

It's Holy Week and Christians around the world are preparing our hearts for Easter. My heart is settling on this thought: LIFE isn't a game because Easter is more than a story!

This year Easter has taken on a significance and meaning not experienced in recent memory. Pandemic. COVID-19. Life disrupted. Lives and jobs lost. Certainties shaken. And, a cookies and Kool-Aid or social argument religion is simply not enough.

When you play Milton Bradley's "The Game of LIFE" there comes a time when you [spin]... for the last time. All the money you've accumulated goes back into the bank. The little plastic car you've been driving goes back into the box. Even the little pink & blue pegs that represented your spouse and kids – if you had them – it ALL goes back into the box. Game over.

That happened for Jesus on what we call Good Friday. Jesus had been crucified – nailed to a cross. He hung there for 6 hours from 9am to 3pm. Luke 23:46, Then Jesus shouted, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!" And with those words he breathed his last.

Since it was Passover and Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday, they took Jesus' lifeless body from the cross and laid it in a borrowed tomb. But then – bonus round! Luke 24:1-3, "Very early on Sunday morning the women came to the tomb, taking the (burial) spices they had prepared. They found that the stone covering the entrance had been rolled aside. So they went in, but they couldn't find the body of the Lord Jesus."

While the details of Jesus' death are unique, his death is not that different from any other end-of-life story until... Luke 24:4-7, Suddenly, two men appeared clothed in dazzling robes. The women were terrified. The men asked, "Why are you looking in a tomb for someone who is alive? He isn't here! He has risen from the dead! Don't you remember what he told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again the third day?" Remember.

This year, 2020, feels like the worst Good Friday ever. Fear is our companion just as it was on that first Good Friday when Jesus died for our redemption. You may want to join the 1:30pm Whitley County Good Friday Community Service - many churches are participating. You can catch the link on our SWUMC Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/South-Whitley-United-Methodist-Church-106173364366/>).

Rev. Shadrach Meschach Lockridge (1913-2000), the dynamic African-American pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in San Diego, California, famously concluded a sermon: "It's Friday. Jesus is buried. A soldier stands guard. And a rock is rolled into place. But it's Friday. It is only Friday. Sunday is a-comin'!"

Easter is Sunday, April 12th but that's just a date on the calendar. In a rich and real sense Easter IS "a-comin'" when the Lord delivers us from our fears including COVID-19.

May our Lord bless you with health and hope. Please remember your tithes and offerings to your local church – the mission of Christ continues. Be kind and compassionate – we're in this together.