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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

April 9, 2023

The Joy of Sunday

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, I thank you for the gift that is represented by what has taken place this day, the fact that you are risen, Lord, the fact that your sacrifice was accepted, Lord. That is the ultimate gift and we praise you and thank you for it. And Father, this morning we just want to pray as we're again opening up your word, we want to go deeper in understanding just what it is you accomplished for us, and so we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit to accompany your word so that this would be of lasting value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, the most important three days in the history of mankind are what we are celebrating this morning. Jesus was executed on a Friday, and he rose from the dead on a Sunday and much has been written about those two days, but there's very little written about what took place on Saturday. In fact the only scriptural reference to that second day is this one in Matthew's gospel. It says: *On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we*

remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

It's Saturday morning; Jesus is dead and buried. And we know from this text that even after the crucifixion with Jesus safely dead and buried, the Pharisees have no regrets whatsoever. I mean their only concern was that the disciples would steal Jesus' body and claim he had risen from the dead. Jesus was dead; the tomb was sealed; a guard was posted. For the vast majority of his followers, that settled the issue.

Jesus had made quite a splash but now all bets were off. The cross had proven to most of them that Jesus was a failed Messiah figure, like many before him. Even among those who believed in him there was this all pervasive sense that all hope was dashed and the reign of King Jesus had come to an end. And we can see this in a conversation that scripture records of two men walking on the road to Emmaus. It describes a confrontation that the risen Jesus had

with two of his disciples who don't recognize that he is actually walking and talking with them and it shows us exactly what those who believed in Jesus were thinking.

It says: Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.

Cleopas, he can't believe that this stranger hasn't heard all these terrible things that have gone down since Friday. "What things?"

says the stranger? Cleopas's answer reveals a state of mind of those who had believed he was the Messiah. Quote -- *"We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel."* Well, by Saturday, that hope was apparently dashed. Cleopas summed up the despair and the despondency of the disciples at the fact that they thought they had been deserted. Despair because from every visible perspective it looked like the bad guys had won.

I mean the disciples had seen Jesus repeatedly go up against the Pharisees and time after time demonstrated superior wisdom and knowledge making them look puny and small. On Friday they had succeeded in making Jesus look puny and small. Starting from the garden of Gethsemane they saw Jesus being brutalized and never before had they seen Jesus being physically assaulted. Now they saw him surrounded by thugs, pushing, shoving and slapping him. Even though Jesus had repeatedly told them time and again exactly what was going to happen including the details of his arrest and capture, they had chosen not to believe it.

As Mark's gospel details it: *Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him:*

"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will

mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

Well the mocking, the scourging, the spitting, and the killing all took place exactly as Jesus said it would and yet they were still stunned. They were amazed. This couldn't possibly be happening, they thought. I mean surely the same Jesus who walked through the crowds who wanted to throw him off a cliff, the same Jesus who defied the Pharisees over and over again wouldn't fall prey to them like this.

As the nightmare continued to unfold perhaps the disciples thought that Jesus was just saving up his miracles for one last mighty one. Well, that's precisely what Jesus was doing, but it wouldn't be the miracle that the disciples expected. In fact from their perspective Jesus simply ran out of options or grace or favor. For some reason the unthinkable had unfolded that Friday. The Savior, the miracle maker had apparently run out of miracles and not only had the Pharisees succeeded in turning the whole of Jerusalem against him, they were able to literally laugh in his face as he hung on the cross. It says: *And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."* Likewise the chief priests also,

mocking with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

So you wonder how much hatred do you have to have inside to see a man beaten and flogged, someone whose head is covered with a crown of thorns pressed into his scalp, hanging nailed through his hands and his feet on a cross and then to decide now is the time, now's the perfect time to laugh, to laugh at him, to mock him. You know there's been more than a few monsters that this world has produced, I mean, there's folks like Hitler and Stalin and Vlad the impaler and Genghis Khan, people who've earned their reputation as murderers, but what did Jesus do to deserve such a monstrous response? Well, the answer is not just nothing, it's the cosmic assertion that this broken body hanging on the cross belonged to the only sinless one who ever walked this planet.

Never once in his entire existence had Jesus ever done anything deserving of any punishment. Flawless love, flawless care, flawless courage, flawless thoughtfulness, flawless worship, flawless everything emanated from Jesus. He once challenged the

Pharisees by asking *"Which one of you convicts me of sin?"* And at this point Jesus is not speaking of a particular sin; he was challenging the Pharisees to convict him of any sin, something they could not do. Something that prompted the rage that would cause them to see someone crucified and think, oh, this is a great time to gloat; this is the time to mock.

