Jesus in our Darkness

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[0:00] Let us turn now to our studies in the Gospel of Luke. We turn to chapter 23 of Luke's Gospel and the verses 44 and 45.

Luke chapter 23 at verse 44. And it was about the sixth hour, that's about 12 noon.
And it was about the sixth hour and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.
We've been coming to the cross these recent Sunday mornings. And we've been watching and listening.
Today, as we come to the cross, we cannot see anything. Because on that first Good Friday, there was a complete darkness over the land.
[1:23] Maybe better over the land than over the earth. Although it's not really all that important. But there was darkness over the whole land around the cross.

It seems as we compare all the Gospels that there wasn't much to hear during these three hours. Certainly not from Jesus until very near the end of the three hours. But the darkness continues.
There is no doubt that the Bible is saying that the darkness was a miraculous darkness. It was a supernatural darkness.
It tells us that the sun was darkened or eclipsed. But we know that this eclipse couldn't have been any natural phenomena according to the ordinary laws that God has allowed for his universe.
[2:41] Because Passover time was always at full moon time. And those who know about these things tell us that it is impossible for there to be a normal eclipse at that time.

And so we understand that in some supernatural way, God darkened the sun.
So that there was a supernatural darkness over the whole land during these three hours of Jesus being on the cross.
So that although there may be relative silence all around. Although we cannot see anything.
Yet we are called to that darkness. Still to watch and to listen. Because if God is working miraculously.
[3:47] Then God is doing that for a purpose. God is speaking. The Bible makes clear that wherever God does something miraculous. It is for a purpose.

And God is speaking through that. So we have to come to the darkness of the cross this morning. Expecting to hear God explain to us something of the significance of this darkness.
And what he wants us to learn through it. And then I think we are further encouraged to believe that there is some real significance in this darkness.
Because Luke associates it with the temple veil being torn. Now again if we compare the other gospel writers.
We would learn that it is towards the end of this darkness that this event happens. And that the veil in the temple is torn. The veil that was the huge vast heavy curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple.
[5:02] And of course behind that veil in the Holy of Holies was the place where God had traditionally met with his people.

In the coming down of the light of the great Shekinah glory. And so the darkness around the cross. It's in some way associated with the tearing of this curtain. And making available to all men in a way that had never been available before.
The light of the presence of Almighty God. That's what it's about.
What can we learn then from this darkness? Well I would like first of all to see it as the darkness of lostness.

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[6:08] The darkness of lostness. God makes clear in his word and indeed Jesus himself especially makes clear that darkness is used by God as a symbol of spiritual reality.

And so Jesus says to his disciples towards the end of his ministry and recorded for us in John chapter 12 and verse 35. Jesus said yet a little while is the light with you.
Walk while you have the light lest darkness come upon you. For he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. In other words he's lost.
Jesus used the symbolism of darkness to speak about the lostness of a life without God. And that's why he was saying I'm the light and I'm with you.
Learn to walk while you have the light. For if the light is taken away and you're in darkness. You won't know where you're going and you'll be lost.
[7:23] That was one of the great things about Jesus when he was with his disciples. He never gave the impression that he was in any way lost.

Neither physically nor spiritually. Jesus was always teaching his disciples about the fact that he knew God's plan. That he was here in fulfillment of God's plan.
And that he knew and he wanted the disciples to know more and more about this fulfillment. And about where he was going in the fulfillment of God's plan. And of course he told them especially, especially towards the end of his ministry.
When he concentrated on teaching his own disciples. He taught them again and again that the fulfillment of that plan would bring Jesus to the cross. That after three days he would rise again.
Jesus knew where he was going. He was walking in the plan of God. And he knew where he was going. And the rest of history makes clear to us. That Jesus was right in his knowledge.
[8:33] In his certainty. And all that he expected. All that he knew. It came to pass. He was never unsure. He was never walking in the darkness.

