

## God's Darkness and God's Light

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*Adapted from a message preached by Pastor Ken on Good Friday 2019.*

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Isaiah 53:10-11

We live in a world where we often seek to tie the outcome to a cause, especially if the outcome was bad. We need to find someone who is accountable, someone to blame.

I once heard the question asked, "Who did this to Jesus?" I want to turn that around a little bit as we look at Holy Week and Good Friday and we consider the question: "Whose darkness is it? And whose light?"

Holy Week and Good Friday certainly contrast darkness and light. Just consider the darkness that sat upon the earth on Good Friday for those three hours from noon until 3:00 PM. "Who did this to Jesus? Whose darkness is this?" In one sense we can say, of course, this is our darkness. Jesus is bearing our sins, and so all that we have done, all that we have chosen to do, all that we have said, and all that we have thought that is not in alignment with Who God is or who He has called us to be—that is our darkness on Good Friday. Our darkness cuts deep, and in one sense there is something attractive to us about the darkness. We come by that honestly because of our sinful nature. We see evidence of that when we are drawn more to stare at a tragedy or an accident than we are to gaze at a sunset.

And because our sinful flesh is attracted to the darkness, we also—by nature, apart from God—are drawn to sin. Rarely do our sinful actions begin simply with an impulse. Sometimes we go through red light after red light after red light before we find ourselves in that place where we say, "What have we done? How do we get out of this? Is there an escape or a means to be rescued?" And we call out to God, "How do we change this, Lord! Help me and rescue me!" The darkness is ours.

And yet, if you look at the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, it speaks of the darkness as being God's. Remember, Jesus was the one who said, "No one takes my life from me. I lay it down of my own accord. I lay it down only to take it up again." And so, Isaiah reminds us "It was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause him to suffer. And though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in His hand. It was the Lord's will to crush Him" (Isaiah 53:10).

That is a stunning statement. It isn't that God desired to do this to His own Son, but the cross was the means by which God would bring about justice for us and all people. The penalty for sin is death, and so through the death of His Son—His one and only Son, His most precious Son—

laying upon Him the sins of us all, it was God's will that His Son would carry this out. Even the night before when Jesus prayed, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup be taken from me. Yet, not as I will, but as You will." In God's word today as it speaks about that justice, the darkness of God the Lord's will was that Jesus, the Son of God, the Suffering Servant, would be crushed, and that He would suffer. He does so for us to make an offering for our sin—a covering, atoning for our sin. God's darkness cannot get any darker than when God withheld His hand of blessing from His Son, when God the Father withdrew and turned His back on His Son, causing Jesus to cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" There could be no greater darkness than that.

And for all of the times that we walk through the darkest valley, God assures us that it will never be as dark as what Jesus experienced on our behalf that day. In fact, because Jesus, the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for us, we know that even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He is with us. God's darkness and the way He crushed His Son for us is also the source of the light that God gives us. Even in the words the prophet Isaiah shares here, it gives us a picture, an inkling, some anticipation of what is to come: "And after He [the servant of the Lord] has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11).

The third day is coming—the day of resurrection. Though we might sit in darkness today, pondering how our sins have put Jesus on the cross, we also contemplate the redemption that He Has won for us through His suffering and His death—looking ahead to His victory, knowing that when Jesus said, "It is finished," it most certainly was. The price had been paid and our sins had been atoned for, covered over by His blood, so that we would be set free to be the children of God. We now live in His light which Jesus brings—and how bright is that light, a light which shines brightly for all creation—a light that shines through you and me—as we live for Jesus, the One who experienced God's darkness to bring us to God's Light. Amen.

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