

“The Darkness of the Cross”

Mark 15:33-39

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³³ And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ³⁵ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.” ³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” ³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Introduction

Video: [Passion of the Christ – Worthy is the Lamb – Hillsong](#)

Our sins put Jesus on the cross, yet we are forgiven because of His death. This should generate simultaneous feelings of sorrow and thankfulness, and we should fall in love with Him all over again. I pray that throughout your life, you take the Lenten Season and Passion Week very seriously. I believe it is the most important week of the year – more than any other Christian holiday. We should really meditate and think about the cross so that from this week forward, we will be revived for the rest of the year to live for Him. If the gospel is mundane to you, your heart needs to be purified by His blood once again as you gaze at the bleeding Lover of the cross. And that’s what we will do today, especially as we focus on the word “darkness.”

I. Our darkness [33]

We don’t know exactly to what degree it was dark, but it was significant enough that people noticed it for three hours. The first hour in the Jewish clock is 6:00 AM, so the darkness was from 12:00 to 3:00 PM. However, the process of Jesus’s crucifixion was longer than three hours. When you look at the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John comprehensively, you can understand what happened. John 19:14 states that the crucifixion began during the sixth hour, but this was using the Roman clock. Therefore, Jesus probably began carrying the cross around 6:00 AM. When I say “carrying the cross,” I’m referring to Jesus being scourged and beaten while carrying the cross along the way. At 9:00 AM, He was nailed to the cross, and starting at 12:00 PM, there was darkness for three hours. At 3:00 PM, Jesus died on the cross. He was nailed to the cross until His death for about six hours, but if you include carrying the cross, Jesus’s crucifixion was a total of nine hours. Often, physical darkness is a metaphor for spiritual darkness, and this can be seen everywhere in Scripture.

A. The darkness in Creation

- Genesis 1:1-2 - *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

Before the completion of earth's creation, there was darkness. We see this also when God gave ten plagues to Pharaoh, as one of them was darkness over the whole land.

B. The darkness in Re-Creation

-Luke 23:34 - *And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.*

These people surrounding the cross could not see the enormity of their sins. Some of us know our sin, but we don't know the depth of it. It is incredibly blessing to see our sins so that we can go to the cross. When we cannot see our sins, we cannot see our Savior. These people did not know who was being crucified. They did not know that thousands of years later, millions of people in the twenty-first century would speak of this event. They could not see their greatest need. They were seeking comfort, just as we often do. Jesus could have said, "Father, give them money" or "Father, feed them". Instead, He asked for their forgiveness because that was their greatest need. Giving Himself, His life, and His blood was the best thing He could have ever given to us.

C. The darkness in our lives

When we don't have Christ, we are away from God. Darkness means we are turned away from the light and that humanity is lost. There are several consequences to living in darkness.

1. We cannot see forward – Purpose darkness

Everyone is motivated to live for something. Even if you don't have a long-term purpose, you might have short-term goals. But when we cannot see the purpose of God, we are not living how we were created to be and for who we were destined to live for. There is a purpose for us that is eternal. Any other purpose is too short or too small. God has an amazing purpose for us in Jesus Christ. Apart from God, we have no idea what to live for.

2. We cannot see within – Identity darkness

These days, people are searching for their identity, but they are lost in darkness without guidance. But as we look into the Word and find Jesus Christ, we know who we are. We are hell-deserving sinners lost in darkness, and we do not know who we are until we find God.

3. We cannot see the surroundings – Social darkness

According to the Bible, even when we are with people, we are alone and living for ourselves. We surround ourselves only with people who give us what we want. We can only experience true love in Jesus Christ. It's foreign

to us until the alien love of Jesus Christ lands in our hearts, and we can spread this love to the world. Until then, we are in isolation and cannot see people as they are. We judge others and isolate ourselves. But when we find Jesus Christ, we learn to connect spiritually with others.

4. We cannot see above – Spiritual darkness

There is no way to see God unless we see Him through Jesus Christ. Someone once said, “If our greatest need had been education, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.”

