

Romans 8:18-25, I Cor 15 "It's Friday, But Sunday's Coming"

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[0 : 00] I love the joy, the celebration of Easter, the beautiful flowers like these that I can't do anything like.

This is amazing. I love the arrival of spring and new life that we're feeling on a gorgeous day like this. But sometimes a weekend full of hunting for colored eggs, of going to church maybe more than once, of celebrating with family can feel a little bit disconnected from reality, can it?

It doesn't really feel like real life. It can be a little bit like Disney World, an escape briefly from reality that has no impact on real life afterwards, right?

It's wonderful for a moment and then it's gone. I think it was the author Barbara Johnson who first said, we are Easter people living in a Good Friday world.

The reality of life can be harsh. Real hope can be elusive for us, can't it? And so I want to talk together this morning about the hope of Easter for our real lives.

[1 : 30] We're going to look at a couple of different passages together as we go. But first let's pray and ask for God's help as we look at His Word together. Father, will you pray with me? God, it is Easter Sunday and so we have all these expectations and hopes.

They all want this sermon to be short and sweet. I want this sermon to be impressive and memorable. And we confess that to you because what we all need is to hear from you.

So we pray that you would speak to us through your Word. The only thing in this world that is completely reliable, that is always true.

Father, would you speak that we might not be impressed with ourselves, might not be impressed with a preacher, that we might be overwhelmed by our Savior and comforted by an eternal hope because He's alive.

Speak to us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. A few days ago, I woke up early and I got a good run in in the morning, a little bit further than I usually go.

[2 : 55] And I showered, came into the office and sat down for a meeting first thing. It was about 10 o'clock before I got to stand up from that meeting. And when I did, I groaned.

Oh, lots of muscles were sore and tight. And there were at least three people in the room who looked at me with disgust and said, oh, come on, you're only 35.

Fair enough. But it hurt. I'm out of shape. And I groaned. In many ways, the longer I live, the more groaning I do.

Anybody else? Yes? A little bit? Oh, a lot of other people. Not merely from my body, not feeling or looking like it used to, but also because I experience more of the painful realities of living in this world.

And this church family here at Southwood, there have been a lot of those recently. We've walked through the death of beloved family members and friends quite a bit in recent weeks, if you haven't noticed.

- [4 : 07] And we groan in the grief and loneliness that many of us know firsthand right now. We've walked through quite a few broken relationships recently as well.
- And we groan through the pain of divorce or the difficulty of forgiveness and reconciliation. Many of us are walking through deep pain for our kids.
- We groan. And we groan as we watch them face difficult life situations we hope they'd never see or experience. We groan because we hate cancer.
- We worry about school shootings. We fear severe storms. We feel the shame of our repeated failures. And I may not have named your particular groaning this morning, but that's the kind of lives that dress up and drag themselves here on Easter Sunday, isn't it?
- That's who we are. That's what we experience. And you came thinking, surely on this day of celebration, no one will mention my heartache. Hashtag pastor fail.
- [5 : 22] But I mention it to be honest about the reality of life. And also at the same time because I long for you, for us, to know the hope that Easter would be not merely an escape for a moment, but truly a refuge in the midst of real life.
- God's word actually addresses our groaning. And it offers us hope. Turn with me this morning to Romans chapter 8. It's on page 944 of the Bible in the pew in front of you.
- If you want to read along there, it'll also be on the screen behind me. Let's read what God says about our present lives. Starting at verse 18 of Romans chapter 8.
- Verse 18.
- For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
- [7 : 03] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.
- There's something glorious coming, but life now is not that. Do you hear the description of the present groaning? God says the whole of creation is groaning, right?
- And all Christians are groaning. We're not just these weirdly happy people, are we? If you're not a follower of Christ and you're here today and you think Christians just have to smile all the time and act like everything's okay, that's not true.
- We groan. And why? Well, because life is not the way it's supposed to be. Creation and the people who live in it don't function the way God intended us to.
- Verse 20 says it goes all the way back to Genesis. When as a result of our rebellion, the Creator placed a curse on all of His good creation.
- [8 : 15] No longer perfect, but now broken and cursed. The ground wouldn't produce fruit easily. Childbirth would be painful.
- Men and women would struggle in relationship with each other. Those are the places right where God had created us to live. Those exact places where He had called us to, to fill the earth.
- He said, well, that's going to be difficult now, painful in childbirth. He called us to subdue and rule over the earth. And now that's going to be hard. It's going to fight against us with thorns and thistles.
- And the relationships we were to enjoy while doing those things are not going to come naturally. And so all of creation has been groaning.
- And we have too. Aching. Longing to get back to the way things were supposed to be. Don't you feel that sense of things in the world and in your own life just not being quite right?

