

# Sermons at First Church

**A Ministry of the Word**  
**March 27, 2016**

**First Presbyterian Church**  
**Clarksburg, WV**

**Rev. John F. Koerner**

**John 20:1-18**

*Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!"*

(John 20:18 N.R.S.V.)

## **It Is Friday, But Sunday's Coming**

This last Wednesday, we had the privilege of hearing Pastor Armand from the Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church preach for our last lenten service. Afterwards, someone said to me, "He sure gets wound up, doesn't he?"

Well, yes, he does. That style of preaching is not for everyone and it is not my style of preaching. Nevertheless, I can appreciate it. Part of what I appreciate is the way the congregation gets drawn into the message, becomes part of the message.

Dynamic Preaching magazine has a story about an african-american Preacher who was preaching to his congregation on Good Friday. He began his message by saying quietly, "It's Friday and Jesus is hanging on the cross. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming."

He keeps working that same message. "It's Friday, but Sunday's coming." It's Friday and Mary is crying her eyes out, the disciples are scattered like sheep. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming."

He keeps on working that sentence until he reaches the climax of his message. He shouts out, "It's Friday!" And the whole congregation stands and shouts back, "But Sunday's coming!" (Dynamic Preaching, March 27, 2016, pg. 85)

I'm glad to say this morning that Sunday is here! Welcome to Easter Sunday 2016. We have so much to be thankful for. We have so much to be joyous about!

We know what happened earlier in the week. Jesus was arrested. Peter denied Jesus three times. The disciples scattered and ran away. Jesus undergoes a mockery of a trail before Pilate. He is beaten nearly to death, then forced to carry his own cross. He is nailed to that cross and left there hanging against the sky to die.

Jesus died. He didn't just go into a coma and then get revived. He died all the way dead. He was buried in a tomb.

That was Friday and Saturday, the lowest point in human history.

Then on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early. She finds it empty. The body is gone. She goes and gets Peter and John and they have a foot race back to the tomb to see what has happened. Notice that none of these first disciples thought that Jesus had been resurrected. Later they would reflect back on all the times when Jesus had told them he would be resurrected, but they were too deep into the pain of Friday to think of that.

All they can see is the bleakness of Friday. All they can feel is pain, grief, and hopelessness.

Then everything changes, the risen Jesus appears to Mary. She runs and tells the others, "I have seen the Lord." Sunday is here and everything changes. The world had been upside down and inside out, but now all is made right. When Jesus appears to all of the disciples, they cannot contain their joy. Sunday is here!

Now let me back up just a little bit. For many in the world today, it is still Friday. I'm not just talking about unbelievers here. As long as we are in this life, Fridays will be part of our world. We know that Sunday's coming, but Friday is a reality we have to face time and again.

I was reading about Marshall Shelly, the author of The Quest Study Bible. While working on this Bible that has helped so many, Shelly and his wife celebrated the birth of their first child. She was born with severe physical and mental problems. They loved her greatly and worked hard to help her overcome her disabilities. Then their second child was born. She lived only a few minutes. The Shellys were devastated. Then just 18 months later, their first daughter also died of complications from her medical problems.

Marshall Shelly was full of hard questions for God. If you have ever watched a loved one struggling with sickness and pain, you can understand that. Shelly said, "God's not offended by (our asking questions). In fact, He invites it!" (Dynamic Preaching, pg. 86)

We are not sure how God healed and renewed the Shellys' faith after those terrible tragedies. It seems impossible to us. But God does the impossible every day. Shelly went on to finish his Study Bible which has been such a great help and inspiration to others.

If today you are mired in Friday, overwhelmed by grief, and feeling hopeless. Don't think that you are the only believer to face Friday, or the dark night of the soul. Fridays are a reality in this world. The Bible is very frank about that.

It has been pointed out many times that it is only through struggle and difficulty that our faith grows and we draw closer to God. We may not like that, but it is still so.

The Bible is clear that Friday is a part of this world. It is also clear that Friday is not the last word. Sunday is coming.

When we look back on the most difficult times in our lives, we can see where God was present. We can see where he carried us, when we could no longer walk.

Yet in the midst of Friday, we may feel abandoned and hopeless. Every option we can think of turns out to be a dead end. Hopelessness begins to weigh us down and Satan starts whispering in our ears. "It's all over. Throw in the towel. It will never get better."

Listen Friend, It's not over til God says it's over. Yes, Fridays are a part of this world. But Sunday is coming. The resurrection teaches us that there is life beyond the grief and the pain.

Yes, there are many people who are hurting in the world today. You may be one of them. Your pain and your grief and suffering are real. But these things are not king. They need not rule your life or define who you are.

You are a child of the king. These things you are going through now, they are only Friday. Friday is not the last word. Sunday is God's last word. Easter Sunday! The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Life for you and for me! Abundant life! Life everlasting! Hallelujah! Amen.