

Text: John 19:38-42; Luke 23:55-56

Title: “The Day of Rest”

Easter is just a week away and this week is packed with opportunities to celebrate and to invite others. Friday evening is our Good Friday Lord’s Supper Service at 6pm in the Great Room. Plan to stay after for complementary Chick-fil-A for all attenders. Next Saturday morning is the Community Easter Egg Hunt at Capps Park at 10:00. And then the climax is our two powerful Easter Celebration Services, next Sunday at 9:00am and 11:15am. No SBS that Sunday so we’ll have plenty of parking.

Open your Bible to Luke 23:50. We’ve been walking with Jesus through the week leading up to His crucifixion and resurrection ... “The Week that Changed the World.” And today we come to the Saturday, the day after Jesus was crucified and a day of mourning. He probably died around 3:00 on Friday afternoon, the day before the Jewish Sabbath when the Jews were to do no work. And the bodies of those who were crucified were not to be left on crosses during the Sabbath. So with the Sabbath beginning at sundown Jesus and the others who were crucified must be buried quickly. So the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs of the criminals broken so they would die quickly. But when they came to Jesus they found that He had already died so they didn’t have to break his legs. But a soldier plunged a spear into Jesus’ side just to make sure He was dead. This, by the way, fulfilled an OT prophecy that the Messiah would die without a bone broken and having His body stabbed. Typically the bodies of those who were crucified were just thrown into a crude grave with other criminals, but that’s not what happened with Jesus. Someone comes out of nowhere to claim His body. **Read Luke 23:50-54.**

So this secret follower of Jesus named Joseph went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus so it could be buried properly. We know from John’s Gospel that a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish leader who had also become a follower of Jesus, joined Joseph in claiming the body and preparing it for burial in a tomb that belonged to Joseph. After they properly prepared the body and placed it inside the tomb, they rolled a stone over the entrance thinking it was all over. **Read Luke 23:55-56.**

These women were carefully watching what was going on. They will return in two days to further anoint the body of Jesus, but for now the Sabbath is about to begin and they must rest. But there are some other characters who will not rest on that Saturday. The religious leaders are still worried about this. They remembered Jesus had promised that after He was crucified, on the third day He would rise

again. The Jews didn't think that could happen, but they were suspicious that the disciples might come and steal the body of Jesus and claim that He rose from the grave. So they insist that Pilate secure the tomb. Pilate says, "Ok, take some guards with you and go make the tomb as secure as you can." So they station some guards and place some kind of a seal on the tomb to validate that no one had tampered with the grave.

I think this is so ironic. They are unknowingly doing something that will actually serve to prove that Jesus really rose from the dead. There were eye-witnesses that Jesus was dead when they placed Him in the tomb. There were soldiers who, under the threat of losing their lives, had to make sure that the tomb was in no way opened or tampered with. So when everyone shows up Sunday and finds the grave of Jesus empty the only plausible explanation is that Jesus actually rose from the dead.

Now as for the two women, they go home and rest on the Sabbath in obedience to the Jewish law. And so do the other disciples. The Gospels tell us they were shut up in their houses mourning the death of Jesus. Remember that none of them expected that Jesus would rise again, in spite of the fact that He repeatedly told them He would. Instead, their hearts are broken and their hopes are shattered. They probably asked one another, "Why is this happening?" Everything seemed to be going their way. Jesus was on a roll. How could things end up this way? And now their hopes and dreams lie dead with the lifeless body of Jesus on a cold slab of rock behind a massive stone. It's like the door was slammed in their faces.

We understand that, don't we? Disappointment and disillusionment and confusion can crash into our lives so quickly and we think, "How can this be happening? How could things go so terribly wrong?" At the time it doesn't make any sense. And for the followers of Jesus after His crucifixion it didn't make any sense. But later it will all become clear that through this tragic turn of events God was actually bringing about something amazing. They couldn't see it at the time, but they would later. There is a purpose behind all that Jesus endured. So why is this happening? Well, in the death of Christ God provided ...

1. PAYMENT FOR OUR SINS

It's not complicated, but there's more to the cross than you think.

This was all brought on by our sins. As I said last week, God is a holy and just God and He must punish sin. Payment has to be made for our sin. This is what the Bible calls redemption.

Romans 3:23-24 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Redemption was a word that came from the slave trade, where a slave would be set free by someone paying the price to free them from bondage. Apart from Christ, you and I are slaves to sin. And through the cross, Jesus steps forward to pay the price for our sin, buying us out of the sin market.

Ephesians 1:7 - In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace...

So there's meaning to the tragedy of the cross. It provided payment for our sin. Also, in the death of Christ God provided ...

2. A SUBSTITUTE FOR OUR PUNISHMENT

God is not only holy and just; He is also loving, gracious and merciful. So how can God be true to His justice and holiness, and still be loving and merciful toward the ones who deserve His judgment? Only through the death of His Son as a sinless sacrifice. The Bible calls this atonement. God in his love and grace allowed His Son to pay the price for our sin. In the OT system offerings of animals, birds and other things were sacrificed to cover sins. But God had something better in mind through the sacrifice of His Son.