[9 : 24] There's another great image here. When we read of this eager longing that creation has. The picture being painted is of all creation waiting on tiptoe.

Looking forward. Peering ahead towards something. Something that would make all the groaning worth it. As God promised would happen even in the midst of the curse in Genesis.

So creation presently is straining to see the glory. While groaning at the same time. Famous theologian John Calvin writes, There is no element and no part of the world which being touched as it were with a sense of its present misery.

Does not intensely hope for a resurrection. I talked with one of our new moms recently in the hospital. She had just gone through the pain of labor for nearly two full days.

And at the end of that pain she had endured the difficulty of a C-section to deliver her little girl. And so I came in the next day after the baby was born.

[10 : 43] And she was exhausted. But beaming. She was so excited. I said, how are you? She said, oh well you know it wasn't what I planned.

But now we have her here and it's so wonderful. I thought, man, I don't know if I could go through all that. And she seemed so excited. This groaning that we experience is like childbirth, verse 22 says.

It's a severe pain but a hopeful pain. A pain that doesn't last forever but looks forward. Looks ahead on tiptoes to glory that is coming.

And here's our problem. We are often caught flat footed. Not on tiptoe. I love that the Bible acknowledges the reality of life and doesn't minimize our pain and suffering.

But it gives us different messages from the ones we swim in. The ones we hear every day about how to make our lives better here. Pop psychology saying, you know, grin and bear it.

[11 : 56] Turn that frown upside down. Or as I heard this week, think positive, be happier. Politicians offering hope of fixing your city or making America great again.

Pastors chime in with false promises of a better life here. Have your best life now. Speak your truth into reality. All of these are intended to offer hope to groaning people, aren't they?

That's very well intended. That's the desire there. You've heard them in many places, in many forms. Here's a rope you can hold on to if life is drowning you.

Here's something that will give you hope. The problem is all these solutions for hope and a better life here center on us and our control, don't they?

Think about it. They're about us making our lives better. Can I just be honest? I've lived long enough to realize I'm part of the problem.

[13 : 11] So finding hope in myself is a nice thought for a minute because it makes me really proud. But honestly, it's really a disappointing offer to me. I groan not merely because the world out there is painful and difficult, but particularly because I still act selfishly and hurt the ones I love most.

Even on Easter weekend, I do it. I mean, doesn't everyone understand Easter weekend is busy for pastors? So they get a weekend to just think about themselves and not listen thoughtfully to their wife and kids, right?

Man, how selfish. I still grasp at control and frustrate people I should trust and respect. I don't want this to be my best life now.

I don't want to be flat-footed. I don't want to keep going and think this is all there is. I want to be done with these failings, looking forward on tiptoes to that day.

And that's the difference of the message of Easter. See, the Bible doesn't just acknowledge the reality of pain. You probably know God's promise to wipe away every tear one day, right?

[14 : 32] Did you know that Psalm 56 says God collects and counts our tears now? He cares about our groaning? And yes, Jesus makes a difference in this world, as I was saying earlier.

We talk about that a lot here. His new kingdom, a new society, new people. But he also says in this world we will never be through groaning.

It's still Friday here. And so Jesus enters into our groaning to bring us glory.

