

Fil-Am Community Church
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RISING ABOVE WITH JESUS

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

Romans 6:4 (NIV)

Happy Easter everybody!

Three buddies were discussing death and one asked the group:

What would you like people to say about you at your funeral? One said: “He was a great humanitarian, who cared about his community.” Another said: “He was a great husband and father, who was an example for many to follow.” The third said: “I’d like people to say, ... “Look, he’s moving!”

Death is something we want to avoid, if possible. No one wants to die. Except, perhaps, for those who have given up in life. Those who feel like life is no longer worth living. But one thing is true. Death is inevitable. Death will visit us one day, whether we like it or not.

But, my friend, I have good news for you! Death is not the end of the story. Jesus, by his resurrection, proved that there is life after death. What I want us to look at today is the fact that Jesus died but he rose again. Jesus rose above his suffering, his pain, his sorrow...and the power of God gave him new life. This morning, I want you to see that you, too, can rise above your circumstances that are giving you much suffering and pain and you feel like you are already buried underneath their load. I want you to know that there is hope and you, too, can triumph over all these and live a new life.

In other words through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, he modeled what you should do in the worst days of your life.

Let me explain. Jesus' death, burial and resurrection happened over three days. Friday was the day of pain and suffering and agony.

Saturday was the day of loss and grief and confusion and misery. Sunday was the day of joy, celebration and victory.

Here's the thing: In your life you're going to go through all three of those days over and over and over again. Some of you right now are in the day of pain. Some of you right now are in the day of confusion and doubt. You say, I haven't the slightest idea what I'm supposed to do next with my life. Hopefully you'll get to the day of joy. But you're often going to go through these three days.

When you do you're going to ask three fundamental questions. What do I *do* in my days of pain? How do I get *through* my days of doubt and confusion? How do I get *to* my days of victory? That's what we're going to look at today.

I hate to tell you this but you need this message. You may not be in a problem right now but you I assure you it will come. That's reality. So I want you to take notes. Because I'm going to teach you what Jesus did in the worst days of his life so you can know what to do in the worst days of your life. And you don't know when they're going to happen.

So let's look at the three days – the last three days of Jesus' life before he died and was resurrected as a model for how you can go through the toughest days of your life and rise above your adverse circumstances.

I. FRIDAY: THE DAY OF PAIN

We begin with the day of pain. Friday was the day of pain. And Jesus experienced pain at the ultimate level.

Let me explain. First he experienced physical pain. The Bible tells us that he was beaten. He was whipped, he was wounded, he was spit on, he was slapped, t

they plucked out his beard just to be mean, they stuck a crown of thorns down into his skull, he was scourged.

What is scourging? Scourging is different than just a whipping. It's a long whip with a kind of cat-of-nine-tails at the end of it.

They'd tie little bits of bone, rock and glass at the end so that every time they would whip you it would tear at your back. He could have received at least 39 lashes.

Then they took him and without sleep, without food, without water – he's been up all night and they take and they nail him to a cross which is one of the worst forms of torture you can imagine. I don't have time to get into the explanation of it but the death of crucifixion is death by suffocation. That's why they would often break the bones of your legs so you couldn't stand up anymore and you couldn't breathe anymore. Jesus experienced the ultimate in physical pain.

But he also experienced the ultimate in emotional pain. And psychological pain. Because the death on the cross was a death by humiliation. How would you like to be stripped naked and nailed to a cross and then let people watch you die? It was a death of humiliation, a death of degradation, a death of shame. He went through the pain of rejection. He went through the pain of betrayal. And many of you know the pain that that causes. He experienced that.

But then there was another level of pain that none of us have ever experienced to his degree. That is spiritual pain. Because Jesus died on the cross for all the sins of mankind, which means he took the guilt of every evil crime and every ugly sin of the past, present, and future, all that guilt on him at one point. You know how bad you feel if you feel guilty over one thing? How would you like to carry the guilt of every murder, every rape, every child molestation, the holocaust, every genocide, every evil thing, every inhumanity to man – he took all that guilt on

himself. And he went through the hell of separation from God when he cried out on the cross “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?”

