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Why do you think the disciples didn't understand what was happening?

It seems the Pharisees and friends were more focused on the threat of resurrection than the disciples. Why?

How easy do we rush to the answer and how can we grasp the feelings of his mother and followers that Sabbath ?

What is your strategy to cope with living between the promise and it's complete fulfillment?

How much of your hope is in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

How can we build faith to live in this in between time?

What can you do to make the whole of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection more real to you?



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1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Too Good to Be True by Andy McDonald

There is, in our human nature, a rush to resurrection.

Often there is the need to set the scene. You know what I'm talking about when the film begins and we don't know enough of the story to understand why that opening scene is significant, but it is. Hours, in some cases years have been invested to discover the best way to open the movie so that scene, or those scenes create a feeling, a mood, an ambiance, maybe not yet grasped by the viewer, but only later do we see how that opening shot contextualizes the whole of the movie.

So, in our digital age, we have the power in the palm of our hand, to fast forward to the important, scenes, the heart of the movie, the dialogue. And some of you may be like me and in the interest of time fast forward through the contextualizing work of the film maker. And using that fast forward button we may see the scenes of the heart of the film but their richness is lost because we don't allow ourselves the opportunity to experience, feel, develop the emotional context that gives the heart of the movie meaning.

What I'm getting at is the contrast between flicking on an early morning bright light and getting up well before dawn and sitting and watching the world slowly become illuminated as the sun nears the horizon and then finally emerges. The difference of abrupt rushing to light with the flick of a switch, and the coming of the morning.

I remember reading to our children when they were small, and now to our grandson. Especially with a familiar story, there's this urge to speed up the turning of the page. In those story's where the primary character faces a dilemma of some kind or is mired in some catastrophe or trouble, there is this emotional need to get to the next page where resolution exists.

And while we may have moved to various levels of maturity today I want to hold back the reins and not allow us to gallop too quickly to a rolled back stone, dumbfounded soldiers, surprised disciples, and an empty tomb.

For the end of the story to communicate the value intended, put down the remote, resist the temptation in your mind to fast forward to the story's glorious end, and let us, for just a bit, wallow, suffer, be discomforted by the quiet part of the story. And maybe, just maybe the Sabbath story, that falls between "Good" Friday and Easter Sunday, will, if given our attention, uniquely speak to the days in which we live.

Have you ever had your heart set on something and then it didn't happen? Of course you have. Whether it is something as simple wishing for and asking for one thing but when all the Christmas presents are opened that ONE thing you longed for isn't there.

When school day start and there's this longing for acceptance and friendship, that wish for being part of the school's community life, or maybe just to be invited into "the" group, but it never happens and you sense the pain of being on the outside only looking in not being part.

There was the dream of building a life together. You committed your life, stood in front of family and friends and took vows. Pledged your love until death would separate, but your partner made other choices, invested energy in other pursuits or other people and all the dreams are broken.

Or maybe you had the idea, you worked hard, developed the business, it took off and you only saw good day's ahead and now you sit in bankruptcy court and it is over.

You studied, went to a prep class, got coaching from others in the field, read, reviewed because the career you dreamed about as far back as your memory will take you hangs on getting into this school, this program and when you get your exam back you realize you blew it the

score isn't sufficient to gain your entrance into the program. The dream is dead.

You worked hard saved your money, invested, made a plan to prepare for your post career years, but the investment failed, and your money is gone, and all those plans for retirement now up in smoke.

Or everything has gone well. Almost seems like you've lived a charmed life. Good marriage, great kids, successful career. Its just about time to shift gears to retire, to be able to volunteer instead of the demand for a paycheck, you plan to enjoy the grandkids and travel and then that lump, or cough, discomfort of some kind drives you to the doctor and you hear the cancer word. Or maybe all the plans are in place and your spouse dies.

Any opportunity that you thought was going to work out and didn't creates the feeling of the followers of Jesus on this day between Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday.

On Friday afternoon when Jesus cried out, "It is Finished" those words resonated with his followers. Not in some prophetic voice of completion of the accomplishment of our salvation, but just the simple painful stark reality, It is finished.

Jesus Mother felt a sword pierce her soul as her boy was finished. Her mind may have raced back thirty plus years to when she had been visited by the angel. Maybe she recalled his word, "Don't be frightened, for God has decided to bless you. You will become pregnant and have a baby boy and you are to name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever, his Kingdom will never end!" Luke 1:30-33

She sees her son's lifeless body taken down from the cross, put in the tomb, stone rolled in place and her boy's words just hours ago, "It

finished” become the reality of her mind that long Sabbath. The dream is finished.

