

It's Friday, but Sunday's Coming, part 5 of Easter Response  
April 26, 2015

Today we wrap up this series of sermons called Easter Response. The most important events in history are the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. How you respond to these events as a group determines your eternal destiny. Let me review for you what God is expecting as our proper response. We are to **Believe all that Jesus said and did.**

We are to **Repent of sin, turning our lives over to the Lord Jesus.**

We are to **Be baptized in His name.**

We are to **Pray, led by the Holy Spirit, treating God as God.**

We are **Love each other as Jesus loves us.**

All of these are foundational responses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These are not options to choose from. All are part of a correct response to Jesus. There is one more thing for us to do as a basic response to Jesus. Before I tell you what it is, I want to set up the context for living this out.

I want to take you back to the day Jesus died. I want to take you back to that Friday. It was a dismal day in the life of the disciples of Jesus. They could not believe that He was being executed. They had such high hopes for Jesus.

All the hopes of the nation of Israel were wrapped up in the coming of the Messiah. Those hopes included the restoration of their nation as a free nation. Once more they would have a Jewish king on the throne. This king would be righteous before God. This king would provide justice for his people. This king would begin a never ending age of glory for Israel. All of these things had been promised by God through the prophets.

But on that Friday the situation was much different. Israel was ruled by the Romans. The Romans were ruthless in their governing. They gave the Jews some religious freedom, but taxed them heavily and treated them poorly. Crucifixions were common, a horrible example to anyone of went against Rome. It had been this way for about 95 years.

For all of those years the Jews had been watching for a prophet to rise up in Israel. They were looking for a prophet like Moses. Moses had foretold this.

**Deuteronomy 18:15 (NIV)** The LORD (Yahweh) your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.

Up until Jesus, there had never been a prophet like Moses. Through Moses, God had rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Through Moses God had done many miracles. None of the other prophets who had come after Moses had been like Moses. So the Jews were looking for a man who they referred to simply as The Prophet.

When Jesus came, he preached another rescue. He preached a rescue from sins and the arrival of the kingdom of God. And Jesus did many miracles like Moses. The presence and power of God were strong in Jesus. So the logical conclusion was that He was the Prophet they were awaiting. His disciples believed Him to be the Messiah. For the disciples of Jesus, all the hopes of the nation of Israel rested in Jesus.

But then He was arrested, tried, and was now crucified on a cross. Of all the Fridays they had lived in their lives, this was the worst. This was the most dismal. All their hopes were dashed with the crucifixion of Jesus. They concluded that Jesus was not the prophet, not the Messiah. They were back to square one in their hopes.

You and I can sometimes feel like it is that kind of Friday in our lives. Many people look forward to Fridays. Friday signals the last day of school or work for the week. Following Friday you have two days of things you get to do instead of things you have to do. You have two days of freedom, to go where you want, relax, hang out, refresh. So we hear people saying, "TGIF", Thank Goodness It's Friday.

But there are times in our lives when the weight of things we are dealing with gives no joy even on Friday. Maybe you are feeling weighed down, depressed, or defeated by something today.

**Maybe what has you feeling defeated today is a problem.**

It could be a health problem, a money problem, a relationship problem, family problem, work problem, school problem, or some other kind of problem. Some kind of problem you are facing has brought you as low as the disciples were that Friday long ago.

**Maybe what has you feeling defeated today is an unfulfilled expectation.**

Maybe you are tired of being tired. The hectic pace of modern life has worn you down until you don't know how much longer you can go on. Our modern time-saving conveniences were supposed to save us physical effort. They did, but we find that they take more out of us mentally, emotionally, and spiritually than we expected.

Maybe your life has not turned out like you expected. Maybe a relationship has not turned out like you expected. Maybe your health has not turned out like you expected. Maybe your living situation has not turned out like you expected. Maybe your finances have not turned out like you expected. Maybe your church has not turned out like you expected. Maybe your children have not turned out like you expected. Maybe your vocation has not turned out like you expected. Whatever it is that you expected and have not seen fulfilled, the disappointment has you feeling depressed. Life is not turning out like you had hoped. You are tempted to give up.

**Maybe what has you feeling defeated today is the state of our immoral world.**

The Bible says that Lot was weighed down by the immorality of Sodom and Gomorrah.

**2 Peter 2:7-8 (NIV)** "... Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) ...

I think that well describes what many of us are feeling these days. We feel weighed down by the growing immorality of our nation. We see it in our culture, in media, in government, and in business. It is everywhere. It distresses us greatly.

Slavery, kidnapping, stalking, and human trafficking are on the rise. Sexual immorality is becoming systemic, making marriage meaningless. Public discourse is becoming vulgar and coarse. Those public figures whose unethical and criminal behaviors get exposed act like it is nothing, and they should suffer only minor consequences. We see little embarrassment or shame. We see the words of Romans 1 coming true every day.

**Romans 1:29-32 (NIV)** They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

The world I grew up in, in the 60's was distressing enough. We thought it to be a time of great cultural change, which it was. But the immorality of those days was nothing to what we are seeing today. I fear for my nieces and nephews and their children. I fear what growing up in such a world will do to them.

Yes, like the disciples on that horrible Friday, for us today is like that Friday. It is easy to lose hope. It is easy to be discouraged. It is easy to focus on the bad that we can see instead of the good God has promised us that we cannot see.

