

He's Not Here!  
Luke 24:1-12  
Easter  
April 17, 2021  
Rev. Dr. Jenothy Irvine

**Intro**

What is victory without defeat?

What is joy without sorrow?

What is wholeness without brokenness?

What is peace without conflict?

What is hope without suffering?

Can you have one without the other? Can you know what one is like without experiencing the other?

Would this day mean anything more than chocolate bunnies, candy-filled baskets, and egg hunts without the events, experiences, or darkness that led us here?

What is the cross without the grave?

What is the manger in Bethlehem without the tomb in Jerusalem?

**Prayer:** Dear God, may the power and truth of your word speak hope, wisdom, and life into all who have ears to hear. Amen

**Message**

Easter and Christmas are both my favorite and not-so-favorite days to preach. They're my favorite because I get to retell the most beautiful, drama-filled, life-changing story of all time. They're my not-so-favorite because of the pressure pastors often feel to present the most beautiful, drama-filled, life-changing story of all time in a way that captures the

attention of the listener and engages their heart and mind that God may engage their soul.

When it comes right down to it, there is only one thing to say for each: for Christmas, the good news is: “he’s here!” For Easter, the good news is, “he’s not here!”

Books-ends to the greatest story ever told.

You can’t have one without the other.

Hear the Easter story as recorded in Luke

READ TEXT - Luke 24:1-12 MSG

Is there anyone here besides me that needs Easter now more than ever? With everything happening in our own country and around the world, the season of Lent felt longer this year. It may have passed quickly yet Ash Wednesday feels like forever ago...like a long hard winter.

The war in Ukraine. The poverty in our own country that so many refuse to see. Protests and demonstrations across our country and around the world. The spike in crimes against first responders. The spike in crimes against minorities and the marginalized. Political tensions. Increased social and economical division and fracturing.

We need Easter now. When we walk through challenging situations, face difficult circumstances, and wade through deep waters of personal trauma, local disputes, institutional change, cultural differences, governmental instability, life transitions, mounting frustrations, or global uncertainty we come to know what it was Jesus was up against and and what he and his followers were living through. We come to know and perhaps understand why the followers of Jesus were so shook up, confused, scared, stunned, and left asking why.

They saw his miracles. They heard him teach and preach on a new kind of kingdom, a new way to live in community, a new kind of rule. They witnessed how he handled the religious leaders, how he stood up for those with no voice, those left for dead, and those ignored by the system. They received first hand, his acts of service and sacrifice. How could he be dead? What did they miss or not understand? They, like us, were left with more questions than answers. They, like us, lived in the midst of cultural divisions, political fracturing, and systemic agendas. They, like us, were trying to navigate life and find a way through challenges, turmoil, and the unexpected.

I wonder if that was the inspiration behind what has been called one of the greatest Easter sermons ever preached. It was 1976 and the Rev. S.M. Lockridge spoke at a church in Detroit, MI. His words resonated so deeply with renowned evangelist Tony Campolo that Campolo used them as the foundation and title of one of his best selling books, *It's Friday, but Sunday's Comin'*.

Lockridge captured the power and essence of Easter by expressing the corruption and brutality of what led to Easter morning. He brilliantly put to verse the people involved in those last hours of Jesus' life, the actions carried out, and the implications of how it appeared things would go. Lockridge creates a scene of emotional and physical darkness and connects the human experience of betrayal, anger, fear, defeat, and pain to the divine providence of God; to the promise and hope found in Jesus.

Here are the words Lockridge wrote:

"It's Friday. Jesus is praying. Peter's a sleeping. Judas is betraying. But Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. Pilate's struggling. The council is conspiring. The crowd is vilifying. They don't even know that Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. The disciples are running like sheep without a shepherd. Mary's crying. Peter is denying. But they don't know That Sunday's a comin'.

It's Friday. The Romans beat my Jesus. They robe him in scarlet. They crown him with thorns. But they don't know that Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. See Jesus walking to Calvary. His blood dripping. His body stumbling. And his spirit's burdened. But you see, it's only Friday. Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. The world's winning. People are sinning. And evil's grinning.

It's Friday. The soldiers nail my Savior's hands to the cross. They nail my Savior's feet to the cross. And then they raise him up Next to criminals. It's Friday. But let me tell you something Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. The disciples are questioning. What has happened to their King. And the Pharisees are celebrating that their scheming has been achieved. But they don't know it's only Friday. Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. He's hanging on the cross. Feeling forsaken by his Father. Left alone and dying. Can nobody save him? Ooooh ,, Its Friday. But Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. The earth trembles. The sky grows dark. My King yields his spirit. It's Friday. Hope is lost. Death has won. Sin has conquered and Satan's just a laughin'.

It's Friday. Jesus is buried. A soldier stands guard. And a rock is rolled into place.

But it's Friday. It is only Friday. Sunday is a comin'!"

The power of this day is found in the profound reliance life and death have with one another. Joy and sorrow. Victory and defeat. Hope and despair. We know the good because we endure the bad. We know the relief because we carry the burden. The fact that we know what it means to struggle; we know how it feels to lose love, face tragedy, endure pain,

confront injustice, walk-in uncertainty, and live in systems of shame, division, and fear and because of that, the beauty of this day is made more rich, vivid, and full of color; because of that, the good news of this day is that much more valued, needed, and life-giving. Without one there is not the other.

I'm no S.M. Lockridge. But I put before you people of God:

Sunday is here!

It was still quiet and dawn was just below the horizon  
The air cold and quiet  
Questions lingered heavy on the women's chests  
Do they not know  
Sunday is here.

They rush to the tomb  
Tear stained faces and spice-filled hands  
Hearts pounding - minds racing.  
Do they know  
Sunday is here.

Uncertain, they approach  
Perplexed and afraid  
Scattered and scared  
Belief waning - Hope fading  
Don't they know  
Sunday is here  
Their eyes adjust as  
morning light and shadow climb stone walls  
Holding their breath  
They look - they wonder  
Is Sunday here

What did they see  
What was found  
Nothing  
Nothing  
Nothing  
Sunday is here!

What does it mean?  
Where did they take him?  
The angel proclaims  
He is not here!  
He is risen!  
It was Friday, but  
Sunday is here!

Run Mary, run  
Tell the others  
Be the first to make it known  
Trust - Believe - Hold on  
Sunday is here.  
Sunday is here.

*It was Friday* dear church. The pain, fear, struggle, confusion, defeat, and grief.

We have our Fridays - times of doubt, conflict, challenge, dissension, and uncertainty. We have our Fridays - deadlines linger, bills come due, hardships happen, illness takes over, tragedy strikes, frustrations mount, and differences surface.

We have our Fridays church, but Sunday is here!

Hope remains.  
He is risen!  
Amen

## Sources Consulted

▶ It's Friday But Sunday's Coming by S. M. Lockridge

<https://youtu.be/QS2wPotScZY>

Thank you Phil Shaw for reading Lockridge's poem during our 11:00 worship service.

Scripture read from Eugene Peterson's translation, The Message