An eternal glory that is actually our true hope. That's the good news of Easter. In 1 Corinthians 15 we read of the basis for true hope.

And it's not in ourselves, it's in someone else. 1 Corinthians 15 verse 3. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received.

[15 : 35] What's the most important thing? What's the basis for all of our hope? It's not something we do. Who does it? Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

He was buried. He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. And he appeared to Cephas the 12 and then more than 500 at the same time.

He did that. God doesn't stand far off and close his ears to our groaning. No. Jesus enters in and endures our suffering.

The difficulties of this life. The painful death of the cross. And he does it for us. In our place. He groans in agony.

But then he shouts. In victory. Because death couldn't handle him. And the grave couldn't hold him. Pastor Lockridge. He rises from the dead.

[16 : 42] And Easter says. God hasn't given up on this world. All creation will get resurrection. The hope of Easter is an eternal hope.

It's not one fully realized. Looking around flat footed at ourselves. But one we see looking on tiptoes. Into the future. For glory.

For our Savior. Set your hope fully. On the grace. That will be brought to you. At the revelation. Of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter chapter 1. See because of Easter. Because of what Jesus has done. Our hope. Is in a future.

Glory. It's not merely a hope. For this life. It's hope in the future. 1 Corinthians 15. At verse 19. If in Christ.

[17 : 40] We have hope. In this life only. We are of all people. Most. To be pitied. But in fact. Christ has been raised from the dead. The first fruits. Of those who have fallen asleep.

For as by a man came death. By a man has come also. The resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam. All die. So also in Christ. Christ shall all.

Be made. Alive. The resurrection of Jesus. Means a resurrection for us. Too. Doesn't it? That's what Jesus says.

First fruits. Means. That there's another resurrection coming. Another Sunday. Coming. At the end of our Friday. Friday. The promise of life.

To those facing death. To those enduring in a good Friday world. Is hope. And life. Forever. Because our king. And champion.

[18 : 40] Has conquered death. So he offers to us. Life. What does that glorious life look like? It's the glorious restoration.

Of all of God's creation. To the way he intended it. Isn't it? That glory we read about earlier. That far outweighs. Even our most painful sufferings here.

That's even more beautiful than these flowers. And certainly longer lasting. A glory that is more intense. And more permanent. Than your deepest pain.

Or suffering. The rest of 1 Corinthians 15. Tells us some things to look forward to. To rejoice in. Our physical bodies for example.

Are transformed. Verse 42. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor.

[19 : 39] It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. Power and strength.

Honor. Permanence. I don't know exactly what our new bodies will be like. But I know it will be glorious. And I don't think I'll groan when I stand up anymore.

Perhaps even better. I'll live life in community with others. With no self-consciousness about what I feel like or look like. With no shame.

But there's even more here as we keep reading. Verse 26 says, The last enemy to be destroyed is death. When the perishable puts on the imperishable.

And the mortal puts on immortality. Then shall come to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory. Oh death where is your victory? Oh death where is your sting?

[20 : 41] The sting of death is sin. And the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Death.

The final enemy. And sin. The sting of death. Swallowed up completely. Done away with. Forever. Y'all just think for a minute.

The glory. Of no more death. No more grieving. Loss. And no more sin.

No more goodbyes. No more fears over harm that could come to a child or a friend. No more devastating news reports.

Rather. Fullness of life. And love. And friendship. And all the joys of relationship. Forever. A world of justice and peace.

[21 : 43] Because if death. The final enemy is defeated. Then so are all the other ones that mar this world. I can't even comprehend what a sin free will feels like.

Can you imagine for yourself? Longing only for God all the time. Thinking only of his priorities rather than my own.

Serving only his kingdom. And never feeling insignificant. And never feeling insignificant. Or unimportant. Or ashamed. Anxieties relieved. Insecurities banished.

Self-righteousness eliminated. Jesus chases evil away. He writes all wrongs. And he brings us to himself.

