



**“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer;
I have overcome the world” John 16:33b**

Periodical Message (March 2021)

A Word from us,

Again, we managed to serve during new restrictions because of the so-called ‘Pandemic’ and our Lord used the Pope’s visit ‘...to the Land of the Chaldean’ as a catalyst. We noticed how the whole world was watching, and though terrorists were trying to disrupt or even hinder the visit, the Pope didn’t want to ‘disappoint the people’. It was good that the Pope came; at least the Christians in Iraq and the situation of the Iraqi people were put in the spotlight and under scrutiny.

Did we pray more? Yes, indeed, because we felt the urgency of prayer at such moment in our history; Iraq was Christian from the First Century, but that fact was ignored for a long time. Was it necessary to see the Pope coming to Iraq? The answer is yes. NOT the doctrine was in display but the name of Jesus Christ and the suffering Christians. We had greater opportunity to talk to people, reach out to the lost and encourage Christians to pray more for the future of our country. We want you to rejoice with us, because the world, finally, recognized that Iraq has a Christian history; please pray for a Great Echo of the Pope’s Visit.

**Yours in the Lord,
Salman**

A Word according to the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

It is Saturday and God is silent!

For me the day between Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday is an odd break in the resurrection story, so how do we understand God’s apparent inaction here? Did you ask yourself about the reason, why God was silent between Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday?

Through the years I served the Lord and discovered that very few people are willing to discuss the Saturday between Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. It seems this strange, dark day of limbo and mystery brings up too many uncomfortable questions; did you notice that the Gospels mentioned nearly nothing about that Saturday!

We know this much “And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just: (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. **And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a Sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.** And that day was the preparation, and the **Sabbath** drew on. And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the Sepulcher, and how His body was laid. **And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment**” Luke 23:50-56.

It is clear, the body of Jesus was laid down in that **Sepulcher**, and the women were the witnesses; not very Jewish indeed...and that was all. Even those (Women) witnesses ‘rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment’. Many questions could be asked like: Why didn’t Jesus rise on Saturday? Why did He wait

a day in the grave when His followers were mourning and freaking out? Was He so committed to the Jewish Sabbath that He wouldn't break it by coming back to life on Saturday? Well, that doesn't really make sense, since He performed fair few miracles on the Sabbath. Didn't He have any concern for the people who were grieving for Him, for example His own mother? We can go on and on...but the last question could be: **What was God doing in the darkness and silence of the grave?**

Impatience is the root cause of all murmuring and complaining among God's People and wherever there is impatience, there can be no faith. I believe one of the things the Lord most wants to deal with in His Church today is impatience, because His people are notoriously impatient!

Throughout history, we have constantly given God deadlines, crying, 'Lord, how long do we have to pray about this? Where are you? If you don't do something soon, it will be too late'. King David was not different, as we all know, yet God doesn't answer that kind of prayer. Instead, He keeps on having our faith tested to get at our impatient spirit. I believe God only ordains His children deep disappointment and profound suffering in order to give them far greater joy in the glory He is preparing to reveal. This Verse from Romans expresses it very well "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" Romans 8:18.

Like the Disciples, before we know what Jesus is doing, circumstances can look all wrong; just try to put yourself in Peter's place! Most of the time we are tempted to interpret God's apparent inaction as unloving, when in fact God is loving us in the most profound way He possibly can. I believe you agree with me that we simply don't have the perspective that God has on our circumstances. What seems mean-spirited and even pointless to us has grander purpose beyond what we can perceive. We can come back to the same question: 'Why did Jesus wait a whole day in the grave?' We don't know for sure and nowhere in the Bible is the answer laid out plainly. BUT, and I believe you would agree with me, that what we do know is that: God is good. He never acts without a purpose and He wants us to engage with what He's doing, even when we're confused or completely in the dark about His aims. Do you want to be like Abraham...or like Jacob (Israel!)? It's perhaps too easy to forget that the name Israel, the name for God's People, means "struggles with God" (Genesis 32:28)!

I noticed that so often this passage is used as an example of 'Pray harder, and God will give you what you want!'...but is it so?! I believe in our hurry to grab that much more comfortable message, we miss the fact that Jacob wrestled with a stranger through the long hours of the night. Yes, He left Jacob blessed, but also exhausted, sleep-deprived and with a dislocated hip right before a day's journey and meeting his brother Esau, who potentially wanted to kill him. It is easy to overlook the long night and how God deliberately leaves Jacob's questions unanswered. Once I read what Martin Luther said 'Saturday was the day that God Himself lay cold in the grave. Friday was death, Sunday was hope, but Saturday was that seemingly ignored middle day between them when God occupied a dirty grave in a little garden outside Jerusalem. Saturday is about waiting, about uncertainty, about not knowing what'll happen'. One thing is certain, the women and the Disciples "...rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment". One theologian put it this way 'Saturday is ambiguity. It's about, as one 'muddling through' when the future isn't clear'...I believe so much of Christian faith is Saturday faith. Just look around you and see HOW believers are reacting to what is going on in the world because of the so-called 'Pandemic' and all kind of restrictions (Literally, the robbing of our freedoms and rights!). For one believer being shaken will cause faith to become clearer, for the other, shaking will cause the faith to blur and disappear; I believe ALL will be shaken...and then? Where will you be?