Of lostness. It was his disciples who were unsure. And that's why he had to say to them. Walk in the light. But now.
On the cross. A great and a strange and an amazing darkness comes down. And envelops Jesus. And all the land around him. And Jesus. Is right at the center. Of darkness. And the Bible also makes clear to us.
That this darkness. Is a darkness. Is a darkness. Of lostness. Because from that darkness.
[9:44] We hear Jesus crying. I say towards the end of the darkness. He has had time to contemplate it. He has had time to experience.

All the spiritual reality. The reality of feeling lost from God.
Without purpose. And without assurance. Because those who walk in darkness. Know not where they're going. And sure enough. In the midst of that darkness.
Jesus cries. Why? The only time we hear Jesus asking such a question. Of his God.
And his Father. Why? Why? Why this darkness? Where is it leading?
[10:46] Why this torment of forsakenness? And lostness. Why? Why? Why? There's much mystery in it.

But Jesus could genuinely ask the question. Why? And yet he never ceased to be. Eternally God. God the Son. There is mystery in it. That we must stand in awe. But the facts are there. Jesus in the darkness.
Cried out. Why? The answer we've been dealing with. Quite often in our recent studies in Luke. The answer has to do with substitution. Jesus was in the darkness of lostness. Because he was taking the place of his people.
[12:00] And he was entering into their need. And he was bearing their need. And their sin. Before God.

And a recarrying obvious aspect of that need. Is the need of lostness.
It's a need that we certainly know. Before we become Christians. That's the way that non-Christians and converted people.
Are described by Jesus himself in the Bible. He says that he came to seek and to save the lost. If you don't know Jesus.
The Savior this morning. Jesus himself says. You're lost. You're in darkness. You don't know where you're going.
[13:00] Isn't that true? Isn't that true? If you're an unconverted soul this morning. You don't know where you're going.

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You don't know where you're going. You're in darkness. Jesus experienced what it feels like.
To be lost. It reveals itself in all sorts of ways. It reveals itself still sometimes.
Amongst us once we are the Lord's people. Perhaps because we've drawn away from God. And we need to be warned about the old lostness.
Perhaps not because we've drawn away from God. But perhaps because God in his mysterious providences. Wants his people to know with a new awareness.
[14:04] Just how much they need him. And just how much they depend on him. And feelings of lostness to him. Feelings of insecurity.

Are you oppressed by such feelings in these days? Maybe ill health brings these feelings of insecurity. Maybe financial difficulty brings these feelings of insecurity.
Maybe something has gone wrong in your family circle. And brings feelings of insecurity. Maybe the feelings come to you through some sort of illness.
A depressive illness perhaps. An emotional illness or a mental illness. That God permits to happen. And you know what it feels like.
To feel lost. To feel insecure. To feel depressed. Maybe it's a feeling of frustration.
[15:17] That makes you feel lost. You were quite sure you knew the right way to go. You had plans. You had ambitions. Maybe great ambitions.

Maybe quite small ambitions. Just restricted to one little area of your life. But it had its importance. And now through some circumstance. Maybe through some quite ordinary circumstance.
It's been frustrated. And you feel frustrated. And it's nagging away at you. And it's all part of the experience. of the lossness.
Of the lack of light. And the lack of understanding. And the lack of vision. That there can be in our lives. In this sinful world.
And here's the darkness of lostness. And Jesus is in it. And so the first message is. Jesus knows about your lostness.
[16:20] Today. Your frustration. Your depression. Your insecurity. Your anxiety.

You're constantly asking. Why? The feeling of being in the darkness. And there's no light. Jesus. Knows it. When you come to that point. Where you say to yourself. Nobody understands. Jesus understands.
And when Jesus entered into that. darkness. By the giving of his life. For sin.
That is at the root of it all. He destroyed the darkness. And the veil of the temple was torn.
[17:29] And the light. And the light that is God's presence. And God's purpose for his people. Can shine through.