Little did the disciples of Jesus know on that Friday that two days later Jesus would rise from the dead. They were feeling about as low as you could get on Friday because they did not know what was going to happen on Sunday. Jesus was indeed the prophet that Moses had foretold. Jesus was indeed the hope of Israel. God proved this when He raised Jesus from the dead on Sunday. But the disciples did not know what was coming.

While we are living on Friday, we know that Sunday is coming. God has told us of the return of Jesus. We don't know when. But it is as certain as the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We are living in a Friday world, but Sunday is coming. Jesus is coming again. Jesus is going to return to planet earth. When Jesus returns, He will set right all that is wrong with the world.

We who believe in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus must live with a daily awareness of the fact that Jesus is coming again. Jesus will return and every eye will see Him. Jesus will return in all of His glory. Jesus will return and gather up to Him all of His followers. Jesus will return and will give us resurrection bodies. Jesus will return and complete our forgiveness. Jesus will return and give us eternal life.

**Because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, hold tight to our hope.**

Because of the hope we have in Jesus' return, will persevere. Because of this hope, we will not give up. While the second verse of this next passage gives us warning, the first part is a promise to bank on.

**Matthew 10:32-33 (NIV)** "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

No matter what life throws at us we will hold tight to Jesus. We will keep our faith strong. We will keep our hope strong. We will keep our love for each other strong. We will not give up. We will not give in. We will persevere. We will keep our eyes on the prize. We will affirm and reaffirm and reaffirm and reaffirm again, every day, our faith in God's promise of Jesus' return.

No matter how tough it gets, continue to put your faith in Jesus. No matter how dark it looks, continue to give yourself to Jesus. No matter how many problems you have, hold onto Jesus. No matter how many of your dreams fail to materialize, hold on to Jesus. No matter how bad the world behaves, hold on to Jesus. Jesus' return is our hope.

We live in a Friday world, but Sunday is coming. It is as sure as the resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, let us persevere in following Him.

Stay focused on the Future. Not meaning your graduation or next, better job, or vacation or retirement. Keep looking for the return of Jesus. That is our hope.

And whenever you are feeling defeated, remember His return. Make His return your highest, greatest desire, and hold on.

I recently read the autobiography of Bear Grylls, titled, Mud, Sweat, and Tears. It was an international best seller. You may not know who Bear is. Bear was a United Kingdom Special Forces paratrooper. In his mid twenties he climbed Mount Everest. And for six years he starred in the Discovery Channel TV show Man vs. Wild. He is an adventurer and survival expert.

In his autobiography he records how difficult it was to make it into the special forces. The leaders put the recruits through grueling physical demands to see if they are physically tough enough and mentally determined enough to do the job. They put 55 pound packs and more on them and send them through the woods and mountains and bogs of the countryside in all kinds of weather, night and day. They had to find their way, often on their own, in the dark, within a certain period of time. They were doing this initially for two days on the weekend, with little sleep between days. The final testing was a grueling 6 days long with a couple of hours sleep a night. Out of 100 who started, only 4 or 5 make it to the end.

Unlike the picture of boot camp in our movies, the sergeants do not yell. They simply explain what the recruit has to do and say, "If you want it enough, you will make it."

Bear explains how much that was true. It took enormous physical endurance, more than he initially had. He flunked out the first time through. But he showed such promise that they invited him to try again. That doesn't happen often. He came back to try again, this time in winter conditions. He writes of how much mental discipline and self-talk, and prayer, it took to push himself beyond his limits, beyond what he thought he could do.

His body was crying for him to stop and rest, to sleep. But he had to keep pushing on if he were to make his goal. He needed to keep his goal in mind every step of the way. He had to keep himself motivated, continually thinking about the good he wanted to achieve. And this time he made it.

The Christian life takes that kind of focus. We must want Jesus' return more than anything else. It will give us the strength to persevere. We have to want what God has promised so much that we keep holding on to Jesus, that our faith, hope, and love remain strong. We need to keep Jesus in our mind, our hearts, and before our eyes.

No matter what life throws at you, never give up hope. Never entertain the idea of giving up. The only option for eternal life is Jesus. So hold onto Jesus.

Let me offer a prayer for you to pray each day. **"Don't let my desire/expectation for \_\_\_\_\_ become more important to me than Your coming."**

What you put in that blank will be different from someone else, and will change from time to time. Lots of things can come between you and Jesus if you let them. This prayer is a way of keeping the right things as priority.

A second suggestion is that when you do get into a dark place, that you take a break. I suggest you get your Bible, some pen and paper, and find a place to be alone and quiet and talk it all out to Jesus. Tell him everything that is on your heart. Get it out. And let Him guide you through it to some sense. When you get tired of life, of people, of the work of relationships, of ministry and service in the church, take a day off. Take a break. Take a day and find somewhere to be alone with Jesus and your Bible and refresh, renew, recharge your spiritual batteries. If it needs to be a Sunday, that's fine. Take a day to be alone with God so you can persevere.

#### Invitation

There is only one solution for finding eternal life. That solution is Jesus. Jesus came to give us eternal life, if you are willing to accept it on God's terms.

God's terms are that you admit you cannot earn eternal life for yourself. You can only receive it if someone pays the penalty of your sins in your place. This is what Jesus did when He died on the cross.

As proof that God accepts His death for our sins, God raised Him from the dead. Believe this promise of God and give Jesus your life and you will be forgiven of your sins and when Jesus returns, you will see realized your eternal life.