Cover Page

Scripture: Matthew 27:~~45~~ 45-50

Sermon: "Darkness all over the Land"

Text: Matthew 27:45 -- "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness all over the land until the ninth hour."

Proposition: The period of darkness during three of the hours that Jesus hung upon the cross symbolizes that mankind is in darkness without Jesus, but that the light of his presence can come again into the world as faith in God and the resurrection come about.

Date written: April 5, 1971.

Dates and places used:

April 8, 1971 (Maundy Thursday)
Oakland Park, Fla.

Introduction:

1. A mother was talking to her married daughter on the telephone, and said, "Dear, would you let us leave your children with you and Bill tonight? Dad and I are invited out for the evening."

(Quote, 4-4-71)

Such a story may be thought of as funny because it presents a situation which is different from the normal type situation in which a couple may occasionally ask the parents of one of them to care for the children when the couple wishes to go out for an evening.

2. The Scripture that we are using today, on Maundy Thursday, to prompt our thinking is usually used on Good Friday. ~~But~~ Since we do not have services ~~usually~~ on that day, and since the Scriptural events are a direct result of what happened on the first Maundy Thursday, we're making usage of this passage here. Not to do so once in a while is to ignore it, ~~and~~ it is important, and should be known about,

1. The Scripture points to the world's actual and/or symbolic darkness without Jesus.

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3. The Scripture points to the world's actual and/or symbolic darkness without Jesus.

1. ~~The symbolism of~~ Darkness is in quite a bit of the accounts of Jesus' ~~arrezt~~ last few days. The Passover meal which became the Last Supper OR THE FIRST COMMUNION very possibly was an evening event, since most of the people involved in it were working men. The time of agony and prayer in the Garden of Gethsemnae that followed the Last Supper was at night, ~~and~~ it was there at about midnight that Judas placed the betrayal kiss on Jesus and so caused his arrest. Most of the trial before the priests and Pilate happened at night or very early in the morning. We are not sure at just what time Jesus was crucified. Mark ~~seems to~~ indicates a time which would correspond to our 9 a.m., while the other gospels say it in unclear ways which seem to indicate ~~bk~~ about noon. All of the gospels report that from the sixth to the ninth hours of the day, or from noon to 3 p.m. as we count the hours of the day, there was darkness on the day that Jesus hung upon the cross. Luke says ~~it~~ "while the sun's light failed," ~~and~~ many have taken him to mean an eclipse. However, astronomic studies seem to prove that there could not have been an eclipse at that time. The darkness was from some other

Matthew 27:45-50 2

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cause. Explain it as you will: I can't. ~~But~~ It was unusually, abnormally black, enough to be called dark, during those hours Jesus was on the cross. WE KNOW THIS BECAUSE The people who recorded the events were close to people who were there, if they themselves were not, and they were ~~so~~ convinced. Darkness was just fading away into dawn on the first Easter when the women found the empty tomb and encountered Jesus in the burial garden. Darkness is indeed STRONGLY associated, actually and symbolically, with the man-inflicted sufferings of Jesus during the first Holy Week.

2. We could spend a lot of time illustrating that darkness of the soul, lack of illumination as to meaning and purpose in life, the blackness of man's cruelty and inhumanity to other men, and other human experiences which can be called dark ~~ones~~ happen when Christ is not in the picture of events. Paul ~~the apostle~~ before he became an apostle was sure he was right in persecuting the christians. He was blinded and experienced a real loss of physical and spiritual sight, ~~or certainty,~~ until he accepted Christ's purpose for his life. ~~If the affirmation and ex-~~

Many a person since has found that ~~only as~~ LIFE IS VERY DARK UNLESS he accepted Christ. ~~has he found meaning, or light, in life.~~

II. ~~Jesus'~~-words of faith and worship during the crucifixion demonstrate his ability to bring the light of God into the darkest situation.

1. Our Scripture tells us that while Jesus was hanging on the cross, about the ninth hour, or about 3 in the afternoon, he cried out, "Eli, Eli, la'ma sabach=tha'ni?" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This sounds as if he was completely desparing and giving up. ~~his faith. In fact,~~ We don't know what he meant. ~~But~~ There is ~~good~~ evidence to think ACTUALLY that he ~~was strongly~~ affirming his lasting faith in God the Father, EVEN at that very ~~point~~ TIME of ~~seeming~~ hopelessness. Why do we say this?

2. The 22nd Psalm begins with exactly those same words THAT JESUS USED ON THE CROSS; "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" This Psalm was for centuries BEFORE JESUS a great help to the Jews in their times of trouble, said by them to express their faith. They memorized it much as we do the 23rd. Psalm,

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and used it more often. Let me read
~~it~~ much of it, ~~even though it is long:~~

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but thou dost not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

Yet thou art holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
In thee our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
In thee they cried, and were saved;
in thee they trusted, and were not disappointed.

