

Holy Saturday

Set apart 10–30 minutes at some point on Saturday to work through this meditation slowly as an individual or household. Have a timer handy for moments of silence.

Passage: John 19:38–42

“After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.”

DEVOTIONAL

Holy Saturday. A day we often miss entirely. In our flurry and hurry of preparation to ready ourselves for the celebration of Easter morning, we forget that there was an entire 24-hour day in between the horrors of Friday and the joys of Easter. More than a full day between death and life. Between exhale and inhale. A full day between the darkness of despair and the dawn of new hope.

We already know the full story, so it's easy to skip straight to the “happy ending.” That feels more comfortable and much less awkward to us. And, if we're honest, this is what we're tempted to do with all of our problems, griefs and “little deaths” we experience during our time on earth. We tell ourselves, “everything will be fine in the end!” We push down our discomfort and sadness, jumping

straight to an optimistic perspective. We find silver linings. We sugar-coat. We strive to turn our situation around as quickly as possible, and if that doesn't succeed, we escape, or medicate, or numb ourselves from feeling the pain. These are considered normal reactions in our broken world. But is it how God intended us to live?

Why would God allow for an entire day between Good Friday and Easter? What good does it do us? What good did it do the disciples? Couldn't Jesus have risen on Holy Saturday? Or, for that matter, immediately after being crucified? Why did He make the disciples wait till the third day?

It seems that, through some great mystery, God chose to use the waiting and silence of Holy Saturday for some deeper meaning and purpose. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, His ways are not our ways, and His timing is not our timing. It wasn't Abraham's timing, waiting for a promised child. It wasn't Job's timing, waiting for his family to be restored. And it wasn't the disciples' timing, waiting for the coming Kingdom and the resurrection.

So how do we approach these "confusing in-betweens" with appropriate health and faith? Have you ever considered how Jesus, the only perfect human to ever live, wept over the death of His friend Lazarus? He took real time to feel sadness and grief even though He knew He would resurrect Lazarus from the dead within a few hours! Jesus models time and time again that we are made as humans to slow down, to allow ourselves to feel emotions before God, and to wait for God to move in His timing.

On Holy Saturday, we remember this most painfully confusing "in-between" that the disciples faced millennia ago. But we also recognize that each of us are facing our own "in-betweens" right now, as we wait for God to answer our prayers and ultimately redeem all things. We might be waiting for God to heal a disease or an emotional grief. We might be waiting for reconciliation with a friend or family member. We might be struggling with the recent loss of a life or a home or a career. We may deeply desire a new relationship or a new chapter in life. We may be waiting for God to pull us out of a "dark night of the soul." When we slow

down, we may even simply feel a weight of the world's brokenness and our longing for Christ to make all things new.

Yet, through each of these "Holy Saturdays" we live through, we are not alone. We find ourselves in the company of all who walked with Jesus before us, and even more precious, we find ourselves in the very presence of our kind Savior who gave up His life for you and me. He who once lay still and breathless in the belly of a cold tomb now sits with us here in this moment.

REFLECTION + SILENCE

Right now, take a few moments to think about one or two "in-betweens" you're experiencing, whether great or small. As they come to mind, allow yourself to feel sadness over your unmet longings. Silently ask God to fulfill these longings, even if you've asked countless times before.

Then, if possible, set a timer for 2-5 minutes to sit in silence and stillness before God. Remember that He is with you. Recognize that He also weeps with you over the "in-betweens." Allow His presence with you now to bring comfort.

"HOLY SATURDAY"

by Brent Summers

A threshold, and an open door,
A pause in sacred time,
Remembering what came before,
To know a plan sublime;
Suspended now 'tween darkest day
And brightest dawn e'er known,
Our thoughts, unsettled as we pray,
Come to the heav'nly throne.
Today we wait expectantly,

In stillness look again
For patience and humility
As we trust alone in Him.
And in reflections through the day
Our hearts remain steadfast,
For Jesus is our hope and stay,
His love is unsurpassed.

So now we rest and contemplate
The fearful price He paid,
Too soon to join and celebrate;
A tension must be weighed;
To feel the somber gravity,
The solemn call is heard,
With rumors rustling in the breeze,
Profound in ev'ry word.
These liminal reflections bring
A wisdom as we pray,
Will deepen life in everything,
Give meaning to the day.
Oh God, give us the wherewithal
To wait and trust and cope
With passing time that sometimes crawls
Please fill our hearts with hope.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you from these readings?
2. What is God stirring in your heart today?

PRAYER

O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of Your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with Him the coming of the third day, and rise with Him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(From "The Book of Common Prayer")

END IN SILENCE

Again, set a timer for 2-5 minutes, then sit in silence and stillness before God.