Well, the disciples had nothing but despair that Saturday because everything they had known about Jesus had been slaughtered along with the man. But you know in addition to the despair there was also a great level of despondency because every one of the disciples knew in their heart of hearts that they had abandoned their leader at the moment of his greatest need. They knew that they had not only abandoned Jesus, they also remembered the stark warning that Jesus had given them right after the last supper. It says: *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK WILL BE SCATTERED.'* But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."

Well to a man they did exactly what Jesus had predicted, I mean, the shepherd was indeed struck and the sheep, they all scattered. And worst of all was Peter, he was astounded that Jesus would even

think such a thought and he responded to him: *"Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble."* Jesus said to him, *"Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."* Peter said to Him, *"Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"* And so said all the disciples.

See every one of the disciples agreed with Peter that they would rather die than desert their master. Every one of them deserted him. Peter felt it more than any because of the incident that took place that very night. It was Joni Eareckson who pointed out that the very same Jesus who seemed to have lost all control that night while -- actually while he was being interrogated and beaten was simultaneously controlling a cold front that had moved in which caused Peter to sit by a charcoal fire and reveal himself to the others around him. Luke's gospel describes it. It says: *Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance. Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, "This man was also with Him." But he denied Him, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." And after a little while another saw him and said, "You also are of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then after about*

an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, "Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

If ever there was a night marked with despair and with despondency it was the night that Peter spent agonizing over his conduct before Jesus. I mean just picture the scene: Peter is cursing, the cock is crowing, and Peter locks eyes with the swollen, beaten eyes of the very Jesus he swore he would never leave. Those eyes must have burned a hole right through Peter's soul.

The rest of the disciples spent that Saturday reeling from thinking that not only had they deserted Jesus but in a sense he had deserted them. He had told them, *"Let not your hearts be troubled"* because he knew that trouble was coming, and it all started with a cue that Jesus received that marked the beginning of the end. It's described in John's gospel. It says: *Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew,*

and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

Well Jesus' earthly ministry was about to come to a brutal end and he was explaining this to his disciples. I mean part of loving his disciples was Jesus' desire to prepare for that Saturday when they would be pondering his arrest, his execution, his torture. He was going to tell them the most troubling words they would ever hear. See, Jesus didn't want the disciples to make the same mistakes that many folks make even today, I mean, he didn't want them thinking Jesus -- just what they were thinking that Saturday. And that was that Jesus was the victim, a victim of time, a victim of place, a victim of circumstance. Jesus was no victim. In fact he was about to orchestrate the unfolding events of his own crucifixion completely. And now he's determined to tell the disciples ahead of time precisely what was going to happen.

And again we pick up on -- this in *John 13*. This is Jesus saying: "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me." After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table close to Jesus, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night. When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek

me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'

Jesus had just turned their world upside down. He told them three incredibly disturbing things. He told them first that he was going to be betrayed; secondly, that he was going to be leaving them; and thirdly, they couldn't come. And then he tops it all off by saying in the very next verse: *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me."* You say, why would Jesus say that? I mean, particularly since he had already admitted that he, himself was -- quote -- *"troubled in spirit"*? I mean is this a case of do as I say, not as I do? Well, the answer is no. You see, Jesus had every right to insist that the disciples -- quote -- *"let not their hearts be troubled,"* even though his heart was deeply disturbed. You see, his heart was going where no heart had ever gone before, and unlike the disciples he was going there profoundly and absolutely alone. You see there was a context to Jesus' words of comfort. He said, *"Let not your hearts be troubled"* but then he followed with these words: *"Trust in God; trust also in Me."* He was telling that no matter what those disciples would go through, they would never be alone. They would never be without God's presence and protection. But that wasn't the case with Jesus. He knew with absolute precision the events that were going to take place in the next few days and because Jesus saw the future

perfectly, he gives the lie to the notion that he was a victim of the Roman government, of mob rule, of a kangaroo court. Jesus was no victim. He was the sacrificer and he was the sacrifice. He was the high priest orchestrating his own sacrifice. And it wasn't the physical agony that he was facing that was troubling him, it wasn't the pain or the a humiliation either that troubled Jesus' spirit, he had met and mastered those already.

You know, so much of our understanding of Easter is centered around the physical aspects of crucifixion. And yet as awful as that was, it was not the ultimate horror that Jesus was facing. And to be sure, crucifixion is a uniquely horrifying form of torture, I mean, we use the word "excruciating" to describe its intense pain and torment and that word itself literally means "from the cross." I mean the cross defined torture and death in Jesus' day, but thousands of people suffered that exact same fate. The cross was designed to maximize humiliation and torture and it killed slowly by asphyxiation. It was considered to be the ultimate torture. But like I said, it wasn't the fear of the pain that troubled Jesus; it was something far, far worse.

If it wasn't the fear of the torture that he was facing that troubled Jesus perhaps maybe it was the intense humiliation. Jesus Christ is and will always be the creator of the entire universe,

the Lord of history, the sustainer of life itself. It was he who would be flung to the ground, it was he who would be stripped naked, nailed through his hands and feet and then put on display for the religious leaders to mock and to torment.