When we see the cross, we know our sins are forgiven. As we understand that, we enter His purpose and know who we are. We used to be sinners, but now we are redeemed and made in the image of God. Though we are imperfect, we are growing. We start to see that other people’s greatest need is Jesus Christ and love them. We see above that God the Father has given us His only begotten Son so that we can put our faith in Him, and His righteousness, forgiveness, blood, and life comes into us, and we have a purpose to live for Jesus. When we come out of darkness and into the light, we find the true meaning of life.

II. The darkness of Jesus [34-37]

Jesus was also in darkness on the cross, which is reflected by how He was treated by God the Father. We see this in verse 34, as Jesus says, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

-Luke 22:53 - *When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*”

Jesus is giving Himself to those who will crucify Him – the hands of darkness. He experienced the full range of God’s wrath: physical evil by being beaten, relational evil by being betrayed, and spiritual evil by having sin placed upon Him. The judgment that we deserve is coming down upon Jesus Christ. There was cosmic darkness on him; the darkness of hell. This is why Jesus says, “my God” and not “my Father” in verse 34. Until then, He referred to God as His Father, but at this juncture of the crucifixion, Jesus can’t call Him that. He has to say, “my God” because He is a sinner. As He carries our sin, He is rejected by the Father. I used to think that Jesus was saying verse 34 angrily, but when you watch “The Passion of the Christ”, the actor’s interpretation of what Jesus says shows that He was so hurt by this rejection. For the first time in eternity, God the Father and His Son were separated in a way that we cannot completely understand.

I was reading an article written by a young theologian that said the phrase “the Father turned His face away” is wrong because the Father cannot be separated from the Son because the Trinity cannot be broken. There is some validity to that, but I disagree with

his premise. I believe there was a lack of understanding of the dual nature of Jesus Christ because He was God-man. In His deity as God, He was not separated from God – not even on the cross. In His humanity, He was fully man, but at this juncture, He’s carrying all of our sins on the cross. So as a human being, He was utterly rejected to a certain degree because He was carrying all of our sins. Because of us, during the crucifixion, there was some kind of separation for the first time in eternity, and the Father turned His face away, poetically speaking.

-John 19:28 - *After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.”*

The Son is going through the darkness of hell in this moment. Jesus’s thirst reveals to us what He was experiencing internally, which was hell. After Jesus died, He did not go to hell but heaven (Luke 23:43). The cross was His hell. Jesus Christ experienced God’s wrath for all of eternity, the wrath that we deserve, during those few hours on the cross.

-Luke 16:24 - *And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’*

This is one of the few examples in Scripture through which we can see what hell is like. The rich man in hell is speaking to Lazarus, who is in heaven. His thirst illustrates that there are physical desires in hell. There is also physical pain. According to Isaiah 66, worms will eat you, and fire will burn you, but our physical bodies are eternal and will last forever. There is relational pain because the rich man asks Lazarus to warn his family. There is spiritual pain. God poured His wrath upon Jesus Christ on the cross, and He experienced a million hells. As He was separated from the Father, this was Jesus’s darkness in place of our darkness.

Video: [World Trade Center \(4/9\) Movie Clip – I Can’t Believe This is Happening](#)

This is just a glimpse of what hell might be like. Why did Jesus have to give His life? Because of the wrath of God. Because of justice, the wrath of God will fall upon sinners. Why did Jesus have to be a man? To replace us as human beings. Why did He have to be God? Because the value of God is infinite. In John 3:16 when it says God, “gave his only Son”, the phrase “only Son” translates into “mono-gene”. No other person can have the DNA of Jesus Christ because He was the Son of God. This person was of infinite value, and He carried the cross on our behalf so that when we put our faith in Him, we can be out of our darkness and in the light.

III. Our light [38-39]

A. Our access to the light [38]

During this time, the presence of God was represented through the temple. In the middle of the temple, there was a place called the Holy of Holies that no one could enter, and it was blocked by a thick curtain. This curtain was almost like a wall and

according to verse 38, it was ripped apart, which meant that no more sacrifices were needed. The Sacrifice of the sacrifices was given. Because of the death of Jesus, anyone could enter into the presence of God.