We should remember, God often invites us to meet Him in the thick darkness of life's cares and our griefs or fears. He may answer our questions with silence and troubling mystery. I want you, dear believer, to bear in mind that in these moments, it's worth remembering how much God spoke to Moses, so much so that the glory of the Lord's Presence even rubbed off on Moses' face. I know, and have experienced it; stepping into the gloom and waiting in the silence for God is frightening, but it's also often where He meets us most intimately. Let's also not forget that Mary was waiting in a graveyard, waiting in the silence, not knowing what was going on, BUT she was the first to meet a Resurrected Jesus!

Are you still wondering about that Saturday? Do you have more questions? Well, believe me I do too but I learnt to wait upon the Lord, always asking Him to teach me to be patient, quiet and waiting in faith.

Of course Jesus could have left the tomb earlier, and if He did WHAT would have happened?

Please don't let your faith hang on a question, but on your faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour; and we should agree: He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. May you learn to wait upon the Lord in His timing, where you supposed to meet Him and know where to go after that. IF He's called you, don't stutter like Moses and don't fight and struggle like Jacob; just let the Spirit of the Lord guide you...even if it was Saturday.

Prayer Ideas

- 1.** We thank you, dear heavenly Father, for your Presence, your protective hand and healing touch to our country, Iraq. We agree with you, dear Father, that we NEED you, your Presence and your convicting Spirit; continue visiting and changing our country. Encourage your people through your Presence and SPEAK to those who hate and persecute us; convict them of sin and bring them to the moment of repentance. Sovereign God, in your strong arm we surrender all, believing you are willing to surprise everybody, including us. In the precious name of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.
- 2.** Again you made it possible, Lord, that we could go and serve your people, those widows in need, and deliver the monthly ration from goods and money in time; thank you Jesus for your faithfulness. Thank you for taking care of the needs of your people and supplying ALL what was necessary in time. We adore you, Lord, for bringing joy to the hearts of those who were in dire need and ask you to continue helping us to keep our promise by serving your people. We claim that what YOU promised to give, that is: "I will give you everything" to be always given at the right time; may your will be done.
- 3.** With millions of Christians worldwide we are feeling the pressure of the moment because of all kind of restrictions; Lord we pray, asking you to intervene and change our world. Encourage your people to be active in prayer, in service, in evangelism and in spreading love. Look down with favour upon your servants, who are preaching the Gospel to a lost world around them with humbleness, meekness and love. Do NOT let despair take hold of your people, Lord Jesus, because of 'lockdown', travel-restrictions and else; instead make that as a catalyst for all believers to diligently PREACH the Gospel.
- 4.** Most of what you warned us of, Lord Jesus, is happening; people believing lies, the hearts of men are without love, corruption is widespread and there is a campaign of manipulation to control everybody. In your name Lord Jesus, we rebuke all the schemes of man and claim your WILL to be done. We claim that all what is good, all what is worthy, all what is noble be the characters and deeds of your people. Raise up honest leaders to lead and reveal every corrupt heart, dear Lord; we believe of your ability and willingness to do so.
- 5.** Every day we discover how evil and corrupt the heart of man is, confirming what you said "And GOD saw **that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**" Genesis 6:5
We claim a different attitude for ourselves and all your people; may we shine as Light of the World and bring clarity to our families, our Churches and the world around us. We ask you, Father, to protect us and our minds from the crooked and corrupt ways of the world and to help us to walk on your ways. May your Word be a light to our feet everywhere we go "**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path**" Psalm 119:105. Let's live Heaven's Reality on earth, Lord, and use that to change us from inside out; we ask you and pray in Jesus mighty name. Amen.
- 6.** Your helping hand is visible, oh, God, in our new Mission House in Ainkawa, Iraq and we see how you put favour in the hearts of the people around us, how our work is going smoothly and even how new doors were opened. We want to thank you, Lord, for your immediate and direct help; please continue helping us and guide our feet to where we could be used by you. Encourage us to boldly share the Gospel with all those around us, including those believers around us. We want to see our world changed; may we be the first who are willing and ready to be used by you to achieve that goal. Amen.
- 7.** We've seen your people rejoicing and celebrating, though they are literally in a danger zone; help us Lord to be ready to celebrate you, your goodness and your Kingdom without fear. We pray that through joy, despite all circumstances, people would be able to see your goodness and sense your grace. Your Word says "Rejoice in the Lord always..." Philippians 4:4 we claim YOUR Joy for our Ministry, for our Teams and for those, whom we are serving. We know that YOUR Joy has nothing to do with our circumstances; help us to live that daily.
- 8.** We want to lift up our families, those who are standing with and supporting us and our Ministry and those praying for us to you, gracious Lord; give them special blessing and show them Your Glory. We intercede for our families and all those standing with us, claiming your Mighty Presence, your Revealing