To any needy individual. As Jesus pleases. Even if you still feel the darkness.
When you come to this Jesus. You can know. That God is with you.
Even although you still feel the darkness. Because in Isaiah. God says. Who is he among you that feareth the Lord. That obeys the voice of his servant.
A Christian believer. That you walk in darkness. And have no light. Let him trust in the name of the Lord. And stay.
[18:29] And stay. Upon his God. The darkness of lostness. But it is also.

The darkness of evil. This is another way that Jesus uses. The symbolism. Of evil. Of darkness rather.
He says. Early on in his ministry. When he had been speaking to Nicodemus. In John chapter 3. This is the condemnation. That light has come into the world.
And men love darkness. Rather than light. Because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil. Hateth the light. Neither cometh to the light.
Lest his deeds shall be reproved. The darkness is the symbol. That God uses. For the hiddenness. For the untruthfulness.
[19:29] Of evil. It prefers to be in the dark. Where it can get on with its evil work. And not be exposed for what it is. And evil and darkness.

Go together. In the scriptures. But then Jesus comes on the scene. And we read the record of his life.
In the gospels. And we find that Jesus is the absolute opposite. Of all the darkness of evil. And all the evil of darkness.

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He is the light. And he comes and he says. I am the light of the world. And he's the light of the world. Because he reveals himself. As very God of very God.
And he says. I and the father are one. He who has seen me. Has seen the father also. And the bible of course tells us. That God is light. And in him. Is no darkness at all.
[20:27] And we've been learning that lesson. Quite often. In our recent studies of Luke. Because of course. Before we come to this crucifixion scene. We were at the trial scene.

And again and again. It was proved to us. By the mockery of Jesus' trial. That he is indeed the light of the world. That in his humanity. As well as in his divinity.
There is no evil at all. And no darkness. But again.
We're at the cross during these three hours. And the light seems to be extinguished. And there is no light.
And the darkness has come down. And it's the darkness of evil. It doesn't mean the bible makes clear to us.
[21:32] It doesn't mean that Jesus has become evil. That he's become sinful or a sinner.

But it does tell us. That he is so bearing evil. For his people.
That it's difficult for us to distinguish the two. And it's darkness all around. Paul puts it like this.
In the preciseness of the language. That the Holy Spirit breathed into him. For he that is God the Father. Hath made him. To be sin for us.
You see substitution again. For us. He hath made him to be sin for us. Who knew no sin. That we might be sin.
[22:32] That we might be made the righteousness of God. In him. He became sin. He took it.

And God dealt with him as if he was the very essence of evil. As if he were. And the darkness is all about.
And the darkness of evil is all that can be seen for that time. Does it mean that the light has been extinguished? Because that light will shine ever so brightly.
Just in a day or two. Once again for all to see. But for a time it's only darkness. It's only evil that is most evident.
Because Christ has entered into that realm. For his people. And he has taken it. There's comfort here too.
[23:33] For all who will trust in Christ. Greater comfort than ever. Not just when we feel lost.

Not just when we feel the consequences of our sin. Can we go to Jesus. That when we feel our sin. We can go to Jesus. When we recognize the evil that is in our heart. This also Jesus took to the cross.
Or when we're praying for others. And we're conscious of the evil that is in their hearts. And we're anxious about their need of a better way.
Of a better heart. Of a better life. But sometimes we see only their sin. Sometimes we see only the hardness. And the darkness. And the impenetrableness that seems to be in their heart.
[24:40] And we're praying. But doubt so easily come. Because we see the evil that is perpetrated by the evil one. In the hearts and in the lives.

And we're almost about to give out. Because they seem to be going on in that sinful way. And the evil seems to be enveloping them more and more. And we're finding it perhaps more difficult to pray for them.
But all of that evil and much more. Christ took. And Christ took to the cross.
And it was after the bearing of that evil. And the bearing of it away. That the temple curtain was torn.
And God was saying. Because of the darkness. That my son went into. So that sin was imputed to him.
[25:44] As the theologians say. Put on his back if you like. So that it became like his. That he might take it and deal with it. So now.