So we’ve never experienced that kind of intense physical, mental and spiritual pain combined.

One thing you can be certain about Jesus is this: He understands pain. And he understands every pain you go through and he sympathizes with it.

The Bible says in Hebrews 2:18, *“For since he himself has now been through suffering and temptation, he knows what it is like when we suffer and are tempted, [here’s the key] and he is wonderfully able to help us.”*

So what do you do in your days of pain? You do the two things that Jesus did on the last day of his life. You need to write these down.

Number one, –

1. Reach out to friends.

That’s the first thing that Jesus did. Their presence can be helpful in your life in sharing your pain. On the night that Jesus knew he was going to be arrested, tortured and executed, the last thing he did on planet earth was gather his closest friends together and said, I need you guys to just hang out with me. I don’t need any sermons, I don’t need any speeches, I don’t need any advice. I just need you to be with me.

This is the ministry of presence. He said I need to go pray. And he goes to his favorite prayer spot. It was called the Garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane is an olive grove on the Mount of Olives. You could call it the olive garden but that’s a restaurant so we’ll call it a grove of olives. This is where Jesus regularly went to pray. So he takes his apostles minus Judas. These 11 guys have spent three and a half years with him. They’re his most intimate friends.

Notice what the Bible says in Matthew 26:36-39 *“Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, ‘Sit here while I go*

over there and pray.’ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.’ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed...”

That passage in the Bible tells us two startling facts. Even the Son of God needed friends in the middle of pain. Even Jesus needed friends to be around him. This is the exact opposite of what you normally do. When you are in pain you typically isolate yourself. You back out of relationships. That’s wrong! It is a mistake to pull back from your friends in your pain. God never meant for you to go through life on your own. He meant for them to share your pain with you

Probably you’ve heard of the name Elie Wiesel. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. Elie Wiesel had written fifty seven books. For his entire life since World War II he’d been an international ambassador for peace and reconciliation all around the world. But he’s best known for the fact that he survived the Nazi death camps in World War II. He was at Auschwitz (ozvitz) and Buchenwald (buchenwald) and saw the horrendous torture and the extermination of family and friends, six million Jews being killed in the holocaust.

In an interview, he was asked, “Elie, how did you get through the darkest days of your pain?” He said, “God and friends.” The very two things that Jesus looked to when he was in the darkest last day of his life. And the very two things God wants you to turn to when you are in pain.

First you reach out to your friends. That’s why we promote our home groups here in this church. That’s where you find friends and you can develop close friendships with those in your home groups. They’ll be there for you, in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad. They will pray with you and pray for you.

If you’re not in a small group I actually worry about you as your pastor. Because you don’t have the safety net that’s going to carry you when the rough

wind comes along in life. Who's going to help you out when you have a tragedy? Who's going to be there for you? So you start by reaching out to friends. Just like Jesus did.

Jesus' friends in the Garden of Gethsemane that night in his hour of deepest need fell asleep. At least they showed up. So, be grateful if someone in your home group falls asleep. At least, they showed up. It's not about you. They're not bored with you. Maybe they just had a long day and are really tired. But, friends cannot be there all the time. So the second thing you need to do when you're in the Fridays of life, the days of pain, is you

2. Reach out to God. He never gets tired. He never falls asleep.

How do you reach out to him? You do it by praying. This is the other thing that Jesus did right before he faced the worst pain of his life. He prayed. The Bible says this in Mark 14:35-36a, "*Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father."*" Abba is the Aramaic word for Daddy. It's also a Swedish rock group but that's not what we're talking about here. He's saying Abba. Abba is the first word every little Middle Eastern child learns. Abba. Papa. Dada. Any baby can learn to say Abba. It means Daddy.

And Jesus is saying when you are in your worst day of pain and you need to talk to God about it, you don't use fancy language. You don't utter all these great theological terms. You go Daddy! Help! That's what you do. You come to God and say Daddy! Help me. Because your heavenly Father loves you intimately.