But I am a worm, and no man;
scorned by men, and despised by the people.
All who see me mock at me,
they make mouths at me, they wag their heads;
"He committed his cause to the Lord, let him deliver him,
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"

Yet thou art he who took me from the womb;

thou didst keep me safe upon my
mother's breasts.
Upon thee was I cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me thou
hast been my God.
Be not far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is none to help.
(vs. 1-11)

I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax,
it is melted within my breast;
my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
thou dost lay me in the dust of death
(vs.14-15)

But thou, O Lofd, be not far off!
O thou my help, hasten to my aid!
~~Deliver my soul from the sword,~~
~~my life from the power of~~ (vs.19)

I will tell of thy name to my brethren;
in the midst of the congregation
I will praise thee;
You who fear the Lord, praise him!
all you sons of Jacob, glorify
him,

THOU DIDS KEEP ME SAFE FRO

and stand in awe of him, all you
sons of Israel!
For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted;
and he has not hid his face from
him,
but has heard, when he cried to him.

From thee comes my praise in the
great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who
fear him.
The afflicted shall eat and be sat-
isfied; those who seek him shall
praise the Lord!
May your hearts live for ever!

All the ends of the earth shall re-
member
and turn to the Lord;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.
For dominion belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations.

Yea, to him shall all the proud of
the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down
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Posterity shall serve him;
men shall tell of the Lord to the coming generation,
and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
that he has wrought it.
vs.22-31)

Some who stood by the cross thought Jesus had called out "Elijah, Elijah," the name of the ancient prophet whom pious Jews believed was their reecuer in time of need. ~~But~~ Jesus on the cross was weak, and may not have spoken distinctly. The start of this ~~24~~ 22nd Psalm would have sounded about the same. We really don't know what he was saying, but it is ~~most~~ reasonable to think that he was turning to the ingrained words of the psalm to express~~ing~~ faith ~~of~~ in God in ~~the~~ this times of greatest trouble. If he was, as is reasonable and probable, then we can say that Jesus' words of faith and worship, ~~as in the Psalm~~, even during the crucifixion, demonstrated his ability to see the light of God in the darkest situation.

III. <u>To follow Jesus by placing OUR faith in ~~and worshipping~~ God in</u>

the darkest situations is to bring light of countenance, lightness of heart, and understanding into the trials of our lives.

1. Many a Christian has died for his version of the faith. In England in 1557, in the town of Lewes in Sussex, ON ONE DAY ten persons were burned to death because they would not accept the authority of the Pope but held to the right to search God in their own manner, from the Scriptures. One of these was a Rev. Mr. John Hullier. His burning is described in "Fox"s Book of Martyrs," published over 125 years ago. It tells how this man was bound with a chain, placed in a pitch barrel, AND fire built around the barrel. The fire was carried by the wind first to his back, but he prayed harder than before. His friends had the executioner redirect the fire to his face, to KILL him agony quicker. Some books were thrown into the fire with him, and he caught one of them, a book with the Communion Service in it. He read this until he could no longer see because of the fire and smoke. Then

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it says, "even in earnest prayer, he pressed the book to his heart, thanking God for bestowing on him in his last moments this precious gift. The day being hot, the fire burnt fiercely; and at a time when the spectators supposed he was no more, he suddenly exclaimed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' And meekly resigned his life."

People have died for their Christian faith, in the example of their Lord, by the thousands, or hundreds of thousands, as did John Huntier

2. You and I probably will not be under such persecution for our faith, tho it is possible that we could be. The things that depress us and make us complain usually are ~~pretty~~ minor. ~~However,~~ When they are serious ones of suffering, bereavement or failure, the person who can feel that Christ is still with him, representing God the Father, has a light of countenance and a relief and lightness of heart which is available in no other way. I've seen it experienced by many people.

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Conclusion:

The absence of this type of assurance and faith is darkness indeed. A country, an area, a people without faith in Christ ~~may not know it, but theirs~~ is IN a condition that might well be described as "darkness all over the land,"

2. That is ONE IMPORTANT THING THAT ~~what~~ this part of the crucifixion story tells us, when we read about the three hours of darkness that came about while Jesus was on the cross.

3. The period of darkness during those three hours symbolizes that mankind is in darkness without Jesus but that the light of his presence again can come into the world as faith in God and the resurrection is expressed. Darkness may be over the land, but it need not be in you. Have faith in God. Take the name of Jesus with you.

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