That's our risen king. Amen. Amen. And so we will be with him. With the Lord. Forever. Y'all evil never returns.

[22 : 50] Sin never haunts again. Sin. Death. Is dead. Thanks be to God. Who gives us the victory.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ. An eternal Sunday. An eternal hope. That's what Jesus offers us on Easter. Most of you heard at the beginning of this service.

The recording of Pastor S.M. Lockridge. Preaching. Preaching. Reflecting. On the first Good Friday. And looking forward to that first Easter Sunday.

It's Friday. But Sunday's a coming. I don't have his voice. But here's an attempt. In that vein.

To reflect on this Friday world. And look forward to an eternal Sunday. It's Friday. Creation is groaning.

[23 : 52] People are moaning. Predatory lenders are loaning. But Sunday's coming. It's Friday. Enemies are reviling.

Liars are deceiving. Gangs are killing. But they don't know Sunday's coming. It's Friday. Siblings are arguing.

Parents are wondering. Children are wondering. But it's only Friday. Sunday's coming. It's Friday. Cancer is attacking.

Depression is darkening. Christians are doubting. But Sunday's coming. It's Friday. Substances are addicting.

Pornography is enslaving. Traffickers are profiting. But they don't know Sunday's coming. It's Friday. Selfishness is controlling.

[24 : 50] Anger is exploding. Divorce is overwhelming. But it's only Friday. And Sunday's coming. It's Friday.

Hunger is aching. Thieves are taking. Friends are forsaking. But Sunday's coming. It's Friday. It's Friday. Racism is dividing.

Shame is oppressing. Rich are hoarding. But they don't know Sunday's coming. It's Friday.

Darkness is creeping. Hate is winning. Death is threatening. But it's only Friday.

And Sunday's coming. Will you say it with me? It's only Friday. But Sunday is coming. Let me remind you how dark it looked that first Friday.

[25 : 56] And at the same time. How much glory. How much hope. Easter Sunday brought into that darkness.

And God will do it again. He promises forever. All those things from Friday. Completely gone. Never to return.

An eternal Sunday is coming. So yes there's work to be done here. But it begins with fixing our eyes.

Not on what is seen. But on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary. But what is unseen. Yet at this moment. Is eternal.

Most of the glimpses of glory. In the Bible. Are given with instructions for us. As we wait. To be encouraged.

[26 : 56] To stand firm. To be patient. To endure. To hope. Even as we wait.

To hope. God meets you. In your groaning. This morning. And he wants to pull you up. He wants to stretch you.

To your tip toes. And turn your eyes. To eternity. To comfort you. And encourage you. Where you are.

Sunday's coming. An eternal Sunday is coming. The wolf. Shall dwell with the lamb. And the leopard. Shall lie down. With the young goat.

And the calf. And the lion. And the fattened calf. Together. And a little child. Shall lead them. The cow. And the bear. Shall graze. Their young. Shall lie down together. And the lion.

[27 : 55] Shall eat straw. Like the ox. The nursing child. Shall play. Over the hole. Of the cobra. And the weaned child. Shall put his hand. On the adder's den. They shall not hurt.

Or destroy. In all my holy. Mountain. For the earth. Shall be full. Of the knowledge. Of the Lord. As the waters. Cover the seas. Mortal enemies.

Together. At peace. After this. I looked. And behold. A great multitude. That no one could number. From every nation. From all tribes.

And peoples. And languages. Standing before the throne. And before the lamb. Clothed in white robes. With palm branches. In their hands. And crying out. With a loud voice.

Salvation belongs. To our God. Who sits on the throne. And to. The lamb. Therefore. They are. Before. The throne of God.

[28 : 50] And serve him. Day and night. In his temple. And he who sits on the throne. Will. Shelter them. With his presence. So they shall hunger.

No more. Neither thirst. Any more. The sun shall not strike them. Nor any scorching heat. For the lamb. In the midst of the throne. Will be their shepherd.

And he will guide them. To springs of living water. And God will wipe away. Every tear. From their eyes. Sheltered.

