as fully God and fully human, the crucified Christ, went down to the realm of the dead. 1 Peter 3.19f-20, "*in which Jesus went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah...*" 1 Peter 4.6, "*For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.*" Ephesians 4.9, "*What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?*" Jesus went to the eternal dwelling places of those who believed the

promises of God and to those who rebelled against God, to all those who had lived before to demonstrate the promise of God fulfilled and to proclaim victory.

The Lord approached them all bearing the cross, the weapon that had won Him the victory. He opened the full glory of heaven, the full presence of God and the completion of God's plan in the resurrection of the dead to those who by faith believed God and He sealed the fate of an eternal Hell for those who denied, rebelled and chose not to obey God's Word and God's prophets. The great enemy led us away from God and out of Paradise and Jesus descended to bring them back. Heaven's gates were thrown open and Hell's gates secured.

[PRAY] "Lord, this was your victory over all of death, You have conquered the last enemy. On Friday, you were the Lamb of sacrifice for sins and on Saturday, You were the Lion who conquered death. You are the Alpha and the Omega what You began You completed. Praise be to You alone O Lord, our Victor! Amen."

We must also remember there were those who were celebrating the death of Jesus... finally things in Jerusalem could go back to normal they thought. What a relief to be rid of this rebel rouser, troublemaker, healer and teacher who was constantly stirring up trouble and going against the traditions. The chief priests and the Pharisees did remember the promise of resurrection. They weren't sad about His death; they were crazy with fear about the possibility of Jesus' life. Having already plotted to put to death a resurrected Lazarus, they weren't about to indulge a resurrected Jesus so they guarded the tomb. But no one could guard against the power to come! Oh foolish, silly, sinful men—they could sooner hold back the rising of the sun than the rising of the Son of Man, the Son of God, God the Son! Resurrection Sunday was coming, and there was absolutely nothing they could do about it. The silence of Saturday would soon be shattered with the shouts of Sunday: "The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!"

[PRAY] "Lord we know there are still those around us every day who do not know who You are, do not understand fully who You are, do not want to know You, ignore You and deny You. May we live our lives for You in such a way that through our words and our actions the power of Your resurrection is undeniable and vibrantly gives meaning to each and every person upon whom we come in contact with each day of our lives. Amen."

READ: Isaiah 53. Page #660

No one yet grasped that Your mortal punishment would bring our eternal peace, that Your fatal wounding would secure our everlasting healing, and that Your being crushed would lead to our being cherished by the Triune God. Though they had the Scriptures, no one yet knew what the fullness of God in man would unleash.

READ: Colossians 2.14-15. Page #1063

As the sun rose on Saturday, no one could have possibly understood that the most undeserved death imaginable would yield the greatest return calculable. As You were nailed to the cross, the written code God's law, with all its regulations and requirements, was taken away from us losing all its condemning power over us. As You drew Your last breath, You were actually disarming the

powers of darkness and triumphing over all authorities marshaled against the reign of God. Imagine the shock of Satan when Jesus died and then appears at his doorstep kicking the door wide open!

From the darkness of the tomb to the depths of Hell, this moment magnifies the resurrection which was not just from a tomb or a grave but the very pit of darkness, an abode of the dead, a place as equally dark as heaven is light, as equally grim as heaven is great, as equally indescribably horrific as heaven is glorious... Jesus turned the tomb of death into a womb of life. We don't have words to describe to us what took place on that day, but if we place together what we do know about Hell, about Heaven, about sin, about Jesus and about the resurrection I think we can begin to get an idea of the gravity of this day... it is ok to sit unknowingly and silent under the mere thought and presence of a Holy God and an unholy Hell. For a moment, a day if you will, God was present in Hell, Jesus was declaring freedom to the captives, the glory of God the former dispensation/covenant which had looked for fulfillment had been fulfilled. God is well known in Hell but cannot be reached, the glories become apparent when the full opposite is experienced and that is what Hell is, the absence of light and love and the presence of loneliness and darkness. Hell is the complete and permanent removal of any and all things good and holy. The Bible is clear, Jesus descended before He ascended, fitting since we must bow before we can be raised... humbled before lifted, submitted before exalted...

Consider God's kindness in writing Silent Saturday into Holy Week. He could've just as easily raised Jesus from the dead the day after Jesus died. Why leave people waiting? By writing Silent Saturday into Holy Week, God says to every believer who is suffering, wondering, waiting, hoping. I see you. I know your suffering. I know darkness clouds your vision and threatens to smother your hope. But remember: Delay is not denial. The best news in human history came after a period of waiting—and the best things in your life will often come after a period of waiting. I didn't leave Christ in the grave, and I won't leave you in the grave either. Darkness didn't prevail over Christ, and it won't prevail over you.

May Silent Saturday remind you that our Savior willingly entered darkness to give us hope in darkness. He knows what it feels like to wait. He knows what it feels like to suffer. He's not unfamiliar with the blackness; he plunged its darkest, deepest depths of sin to rescue us. And because Jesus entered that dark abyss, we can rest knowing that the darkness we experience in this life is the darkest it will ever get. Eternal light is coming! Resurrection is coming! Jesus is coming! *"I am the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Resurrection and the Life!"*

Let us prepare our hearts that we are ready to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus!

FURTHER READINGS: 1 Corinthians 15 / 1 Thessalonians 4 / Romans 8.

HYMNS: Christ the Lord is Risen Today, Low in the Grave He Lay, Crown Him with Many Crowns, Were You There, Man of Sorrows What a Name, Jesus Paid it All, There Is a Fountain, In Christ Alone, Amazing Grace, The Old Rugged Cross

SONGS: Death Was Arrested (North Point Worship) / Glorious Day (Kristian Stanfill) / Rattle (Elevation Worship) / Oh Death (Mercy Me) / Graves Into Gardens (Elevation Worship) / I Will Rise (Chris Tomlin) / Graves (KB) / His Mercy is More (Shane & Shane)