

**“Cries from the Cross”**  
**The Gospel According to Mark 15:33-41**  
February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Aunt Sarah was 99 years old, the oldest resident in a small, rural town. She was celebrating her 99<sup>th</sup> birthday. Among the guests at her birthday party was her 39 year old pastor.

As the pastor was preparing to leave, he said, “Now, Aunt Sarah, I hope that one year from this very day, I will be able to come and celebrate your 100<sup>th</sup> birthday with you.”

Aunt Sarah looked at him for a moment, then said, “I don’t see why not! You look healthy to me!”

Well, the text of Scripture before us this morning is no laughing matter. **Mark 15:33-41** describe the death of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. When we left the text last Sunday, Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross outside of Jerusalem; he hung on a cross between two criminals. A sign on Jesus’ cross above His head identified Him as “The King of the Jews.” Even so, the soldiers who crucified Him, the Jewish leaders who hated Him, and the people who simply passed by His cross on the road, all mocked Jesus and jeered Him. Even the men on crosses on either side of Jesus mocked Him. Jesus was totally alone as He bore the punishment of all the sin of the ones God sent Jesus to earth to save. That took place at the third hour (as Jews marked time each day beginning at 6:00 AM, so Jesus was nailed to the cross at 9:00 AM).

Our text today begins at high noon on what we call Good Friday; it was the sixth hour.

**Mark 15:33-41:**

<sup>33</sup> Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

<sup>34</sup> And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

<sup>35</sup> Some of those who stood by, when they heard *that*, said, “Look, He is calling for Elijah!”

<sup>36</sup> Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put *it* on a reed, and offered *it* to Him to drink, saying, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.”

<sup>37</sup> And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.

<sup>38</sup> Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God!”

<sup>40</sup> There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, <sup>41</sup> who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.”

It was 12 o’clock noon, the very time the Passover was celebrated. High noon, the middle of the day, and verse 33 in today’s passage says that “there was darkness over the whole land...” Much has been speculated about this darkness. For sure, we should understand that this darkness in the middle of the day came from God.

In the Bible’s second book, we learn of 10 plagues of God against Pharaoh and the Egyptians who had persecuted God’s people. For 400 years, God’s people were slaves in Egypt. God sent

Moses to deliver His people from the hands of Pharaoh. God's plan for this involved several plagues - water becoming blood, frogs, lice, flies, diseased livestock, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness. Darkness was the final plague before God's angel of death visited the land taking the life of the first born of every household where the blood of the Passover Lamb was not protecting it.

"Now, on the cross, the Exodus was finding its ultimate fulfillment. There was a plague of darkness preceding the sacrifice of Christ as the Passover Lamb. But this time, it was God's own firstborn who was to die." (Ferguson, 263)

Darkness, in Scripture, is associated with judgment, specifically, the judgment of God upon sin. Consider just two examples, one from the Old Testament and one from the New:

\* **Zephaniah 1:14a, 15, 17-18** – "The great day of the LORD is near;  
That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress,  
A day of devastation and desolation,  
A day of darkness and gloominess,  
A day of clouds and thick darkness,

"I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse." Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land."

\* In **Revelation 6:12-17**, the Apostle John writes, "I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. <sup>13</sup> And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. <sup>14</sup> Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. <sup>15</sup> And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup> and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup> For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'"

We don't know if it was taking place only during the three hours of darkness, but while He was on the cross, Jesus became sin for us. **2 Corinthians 5:21** teaches, "For He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Paul says that process meant Jesus was made a curse. (**Galatians 3:13**) "Hell came to Calvary that day, and the Savior descended into it and bore its horrors (in our place)." (Hendriksen, 660)

<p><i>Have you ever been somewhere there is no light whatsoever? Like deep in a cave where there is no natural light, and all the lights have been extinguished. It's the kind of darkness that presses on you; you can feel it!</i></p>
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With these things in mind, Isaac Watts was inspired of God to write his great hymn, *Alas and Did My Savior Bleed?* One verse reads:

“Well might the sun in darkness hide  
And shut his glories in,  
When Christ, the mighty Maker died,  
For man the creature’s sin.”

After three hours of darkness, at 3:00 PM, Jesus’ voice pierces the blackness when He said in a loud voice from the cross, “‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (**Mark 15:34**) That this cry was loud is amazing given Jesus had the weight of our sin on Him, and He’d been on the cross for 6 hours at that point.

