

E-Series Saturday



Once again, I will turn my keyboard over to my friend, The Reverend Dr. James Howell, pastor of Myers Park UMC for his reflections on each day of this holiest of weeks.

One week ago, we noticed it was the Jewish Sabbath, and so Jesus did absolutely nothing. Now we come to another Sabbath – and again, Jesus does nothing at all. Crucified the previous afternoon, he is gone, it's all over. Perhaps it's a bit like the day after the funeral for the one you loved, and the mourners and family have drifted away, and you find yourself alone. Jesus' friends and followers certainly hung their heads, feeling acute grief, trying to stave off dark disillusionment.

[Alan Lewis](#) called this holy Saturday “a significant zero, a pregnant emptiness, a silent nothing which says everything.” We live our lives – don't we? – in-between, like Holy Saturday. Talk to the widow whose husband died of cancer last year. She has seen Good Friday. She may believe the Easter Resurrection is coming – but for now she is in between. Talk to the husband reeling from his wife's exiting their marriage. We live in-between.

God could have raised Jesus immediately, or levitated him directly from the cross into heaven. Why wasn't God more urgent? God waited. God did nothing for a time. Perhaps God knew we would experience life, and loss, and love in just this way. We have hope – but the waiting can be a silent nothing. And we have to wait. We live in between.

So was Jesus just dead, lying in the grave all day Saturday? Yes – but the Church has taught through history that Jesus “[descended into Hell](#).” Between his burial and his resurrection, Jesus went down into the underworld to save those awaiting judgment. Such a journey suggests that all people, in this life and even beyond this life, are offered the love of God. Even the grave does not silence God's call. This doctrine helps answer questions like “What happens to those who lived before Jesus? or never heard of him?” – and plays out the truth that God is relentless, unfazed by time, space, or death itself.

For now, Saturday is a day to wait, to be still. For Jews, like Jesus, his mother, and the disciples, Saturday was the Sabbath, and they did what God's people do, even when they have lost everything: they worshipped, they prayed, they rested and waited.

James

james@mpumc.org

Trying to Walk with Jesus this Holy Week,

Pastor Michael