Peter so bold and confident. He walked on water with Jesus. He threw the nets on the other side of the boat and caught so many fish the boat nearly sank. He pulled tax money out of the mouth of a fish he caught. He was the disciple who said to Jesus, “You are the Christ, son of the living God. Night before last he’d asked Jesus to not just wash his feet but his whole body, and he had boldly promised his fidelity, but then later that night had denied Jesus three times once with a curse. Now he felt like a sucker. Jesus is dead. It is finished. He’s finished.

Mary and Martha and Lazarus must have sat around their home in shock that Sabbath. The one who had been so often with them in their home in Bethany was dead in the tomb. Imagine the irony Lazarus must have experienced. He had been dead and buried for 4 days and Jesus had called him back to life but now the life giver was without life, it was finished.

They didn’t believe he would die. But now with his death all their hopes have died too. Stop. Stay here. Don’t pick up that fast forward, don’t yet turn the page of the book. They looked at him on the cross eyelids closed, drooping head, hair matted with blood, hands and feet invaded with spikes and covered with dried blood and their anguish was indescribable. How can this be? Maybe their thoughts turn to jeers they heard earlier, “He saved others let him save himself.” And they are hurt and disappointed, and angry, and sad, and confused that he didn’t stop it. They didn’t believe he would die. They could hardly believe it was true. Now what?

They had all their eggs in one basket and it just got dropped. They didn’t have a back up plan. They had gone all in. Now there was no Jesus, he’s dead. It is finished.

Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus went to Pilate and requested the body so they might prepare it for burial and place Jesus in the tomb.

And permission granted they do just that and then roll the stone in place and it is finished.

The sun sinks beyond the horizon and the worst Sabbath ever begins. The next morning, even though it was the Sabbath, people brought their sick and suffering loved ones to the temple court looking for Jesus to heal the ones they loved.

Some come to be examined for indications of Leprosy and instead of Jesus command to be clean, they are destined to be separated from family and friends and to cry out the mournful warning to all they meet of unclean.

The sick and dying look for Jesus but he is not there he is in the tomb.

The heartache of this Sabbath is deep and real and painful.

We must feel the darkness to rightly value the light.

In many Christian circles, today, this Sabbath is called Holy Saturday. Much neglected, still extremely valuable as part of the Resurrection story.

It is uniquely important because while we must live resurrection empowered lives, and while we must remember the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, in a very real sense this is where much of life is lived.

Sure there are times when we experience the stark gut-wrenching pain of Good Friday, and there are times when we know the jubilation of Easter. But Holy Saturday, is this time in between, this uncomfortable place between death and resurrection.

It is the valley of grief and unknowing--for us as well as for the first disciples. While we know the rest of the story and have eternal hope, at the same time we are like them in our not knowing. In the immediacy we don't know what the future will bring. Whether the cancer will be

cured, or we will love again, or find a job that fulfills our calling. It is a time of dark uncertainty. Yesterday as we buried Rob Fulbright we talked of hope of the resurrection but his wife Yvonne and his four beautiful girls, his parents and his siblings all went home without Rob to live life in the in between time. To live between the promise and the reality.

We have this hope. We look forward in faith. But it is Holy Saturday living.

Holy Saturday comes to us in many ways but it always seems to involve death; the death of Jesus, the death of a loved one, the death of a relationship, the death of hopes and dreams. In the church calendar Holy Saturday is one day once per year. Not so in life. We who have suffered the death of a loved one know that we don't move from Good Friday to Resurrection Sunday in just one day. No this in between can last months, years, even a lifetime.

But we are richer and better off and filled with so much more hope than those who first experienced the hours from Good Friday to Resurrection Sunday.

We still live between the promise and the reality but our Savior lives.

The long slow hours of Saturday night had worn away. Finally it was that darkest hour just before the shift when dawn imperceptibly begins.

Jesus was still a prisoner of the tomb. The stone was still in place. The Roman seal unbroken. Roman guards are dutifully keeping watch.

Suddenly there was a great earthquake because the angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled aside the stone and sat on it. And Jesus comes victorious from the grave alive. He had the power to lay down his life and power to take it up again. Now victorious over sin and death and the grave. I can only imagine the chorus of heavenly

angels and the joy and praise that must have filled heaven at that very moment.

I love Paul's confidence. Even in those early days of living between the promise and the glorious reality he boldly said.

“But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again.

So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, Adam, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man, Christ. Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam, the first man. But all who are related to Christ, the other man, will be given new life.”

The tragedy and glory of Good Friday, Jesus dying an undeserved death, the lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. His great, not whimpering declaration, it is finished, means sin, and death have been defeated the war has been won victory is assured.

And now we wait. Not fearful. Not with the same pain of that first Holy Saturday. Instead we wait in hope because Jesus has conquered. We can endure living between the promise and the complete fulfillment because all our hope is in Christ the risen savior. Resurrection life, resurrection power is our in Christ and that is almost too good to be true but it is.