1 John 2:2 – (Christ) is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 4:10 - This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Christ's death was exchanged for your death, so you would not have to take the punishment. So there's meaning to the tragedy of the cross. Next, in the death of Christ God provided...

3. RELEASE FROM OUR GUILT

As sinful human beings, we stand absolutely guilty in the courtroom of God. We are tried and convicted. Then God looks at us and says, "You are hereby declared

... not guilty.” What? We fully expect the guilty sentence to be pronounced. And when you ask God why He simply points to the cross. This is what the Bible calls justification.

Romans 5:9 - We have now been justified by his blood...

This justification is *available* to everyone, but it isn't *automatic* for everyone. God did everything necessary. But to receive this we must admit we are guilty and put our trust in what God did on the cross for us. So there's meaning in the tragedy of the cross. But also in the cross God provided...

4. FREEDOM FROM OUR PAST

Most people live in a prison of the past. And the cross is God's key to release us from our past. This is what it means to be forgiven.

ILLUSTRATION – I had an interesting conversation with a woman at a hardware store where I often shop. I needed a couple of bolts for a project. They didn't have a price label on them and as I checked out she asked me how much they were. I didn't know so I went back to the shelf to see and told her they were like 75 cents. I happened to be wearing a shirt with a “Call of the Wild” logo on. She asked me what that meant, and I told her it was a men's ministry at our church. She asked which church and I told her it was Travis Avenue and that I'm the pastor, and she said cool. Then she hurried away before I could say anything else. I got in the car and remembered that I actually needed four bolts rather than two so I went back in and grabbed a couple more. As I did I noticed that I had told her the wrong price, the price was actually 99 cents. So when I checked out I said, “I'm sorry. I told you the wrong price and I need to pay the extra for the other bolts I bought.” She looked shocked and said, “You're a man of God.” That took me back a bit, so I asked her for her name and she told me, and she said, “I need you to pray for me. He's (and she pointed up) not listening to me these days.” I said, “Really?” She said, “Yeah, I'm paying for my past life.” Now I wasn't sure whether she meant like reincarnation, or if she meant some mistakes she had made in the past. She hurried back to her work, but as I left she said, “Don't forget,” and again pointed up to heaven. I promised her I would pray and determined that the next time I'm in the store I'll follow up with her.

That's the way so many people feel. God is making them pay for their past. But the NT paints a powerful picture in this regard:

Colossians 2:13 - When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

So again there's meaning to tragedy of the death of Christ. God was setting us free from the past. Also, in the cross God provided...

5. PEACE WITH GOD

In our sin we are enemies of God and separated from Him. We need to be reconciled to Him.

Romans 5:10 - We were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son...

Ephesians 2:13 - In Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

After the crucifixion the disciples may have felt that God was so far away, but through the death of Christ God was actually making a way for them to be closer to Him than they ever dreamed possible. But also in the cross God provided...

6. A WAY TO BE HOLY

God was not just taking care of the *stains* of our sin, but also the *chains* of our sin. He was making it possible for us to be free *from* a life of sin and to be free *for* a life of holiness. Something happens on the inside that changes the way we live on the outside.

Hebrews 9:14 - How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

So the death of Christ, which seemed like a senseless tragedy, was being used by God to make it possible for us to actually live a holy life. Also, in the death of Christ God provided...

7. POWER OVER DEATH

This is where the resurrection of Christ comes in. After Christ's crucifixion and resurrection comes a resurrection for us. That's what Paul was talking about when he said...

Philippians 3:10-11 - I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection of the dead.

Through the death and resurrection of Christ, God defeated our greatest enemy ... death. So when we come to know Christ we have the hope of a new life. And God is working in these and a thousand other ways, through what seemed to be just a senseless tragedy, to bring about His good and glorious purposes for us.

So we come back to the women who were at the tomb of Jesus. It says in Luke 23:56 that they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. It's good that they were in the habit of obeying God no matter what they couldn't understand.

Remember that God commanded Israel to observe the Sabbath. They were to do no work on the seventh day; instead they were to rest. When Israel was travelling through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land the Lord fed them with this stuff called manna that fell out of the sky every morning. They would go out and gather enough just for that day. The next morning they would do the same. But on the day before the Sabbath, since they were not to work on the Sabbath, the Lord provided enough manna for that day and the following Sabbath day. So on the Sabbath Israel rested in the provision of God.

And this OT practice of the Sabbath is a picture of the salvation that comes through Christ. Hebrews 4:9 says there remains a Sabbath-rest for the people of God. When we come to Christ we rest in the provision God made for our salvation. We rest in the provision of God for everything in life by trusting in His promises.

So on the Sabbath after Jesus was crucified, the disciples get very still and very quiet. They are forced to rest and trust that God is at work through this terrible tragedy. They can't see it, but we can. Jesus will not be in the grave forever.

And when tragedy or trouble hits us, at the time it doesn't make sense. But our faith tells us that someday it will all become clear that through whatever tragedies happen to us God is at work to bring about something good and glorious. There is a purpose behind all that Jesus endured. And there's a purpose behind the tragedies

and trouble that come into our lives. Trust God. Obey what you know to do now.
Rest in Him.