By God's presence. Nothing to fear. No racism. Or classism. Left there. Around his throne. Is there? And then I saw a new heaven.

And a new earth. For the first heaven. And the first earth. Had passed away. And the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city. New Jerusalem. Coming down. Out of heaven. From God. Prepared as a bride.

[29 : 46] Adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice. From the throne. Saying. Behold. The dwelling place of God. Is with man. He will dwell with them. And they will be his people.

And God himself. Will be with them. As their God. He will wipe away. Every tear. From their eyes. And death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning.

Nor crying. Nor pain. Any more. For the former things. Have passed away. Gone. Forever. Sunday's a coming.

Our citizenship. Is in heaven. And from it. We await. A savior. The Lord Jesus Christ. Who will transform. Our lowly body. To be like his.

Glorious. Body. From there. We await a savior. And isn't he the most. Glorious part. Of all that we can see. As we stand. And look forward.

[30 : 44] The one whose. Presence there. Makes it glorious. And whose presence there. Guarantees. Our presence there. Because. He lives. We too. Will live. Can you see our risen king.

As you look forward. I saw in the night visions. Behold with the clouds of heaven. There came one like the son of man. And he came to the ancient of days.

And was presented before him. And to him was given dominion. And glory. And a kingdom. That all peoples. Nations and languages. Should serve him. His dominion.

Is an everlasting dominion. Which shall not. Pass away. And his kingdom. One. That shall not. Be destroyed. One of the elders.

Said to me. Weep no more. Behold the lion. Of the tribe of Judah. The root. Of David. Has conquered. So that he can open. The scroll. And its seven seals.

[31 : 41] And between the throne. And the four living creatures. And among the elders. I saw a lamb. Standing as though it had been slain. With seven horns. And with seven eyes. And when he had taken the scroll.

The four living creatures. And the twenty-four elders. Fell down before the lamb. Each holding a harp. And golden bowls full of incense. The prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song.

Saying. Worthy are you. To take the scroll. And to open its seals. For you were slain. And by your blood. You ransomed people. For God. From every tribe. And language.

And people. And nation. And you've made them a kingdom. And priests. To our God. And they shall reign. On the earth. A lamb. Slain.

One more glimpse. In the midst of the lamp. Stands. One like a son of man. Clothed with a long robe. And with a golden sash. Around his chest.

[32 : 36] The hairs of his head. Were white like wool. As white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished. Bronze. Refined in a furnace. And his voice was like the roar.

Of many waters. In his right hand. He held seven stars. From his mouth came a sharp. Two-edged sword. And his face. Was like the sun.

Shining in full strength. When I saw him. I fell at his feet. As though dead. But he laid his right hand on me. Saying fear not.

I'm the first. And the last. And the living one. I died. And behold. I am alive. Forevermore. And I have the keys. Of death.

And Hades. Can you see him? The one who has triumphed. Who holds the keys. Of death. And hell.

[33 : 34] And says to you. Fear not. I am alive. I am alive. Forevermore. Forevermore. And I will bring you.

To be with me. Forever. Sunday's coming. Jesus. Is coming.

Let's pray. Jesus. We look forward. To that day. And. A day.

That never ends. Glory. That continues. Forever. Forever. And we confess. That we so often. Don't.

Look. Forward. We. We look around. We look inward. We. We search. Desperately. For hope. And. We fool ourselves. Would you stretch us.

[34 : 31] Onto our tiptoes. This morning. Might you give us. A hope. That will. Never fail. A hope. That is imperishable. Undefiled.

And unfading. Because it is. Kept. In heaven. For us. In Jesus Christ. Jesus.

You are the. Pinnacle. Of that hope. The most glorious. Part of that. Greatest glory. We can imagine. And we worship you.

And look forward. To being with you. Forever. We pray in your name. Amen. For more information.

Visit us online. At southwood.org. Thank you. Love you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

[35 : 27] God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.