As horrific a humiliation as this was, we have to bear in mind that humiliation was nothing new to Jesus. I mean his entire life was one of intense humility starting from his birth in a feeding trough in a barn. He lived his life not as a prince or a king or a ruler but as a carpenter's supposedly illegitimate son. *Philippians* describes Jesus' humility by saying: *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Now Jesus knew humiliation his entire life. He also knew humiliation was coming in death. I mean he was the one who told his disciples that he was about to be mocked, flogged, and crucified. He knew ahead of time that there would be a flogging and that prior to that his humiliation would include being clothed in a purple robe, being given a crown of thorns and then slapped,

punched and spit on and told to "*Prophecy. Who was it that hit you?*" That was a humiliation that he knew was ahead of him, but that's not what troubled his spirit. It wasn't the fear of those things either. I mean imagine the fear that a condemned Roman prisoner lived with. I mean he knew he was going to be locked up until a certain group of soldiers arrived at his cell and told him it was time and he knew the procedure that would follow. He probably heard the screams as he saw others meet the same fate and that fear had to eat that person alive. Jesus lived with that fear every single day. From the moment perhaps at age twelve that he understood his mission, he knew that day was coming. In fact he understood that that's what he was here for, that his purpose in life was to live out his life flawlessly so that he could be our substitute on the cross.

Just think about, how would you face that fear? I mean how would you face life itself if you knew for certain that at age 33, a group of soldiers was coming for you as they did for Jesus. I mean any joy you might have, any happiness you might experience had to be filtered through that knowledge to the point where the cross would loom everywhere you turned. Well, Hebrews tells us that Jesus did indeed see that cross but it also says that he saw right through the cross to the joy of his victory that lay beyond it. *Hebrews 12 says: For the joy set before him he endured the cross,*

scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

So it wasn't the pain, it wasn't the humiliation or fear that troubled Jesus' spirit as in fact that was common to many; in fact his disciples would soon experience that themselves. No, the reason he could tell them, *"Let not your heart be troubled"* while his heart was deeply troubled is found in *Isaiah 43*. There God says: *"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."* See, God had promised them that whether it was flood or fire, pain, humiliation or fear, he would go with them. Jesus told the disciples, *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me"* because he knew he would be their strength and shield. But he also knew with absolute certainty that in his hour of deepest need, he could expect no such help, not from his followers, not from his disciples, not even from his heavenly Father. That's why his spirit was troubled.

You see, when we speak of the cross we speak of those things that are observable, understandable and knowable, but those areas in no way cover everything that took place that day at Golgotha. There's

a great deal that took place at the cross that's simply beyond human understanding. There's also a great deal that took place at the cross that easily escapes human observation, and we all tend to focus on those things we can identify with such as fear and pain but those are all outside terrors that pressed in on Jesus testing every fiber of his being. However, none of those caused Jesus to say what he said in *John 12:27*: *"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"*

So again, was what was it that troubled Jesus' soul if it wasn't the fear, pain and humiliation of the cross? It was actually something that started in the garden of Gethsemane, something that continued all through his passion until he finally said, *"It is finished."* The inexplicable part that we will never fully be able to understand is that Jesus didn't go to the cross to nobly shoulder the burden of sin that was somehow outside of himself. There was something far more horrifying that was going on inside. The pain, the fear and the humiliation were all minor act warm-ups compared to what God tells us was inside Jesus while he was hanging on the cross. *2 Corinthians 5* tells us: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Now you hear something like that and you have to realize a statement like that has to be pondered for a while to let the full impact of it sink in. And what God is saying here is that Jesus didn't nobly shoulder the burden of our sin at the cross as if he was some outside agent contending with it while still maintaining his identity as the perfect Son of God. Jesus didn't pay sin's debt like we would pay an earthly debt: Here's the debt and here's the debtor as if they're separate; they were not. Instead God insists that Jesus paid the debt by becoming it. That is that Jesus literally became sin at the cross. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us. Jesus didn't go to the cross just to pay for the sin of rape; instead he went to the cross for our sakes to become the sin of rape.

Jesus' flawless life qualified him to become a flawless sacrifice, and it was on that sacrifice that our sins were laid. All of those animal sacrifices in the Old Testament were just pictures and signs and symbols of the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus would become for us on the cross. And the reason why Jesus's heart was so troubled is that he went to the cross having become the very sin he never once had been stained with. I mean God took all the righteous fury that a perfect God must pour out on sin itself and he quantified it, objectified it and placed it on his beloved Son.