-1 John 1:5 - *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

When we enter into the presence of God through Jesus Christ, His light dispels our darkness.

B. Our encounter with light [39]

The first one to see the light after Jesus's death was the centurion. Centurions, similar to army sergeants, were in charge of about a hundred soldiers. This centurion was part of the Roman army, which was the most powerful military force at that time. Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and he was able to recognize that. In the Roman Empire, "Son of God" was a phrase used only when talking about Caesar, but we see that this centurion had seen the true Son of God. As a Roman soldier, he was probably a very hard person who had witnessed many deaths, but something about Jesus softened his heart. This death was different than any other he had seen. This darkness was different than any other darkness he had seen.

-Luke 23:47 - *Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"*

The centurion was probably in charge of Jesus's execution and observed something different about Him as He was dying. He saw the sinlessness of Jesus and that even in the midst of hell's heart, He still loved.

This is how we ought to be in our lives. We need to be the incarnation of Jesus Christ through how we live and die. People have to be able to see Jesus through us. As I'm getting older, my prayer is, "Lord, help me to die well. Help me to die like Jesus so that people are able to see Him." In order for us to die well, we need to live well everyday. We need to build our character so that we will show the life and love of Jesus Christ.

C. Implications of the light

1. Hope for sinners – Jesus is our substitute

Even the most hard-hearted sinners, such as the centurion, can be saved. When you look at others, of course you need to see their sin and help them to overcome by the grace of God, but don't judge them for what they have done. That applies to you too. The blood of Jesus Christ is more powerful than your sin. When I was in college, I read in the newspaper about a Korean lady in Florida who killed her two sons. A friend and I were praying and felt compelled to meet her, so we drove to Florida to see her in prison. I

remember holding her hands and praying for her, knowing that the blood of Jesus Christ was more powerful than her sins. There is hope for any sinner.

2. Hope for the fearers – Jesus is our Son-light

The only darkness that can truly destroy you was already destroyed by the Son who is the light of God, so you do not need to fear. A summary of our darkness in this life can be found in Psalm 23. It says that we, “walk through the valley of the shadow of death”. All of the suffering and hardship we could possibly go through is merely a shadow of death – it’s only a brief moment of darkness that hinders us from seeing the light. Some kids are afraid of the dark because they imagine monsters being there. When you are in the valley of the shadow of death, imagine Jesus Christ being there. As you picture Jesus, you will not see through your imagination but through reality. More than the physical presence of anything, Jesus Christ is present in your midst.

3. Hope for the sufferers – Jesus is our shepherd

In the midst of hardships and difficulties, you might ask God, “Why?” Jesus also asked God, “Why have you forsaken me?”, and He understands when you ask that question. Between the promise and the Promised Land is our life. Confusion is normal because the promise has not been fulfilled yet. That’s why Psalm 23 says that we walk through the valley of the shadow of death not to the valley of the shadow of death. The valley is not our destination, it’s just our path – green pastures are coming. God works for the good. Looking at the cross will not tell you what the reason for your suffering is. Looking at the cross will tell you what the reason for your suffering isn’t. It is for love that you are suffering in this world. It is not to punish or curse you but to purify and bless you.

4. Hope for the weak – Jesus is our strength

If strength is measured by your ability to jump, then you need strong legs. Those who are weak cannot overcome the force that is pulling down. Even though you want to, you don’t have the strength to overcome the gravitational force that is in opposition to you. We are like that. We want to live for God, but selfishness pulls us into ourselves. Selfishness of the heart is like the gravity of the earth. That’s why there is incredible strength in self-denial. It takes the supernatural power of God to deny ourselves and love others. One day, Jesus will return, and we will be free from the gravity of selfishness. We will learn how to love and how to fly as Jesus gives us power to overcome. If you’re weak, Jesus will give you power to love others and live for His glory.

Conclusion

Video: [Mom hears son’s heartbeat after his death](#)

The Father God has given the Son's heart to us, and we've come alive. We have the heart of Jesus Christ that dispels all the darkness in our lives. We need to live and breathe for Him. We need to love for Him so that the world can see the light of Jesus Christ through us.