I can take his righteousness. That he has earned for his people. And I can put it around you. And I can put it within you.
So that you're no longer evil in my sight. But righteous. As Christ is righteous.
In my sight. However you feel your evil. Or the evil of others.
And of course the tragedy is that. None of us feel it. As would be good for us. Or as would be better for us. Perhaps I should say.

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[26:43] But according to the impressions of evil. In our own hearts. Or the hearts of others. That God in his mercy. Has given to us. We can go with it all.

To Christ. And know that on the cross. He took it. And much more.
And bore it away. One last thing. Just as briefly as possible. This darkness was the darkness of lostness.
It was the darkness of evil. And it was the darkness of judgment. Because this is another way. That God uses. And Jesus uses.
The symbolism of darkness. Matthew 8 and 12. Jesus says. The children of the kingdom. That is the children of those. Who were associated with God's kingdom.
[27:41] And thought that they were the children of the kingdom. The children of the kingdom. Shall be cast out. Into outer darkness. There shall be weeping.

And gnashing of teeth. Hell at the same time. Has been viewed as a place of unquenchable fire. Is also viewed. Because it's God's judgment.
As a place of outer darkness. And impressions of the darkness of judgment. Will be seen at the time. That Christ comes again in his glory.
On the last day. When the final judgment comes. And when the eternal judgment. Is completed. And is begun. For all those who are outside of Christ. And it's in terms of darkness.
That Christ speaks about it. In Matthew 24. The sun shall be darkened. And the moon shall not give her light. And the stars shall fall from heaven. Just as it was at the crucifixion.
[28:38] Neither sun nor moon nor stars. Gave their light to the land. It was darkness throughout. So shall it be. On that day.

The day of judgment. Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. And they shall see the Son of Man coming. In the clouds of heaven. And with great glory.
Oh that day will be a day of salvation. It will be a day when the people of God. Will see their Saviour face to face. And they will be like him.
And they will be surrounded by eternal light. But at the same time. For those who are to be cast out. For those who are not prepared. It will be a day of terrible darkness.
Judgment speaks of darkness. And then the Bible tells us. And I say a chapter 9. A prophecy that we often use at Christmas time.
[29:36] The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death. Upon them have light shined. Jesus came.

For there was the darkness of judgment. And I think we could say that that prophecy of Isaiah chapter 9. That we see fulfilled in the birth of Jesus.
I think we maybe have to say that it wasn't fully fulfilled. Until the day of the crucifixion. Because that's when Jesus finally came.
To the shadow of death. To the darkness of judgment. And Jesus entered into that place. With the lostness and with the evil of his people.
And bore it at the court of the judgment of God. And the darkness speaks of the way. That the judgment of Almighty rained down.
[30:38] On his own sand. Bearing that lostness. And that evil of his own people. And so because Jesus stands.

And remains. Until he has received and suffered all the judgment. Even by suffering death itself. Then.
The veil is torn. And the way is clearly exposed. Back to the God of judgment.
That with the assurance. That all who go to and trusting in Jesus. will find that the darkness of their judgment.
Has been taken away. And there is only the light. Of the love. And the mercy.
[31:42] And the eternal acceptance. That inheritance. Of Almighty God. I hope that this morning you have been convinced that to observe the darkness and to observe the torn veil is to observe the infinite mercy of God the darkness that Christ endured he endured for others whatever darkness you are in this morning and only God can convince you of that darkness the darkness of lostness or feeling lost the darkness of evil of sin still standing in your sin or bothered with remaining sin the darkness of the fear of God's judgment at the last whatever darkness

Christ can deliver you from that darkness and you must go to him and you must tell him about the darkness you are in and you must confess to him that you understand that he suffered such

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darkness for others and that you believe that he is the light of the world and those who trust in him will never be in darkness amen

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