**IT’S FRIDAY…Mt. 27:11-26, Jn. 19:17-30, Fri. Apr. 15/22.**

 We’ve been journeying resolutely to Jerusalem, moving intentionally toward the cross with Jesus for this entire month. Last Sunday, Palm Sunday, we used the framework that there was trouble in the text, there was trouble in the world, there was grace in the text & there was grace in the world. The same framework fits today. Certainly there is no difficulty seeing trouble in today’s text, just as there’s no trouble seeing trouble in the world. Just look at our world —what a mess! Who could have believed that Russia could commit such atrocities! The world has never been short of evil. You don’t have to look hard to see evil’s presence at any time. So in 5 days Jesus goes from being celebrated with “Hosannas, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, to relentless shouts of “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” The “stirring” we spoke of on Palm Sunday has indeed shifted to become flat out turmoil. If there was ever a vivid picture of 2 universes colliding, this is it. This is ground zero in the face off between good & evil. In 5 days we’ve gone from a glimpse of the coming Kingdom depicted by Jesus’ reception on Palm Sunday to resistance to & rejection of the King of kings. Yes, 2 universes are colliding.

Today, Jesus’ resolute journey to the cross seems to be complete. We’ve read how his life was snuffed out, how He was so cruelly executed. It’s hard to understand how today came to be known as “Good” Friday. Everything about it seemed to be wrong right from the get-go. And it just went from bad to worse.

 Jesus was hung on a cross to die. The same fate awaited the 2 criminals—one on either side of Him. One kept yelling insults at Him: “If you’re the Son of God, get yourself & us down from these crosses. Save yourself and save us too.”

 Was it an ordinary day? Was it business as usual? Did people just go about their typical routines, not taking notice of what was going on? Or was this crucifixion of the One thought to be the Messiah a spectacle that nobody would want to miss, like the gruesome attraction of the gladiators fighting to the death in the coliseum in Rome? You know how people are drawn to an accident or a fire.

More likely, it must have been formidable. According to Matthew’s Gospel, the sun stopped shining for 3 hours while Jesus hung there. It would have been dark in the middle of the day. Spirits of dead people were seen wandering around the streets of Jerusalem. The curtain in the temple that separated the Holy of Holies from the people was torn in 2. It has been said of that curtain that 2 teams of horses pulling in opposite directions could not tear that temple cloth in 2. Nevertheless, it was torn in 2.

 I want to tell you the story today as it has been told before by Reverend S.M. Lockridge, but made popular by Tony Campolo, a Christian sociologist from Philadelphia. He’s a humorous, yet poignant speaker, who leaves quite an impact on you.

He tells of growing up in Philadelphia in a Black church (Lockridge’s church). And he says politically not right things, like, “It wasn’t always Black; they moved in on us!” Every Good Friday, the tradition in his church was that 7 Black preachers, including Tony, who is Italian-American—not Black, would preach. Tony’s very fond of their tradition. The elders sit in the front row, & when the preacher gets going, you hear, “Preach, you preach!” & the men chime in, “Keep goin’, Brother!” Men, can you try those lines? They don’t do that in a white church. In a white church they’re more likely to shout, “Stop, stop!” And the women wave one hand in the air, often with a hankie in their hand, saying, “Well…well!” Ladies, can you try that? Tony naturally responded to this. It really got him going. There’s one more important detail. He talks about the honesty of Black churches, without any false piety. So he said, the more they got going like this, the more he got going, the better he got. He got so good, that he wanted to take notes on himself! When he finished, he went back to his seat beside the old senior pastor, Lockridge, and said to him, “Think you can top that, Preach? The old Pastor slapped Tony on the thigh, and just laughed. He said, “Son, son, son; you just sit back and you just watch!”

And here’s how it went. It’s a one-line sermon: “It’s Friday, but Sunday’s a Comin’”. “It’s Friday. Jesus is praying. Peter is sleeping. Judas is betraying. But Sunday’s coming.”

“It’s Friday. Pilate’s struggling. The Council is conspiring. The crowd is vilified. They don’t even know Sunday’s coming.”

 “Well…”, someone started.

“It’s Friday. The disciples are running around like sheep without a shepherd. Mary’s crying. Peter’s denying. But they don’t know that Sunday’s a comin’.”

“Keep goin’”, somebody shouted.

“It’s Friday. The Romans beat my Jesus, robe Him in scarlet and they crown Him with thorns. But they don’t know that’s because it’s Friday. Sunday’s a comin’.”

“It’s Friday. See Jesus walking to Calvary, His blood dripping, His body stumbling, His spirit burning. But you see, it’s only Friday. Sunday’s a comin’.”

“It’s Friday. The world’s winning, people are sinning, and evil’s grinning.” But it’s only Friday.”

“It’s Friday. The soldiers nail my Saviour’s hands to the cross. They nail my Saviour’s feet to the cross and then they raise Him up between 2 criminals.” But let me tell you somethin’, that’s because it’s Friday. Sunday’s comin’.”

“It’s Friday. The disciples are questioning what has happened to their King. The Pharisees are celebrating what their scheming has achieved. But they don’t know it’s only Friday. Sunday’s a comin’.”

“It’s Friday. Jesus is hanging on the cross and feeling forsaken by His Father—left alone and dyin’. Can nobody save Him? Ohhh…it’s Friday. But Sunday’s a 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 is just laughin’.”

“It’s Friday. Jesus is dead. A soldier stands guard. A rock is rolled into place. But it’s Friday. It is only Friday; Sunday’s a comin!

“Friday! / Sunday’s a comin’!”

We are the people of God—called to take this message to every sector of society, knowing that because of Jesus we are the greatest power that history’s ever seen—that He has given us the revitalizing and converting power that changes everything. Our ultimate message is we are those with good news, with Gospel. And the good news is this: it’s Friday.