Jesus here quoted the Psalmist David in **Psalm 22:1**. They are the only words of Jesus Mark records while Jesus was on the cross. The same is true of Matthew in his gospel account. The great Reformer, Martin Luther, meditated on that verse for hours, and then he remarked, “God forsaken by God. Who can understand it?”

In verse 37, Mark records that “...Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.” But, Mark doesn’t reveal what Jesus said as He died. Luke does, however. We read in **Luke 23:46**, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having said this, He breathed His last.” *Why could Jesus say such a thing?* John tells us in his gospel account. We read Jesus’ last words (at least according to John) in **John 19:30**, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.”

Jesus fully accomplished the mission that He descended from heaven to earth to accomplish. His perfect life and undeserved death had achieved eternal salvation in glory for each and every person that God had given Jesus to save. All this had happened according to God’s declaring.

Immediately upon Jesus’ death, Mark tells us in verse 38, “...the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” “The significance of (this) tear is the old established priestly ritual for entrance into the presence of God had now been abolished. The temple now stood desecrated – by God Himself. Jesus’ death had created a new way into God’s presence.” (Ferguson, 264)

JC Ryle advises us to “Never forget the practical lesson of the rent veil! To attempt to revive the Jewish ceremonial in the Church of Christ, by returning to altars, sacrifices, and a priesthood, is nothing better than closing up again the rent veil, and light a candle at noon-day.” (Ryle, 346)

There’s more we could explore, but let’s wrap this up by looking at a couple of applications.

1 – **God finishes what He starts.** To redeem a fallen humanity, God didn’t leave us in our sin and misery. He sent His only begotten Son to earth to reconcile us to God. God finishes what He starts. **Philippians 1:6**, “...He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;” As followers of Jesus, we ought to be people who finish what we start. This applies

to your schooling. If you're a student, finish your studies; get your diploma or your degree! If you're a parent, don't check out on your kids, keep parenting them until they're on their own! Keep discipling them in the ways of Jesus; make corporate worship a priority for your family on Sunday, and teach your children God's Word as often as you can! **Finish what you started!** This also applies to marriage – husbands, wives - don't give up; if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you know that God is able to do what seems humanly impossible! Finish what you started, until one of you buries the other! So many young people have told me they're not pursuing marriage because they have such poor examples in their upbringing.

2 – **Consider how great your sin must be for God to shed His own blood to die for you.** In our study of Mark's gospel account these past 16 months, we've followed Jesus from Bethlehem to Calvary. God came to earth, subjecting Himself to all the miseries of this life, to save you from an eternity in hell. **He went to hell so we don't have to!** Someone has said, rightly, we'll never know how deep our wickedness is this side of glory. Neither, do we fully understand how much God loves us in Jesus Christ.

3 – **Knowing God died for us, what manner of life ought we to live?** I've read and discussed **Colossians Chapter 3** with some of you this past week. It's one of many places in the Bible where we find practical applications in abundance. This is how the chapter begins with the Apostle Paul addressing the church in Colossae – “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”

As the chapter progresses we see that a Christian's life is to be marked with “putting to death (steering clear of) such things as fornication (sex between those not married to each other) and covetousness.” We are to be content with the husband or wife God has given us; He knows what is best, and He is able to change hearts of those who walk contrary.

The behaviors we're to throw off are such things as “(unrighteous) anger and filthy language out of your mouth. A Christian's speech isn't laced with profanity and curse words. *How could it be when Christ did so much to redeem us from unhelpful speech?*

Further, Christians “do not lie to one another.” Christians are not deceivers – in their speech or in their conduct. We should be people of the highest integrity in every part of our lives. To do or say anything else is to discredit and malign the work of God in your life.

Milton Vincent, a pastor in California, has written a helpful pamphlet entitled, *The Gospel Primer for Christians: Learning to See the Glories of God's Love*. In it he writes a poetic version of the gospel narrative. Here's a portion:

“(God) sent Christ to die on the cross for my sin  
To suffer my anguish, my pardon to win.

Amazing it is, when I stop to regard,  
That God would consent to an anguish so hard,

Surrend'ring His Son unto mayhem and death,  
To torturous writhing 'til His final breath.

"Why does God forsake Me? Alone Jesus cried;  
Yet God left Him hanging until He had died.

That Jesus was willing His life to lay down,  
Be scourged and insulted and wear thorny crown

For one such as I who had spited God so,  
Amazes and blesses and makes me to know

That greater a lover is no man than He,  
Who laid down His life for a sinner like me."