Now if you go all the way back to when Jesus was first baptized, God looked down from heaven and said, *"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* Well, when God looked down on his son hanging on the cross, he saw nothing pleasing at all. What he saw was sin objectified. What he saw is what his son had become. He had become lying and murder and conceit and adultery and pornography, drug abuse, wife beating, gossip; you name it. All the sins of his sheep had become this living sacrifice, nailed to a cross and put on display. And in all likelihood it had begun earlier that day.

If you recall, Jesus began to sweat great drops of blood while he was in the garden of Gethsemane, and it's quite possible that while he was there he began the process of taking on the sin of the world. It says: *And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

That term "greatly distressed" is translated from the King James as being "sore amazed." It's a very interesting phrase. It's a combination of terror and amazement. See, there's terror at the horror of what Jesus was experiencing, and there's amazement in Jesus because it's so much worse than even Jesus could imagine. Jesus entered into the garden and he began to be engulfed in human sin. I mean it's possible that right then and there Jesus began the process of absorbing our human filth. And it was that process and not the fear of physical pain that drove Jesus to the ground. His Father was in the process of forsaking him. It was that horror that has Jesus saying, *"My soul is troubled."*

See, if you read the accounts of the crucifixion, you're never going to find Jesus crying out about physical torture because as hideous as that was, it was nothing compared to the spiritual torture that he who knew no sin became sin for us. No human, in fact no entity in the entire universe has any idea what Jesus went through as he was transformed from flawless perfection to the living embodiment of sin itself.

We do know that the physical aspects of the crucifixion were not what caused Jesus to be sore afraid and cry out. In fact all during his trial, all during his execution he never cried out at all. Isaiah tells us: *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet*

He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

Jesus time and again during the process of his arrest, torture, and crucifixion, he was questioned repeatedly. He was questioned by the high priest, he was questioned by the Sanhedrin, he was questioned by Pilate, and his silence proved absolutely baffling. It says: *Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"*

Well, when it came to his guilt or his innocence, Jesus answered not a word, and the reason for his silence was simple: Jesus now was the flawless one become the guilty one. Jesus' troubled soul now had to face the wrath of his Father not for his sins, but for ours. *Isaiah 53* says: *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

Psalm 22 takes us into the mind of Jesus as he faces his Father bearing our sin. He says: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken*

Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent. See, Jesus was forsaken. He was forsaken by his followers and forsaken by his disciples and forsaken by his own Father. He who knew no sin had now on the cross become sin itself. The Father and the Son had planned this before the dawn of time. Only by God himself taking on flesh could God himself express perfect justice by pouring out his righteous fury on sin and perfect mercy by absorbing that fury in the person of his Son. And Jesus' Father had no choice but to thrust him out. It was far worse than any external torment Jesus ever experienced.

But Jesus wasn't alone in experiencing torment that day. You know, we seldom if ever consider the torment that the Father went through as he watched his beloved Son being tortured, humiliated and executed, knowing that at the time of his Son's own greatest need he had no choice but to forsake him and the sin that he had become. I think it's safe to say if there was any other way of rescuing God's redeemed, if there was some other way by which we may be saved, God certainly would have chosen that. One thing we know for certain is that God's perfect justice demanded payment in full be made for every one of his sheep and that payment is an eternity in hell. All we can say for certain is that Jesus was thrust out eternally for each of his sheep and somehow God was able to squeeze

all of those eternities in hell into one day of horror. Jesus said, *"It is finished."* It was because he had fully paid the exact equivalent of an eternity in hell for every one of his sheep and all of it was squeezed into six earthly hours. I don't know how he did it but I know for certain that he did.

There's no wonder that *Isaiah 52* states that after the cross Jesus himself in his physical body was no longer recognizable as human. *Isaiah* says: *Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you -- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind.* That's because God himself had gone to the maximum that even an infinite God could go to in order to ransom and rescue his sheep. And so for six earth hours Jesus was literally God forsaken.

And at the end of that time the flawless one who had become sin for us, who had become our scapegoat bowed his head and said, *"It is finished."* You know, it's likely that hell had a celebration and a grand hope that Saturday. You see, if at any time Jesus' sacrifice had proven to be anything less than flawless, then it too would have been unacceptable to a perfect God. Jesus' troubled soul would have been for nothing. God would have no choice but to permanently reject his Son. And so for that Saturday, the entire

universe held its breath.

And on Sunday morning, some 2,023 years ago a brave group of bereaved women were headed to a tomb to anoint the body of the one they thought would be their savior. *Luke 24 says: On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."* And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

And since that day, since that day others have told others and they have told others until this morning and I'm telling you. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the

cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Saturday has become Sunday. He is risen, just as he said. Let not your hearts be troubled. Let's pray.

Father, we just stand amazed at the breadth and width and depth of the gift that you've given us in your Son. We stand amazed that it all was perfectly executed, that because the sacrifice was flawless, you rose from the dead. And because you have risen from the dead, we have the gift of eternal life. We praise you, we thank you, we bless you for your great gift in your Son. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.