And here's what Jesus prays, "*Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.*" (Mark 14:36b) Notice Jesus' prayer. It's a prayer of confidence and trust in God. I don't know what's happening, Lord, but I trust you. I can't see the big picture. But you know. So, not my will but yours be done.

Now as Jesus finished praying, soldiers show up, they arrest him. They take him through six fake mock trials. Then they torture him, all kinds of torture. Then they nail him to a cross and he dies and they put him in the ground.

Now we come to the second day, which is the Saturday of life.

II. SATURDAY: THE DAY OF CONFUSION

Fridays are the days of pain and suffering. Saturdays are the days of doubt and confusion.

Imagine how the disciples felt when they saw the Messiah, the Son of God, crucified by the Romans, taken down and put in a tomb and the tomb is sealed. They're all going, What happened? They're thinking, We know Jesus could have come down off that cross at any point because we saw him do all the miracles for the last three and a half years. We saw him heal the sick. We saw him give sight to the blind. We saw him raise the dead. We saw him walk on water. We saw him calm the storms and control the weather. We saw him do everything.

Imagine the confusion. There's profound grief. This Messiah who is supposed to overthrow the Roman Empire and liberate Israel and now...the Romans have killed him and he's dead in the grave. Huh? What happened? That's a massive day of confusion. That's the Saturday of life.

When you're in that Saturday of life you're in limbo. What happened? You accepted a new job or you start a new business and you had so much hope it's going to be so good and so great and it may have even felt like God led you to start that business, or go to that job. Then it didn't work out and you get fired. Or the company goes belly up and you go bankrupt and you go, Now what am I supposed to do?

Or you go into a marriage with the greatest of hopes and you're thinking, This is going to be heaven on earth! And then the marriage fails and it falls apart. What

do I do now? There are a thousand ways you go through the Saturdays of life. The days of doubt. The days of confusion. The days of loss and grief.

Jesus had warned them that this was going to happen. The Bible says in Matthew 26:31a, *“This very night [the night he was betrayed] you will all fall away on account of me.”* Then he continued, *“...for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”* And that’s exactly what happened. Every one of the disciples went AWOL – absent without leave. They all deserted. The Bible says that when Jesus was arrested every single one of them ran away.

Let me ask you a very pointed personal question. Have you ever deserted God out of pain? Maybe you were praying for something to happen and it didn’t happen that way so you walked away from church. Many years ago. Or maybe you thought it should happen this way and it ended up being a massive disappointment. And you lost your faith. And you walked away. Or you ran away from God. Or have you ever let pain move you away from God instead of to God? It’s time to come home. It’s time to come back home.

Years ago, after my short missionary stint in Russia, and I was living with my parents in California, our group leader from Switzerland contacted me and asked whether I’d like to go back to Russia. I said “yes” without hesitation. I was sure God wanted me to go back there. I had such a successful ministry with Russian kids and I thought this time I might stay for quite a while. So, I made preparations. I started to raise money. But the money didn’t come. I prayed and prayed but I wasn’t able to raise enough. The group left without me. I was so disappointed and bitter and got angry with God. I even said, “God, you don’t know what you’re doing.”

That's okay in the day of chaos. And in the day of conflict and in the day of confusion. Sometimes you go through that. David does this all through the book of Psalms. He says, I don't know what's going on in my life. Why God?

So, how do I get through the days of confusion and loss? I want you to write this down:

I need to remember the promises of God.

I need to remember the promises of God. Never doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light. Sometimes, you haven't the slightest idea what to do next with your life. Everything has just kind of turned to ashes. It's thrown up in the air. All of the plans have gone down the toilet. And you don't even know what to do.

When you are in that situation, you're in the Saturday of life. You're in the day of confusion. But you never doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light. And you never doubt his promises.

Right before Jesus was crucified he gave his disciples a huge promise to hang on to in the dark days of Saturday. John 16:16 *"In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."*

At this, some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?" They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying."

Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'? 20 Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. 21 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a

child is born into the world. 22 So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. 23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

Folks, you can't see clearly in the days of pain. And you can't see clearly in the day of confusion. But it's all part of the plan. And it's a good plan. When you see that plan you'll rejoice in ways nobody ever imagined. Nobody can tear that joy away from you.

What do we know about God in the light? We know that God sees everything you go through. We know that God grieves when you hurt. The Bible says God grieves. We know that God loves you unconditionally. He will never stop loving you. You can't make him stop loving you.

One of God's promises that you can hold on when things are falling apart for you is in Isaiah 43:1a-3a. It says this *“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”*

Friend, you need a Savior. The only way you're going to get from the days of pain, the Fridays of life, and get through the days of confusion, the Saturdays of life, and get to the Sundays, the days of victory and joy is you need a Savior, because you can't resurrect yourself. Sorry. You don't have that power. You need to turn to him. And if you trust him, then you will get to Sunday which is the day of joy.

On Sunday morning a couple of women go to the tomb to mourn. It says as dawn was just coming up. Then Jesus shows up and he starts showing up first to

the women and then he shows up to the disciples and then he shows up to a bunch of other people. Over the next forty days he shows up over and over. He has meals with people, he goes fishing with people.

When the disciples saw Jesus – they go, We’re not afraid any more of the Romans and the Jews. We are fearless. Why? Because they can kill us but we’re coming back to life. These eleven guys start spreading the good news that life can be changed and there is power in Jesus’ name. And it starts spreading all over the Roman Empire. Eleven guys start it. And three hundred years later it’s become the faith of the Roman Empire and Caesar is a Christian. Why? Because they were fearless and confident because they had seen the Lord. And their joy was contagious.

III. SUNDAY: THE DAY OF JOY

How do you get to those days of joy? You rely on the power of Jesus. You can’t get there on your own. It takes far more than self effort. If you could do it on your own, then Jesus coming to earth and dying on the cross is a total waste. Believe me. If there was any other way you could get into heaven without somebody having to pay for your sins, don’t you think God would have chosen the simpler way rather than letting his Son die a humiliating death on a cross? There was no other way.

I want you to listen very closely. I’m going to summarize everything I’ve shared with you. To get through the worst days of your life you’re going to have to do three things. First, You’re going to have to reach out to the presence of Jesus. Then, you’re going to have to remember the promises of Jesus – you’ve got to learn them. **And third, you’re going to have to rely on the power of Jesus.**

When you do those three things it’s a game changer. Anything is possible now. Jesus said it like this in John 11:25-26 *“I am the resurrection and the life!*

Whoever believes in me, even though they die, will live again. I give them eternal life for believing in me and they will never perish!”

What that verse says is death is not the end of the story. And that gives me a lot of hope. Jesus says I am the resurrection and the life. Notice the words I am. Jesus didn't say “I point to it, I teach it, I show the way.” He says *I'm it*.

What I'm saying to you that the answer to all of your problems, the answer to getting out of the days of pain and through the days of chaos and confusion and into the day of joy. The answer is not a principle; it's a person. It's Jesus. You don't need a religion. You don't need ritual. You don't need rules. You don't need a regulation. What you need is a relationship to Jesus Christ.

That's why Paul says I want to know Christ. My prayer for you this Easter is Ephesians 1:18-20a. It's in the Bible. It's just a prayer that as your pastor, somebody who loves you, I've been praying this prayer for you. It says this: *“I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great his power is to help those who believe him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead.”*

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to you on a daily basis. If God can raise a dead body, he can raise a dead marriage. If God can raise a dead body, he can raise a dead career. If God can raise a dead body, he can raise a dead finances. He can do anything. It's a whole new ballgame with the power of God in your life.

That's why Paul says this, *“I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”* (Phil. 3:10-11)

He says if it means going through tough times so be it, so I can get to know Jesus. If that's what it takes so be it. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection because that's what matters most.

Romans 10:9 says, *“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

Friend , if you believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, that’s what Easter is all about. And he says, *“Then you will be saved.”*

That’s one of God’s promises. Have you claimed that one yet? If you haven’t you need to do that one right now. Let’s bow our heads.