

Hour of Darkness

Luke 22:39-46; Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42

Anyone scared of the dark?

In one 2012 U.K. survey, nearly 40 percent of respondents said they were afraid to walk around the house with the lights off. In fact, 10 percent said that they wouldn't even get out of bed to use the bathroom in the middle of the night.

It's not the darkness itself that's frightening. It's the fear of what the darkness masks. The dark leaves us vulnerable and exposed, unable to spot any threats that may be lurking nearby.

Scientists have even found that if a person spends too much time in the dark can suffer with a condition, they call SAD syndrome. That's an appropriate acronym because those who suffer from it often become moody and depressed. SAD is an acronym for "seasonal affective disorder" because it often happens in winter.

In our text this morning, Jesus is addressing those who've come to arrest Him: (sometime in the wee hours of the morning, like 2:30 a.m.)

Luke 22:53, "but this is your hour, and power of darkness."

There is a power in darkness. The power of uncertainty, and anxiety and fear. And during those times of darkness we may be trapped in something we can't control.

Read Luke 22:39-46

This morning's text is a case study in the power of darkness and the feeling of helplessness it can bring. Even Jesus is caught up in it. **Luke 22:42-44** tells us that Jesus prayed:

God the Father had already begun to turn his wrath on Jesus, for OUR, sins. I have stated it many times, for the first time in all eternity the Son and Father's fellowship was being broken. One of the consequences of mankind's sinful nature is separation from God. God is Holy and sinless, and sin must be judged and punished. The last hours of Jesus human life is God's judgment and punishment being dealt out on his perfect, sinless son.

1 Peter 2:22-24, For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

1 John 2:2, And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe! Because of his loving sacrifice, I am no longer a debtor to sin! I am free to live sin less

1 John 3:9, No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. ESV

In just a few hours,

- Jesus is going to be put on trial ... not once, not twice, but 6 different times. (3 before Jewish official's, former chief priest Annas, his son in law and chief priest Caiaphas and then King Herod. Then 3 times before roman officials)
- Pilate going to order Him to be taken away and beaten by Roman soldiers.
- Then Jesus will be forced to carry a heavy cross through the city and all the way up the hill to the crucifixion place on Calvary.
- Then He'll be nailed to that cross, and the cross will be lifted and dropped into position.
- And Jesus will hang by those nails for 6 long hours.
- And ultimately... He'll die there.

Jesus was facing a time of crisis. An hour of darkness. And it's a situation that EVEN He – the Son of God - cannot change. It is a situation that has affected not just Him, but also those closest to Him.

Don't get me wrong, Jesus could have opted out. When Peter cut the ear off of the servant of the high priest, Jesus rebuked him and said, **“Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? 54 How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” Matthew 26:53**

A legion was 6,000 soldiers. Twelve legions would be 72,000. Interesting fact, in 2 Kings 19:35, 1 angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Do you know how many 72,000 angels could wipe out? 13,320,000,000. That is almost twice the world's current population. Kind of puts into perspective 11 disciples and two swords thinking Jesus needing protection.

How He (Jesus) faced the biggest crisis in all eternity, and how He deals with that darkness He couldn't change (for our sake) tells us a lot about how we can deal with our own personal times of darkness. And as I studied this passage, I found some basic principles for how we can face situations we don't seem to be able to stop or change.

Read Luke 22:40,46

Who does Jesus say to pray for in these verses?

Not for HIM... but for themselves. **“Pray that YOU may not enter into temptation.”**

When we are facing a crisis, or are in an hour of darkness, the first thing to beware of is that we will face temptation. In the dark hour is when we are tempted, our minds could go to dark places, fears can grow and become crippling. We need to beware of that so we can train our minds, and heart to respond according to the example that was set before us. (example of gladiators conditioning in football)

Temptation too...

I. Feel that God has abandoned you.

- Have you ever seen what a child does when they're in bed and they become afraid of the dark? What do they do? (Go find mom and dad)
- If the child is with that adult (mom, dad, police, etc.) they're not afraid. And that's because the adult represents power and protection that even the dark can't overcome.
- But as we get older (and we face a time of darkness) we find that WE are the adults in the room.
- Luke's account of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane (oil press) is the only one that says an angel appeared from heaven to strengthen him. In hours of helplessness, great desperation of a faithful and perfect son crying out to his father. To only face the reality that the eternal lives of all mankind is on his shoulders, most of them will never believe in or follow what he did. Some of mankind will allow him to save them from the penalty of their sin, but they will never follow him. Even those that do commit and follow him, will spend their earthly lives falling in and out of sin; most knowing better, repeatedly twisting the nails in his hands and feet.
- I am sure Jesus felt abandoned. **Matthew 27:46, And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"**(forsaken means abandon, deserted)
- Jesus was willing to be abandoned so that we never BE abandoned.

II. Go it alone.

- When we are in the crises, darkest of hours, often our response is to shut others out.
- But that is not what we see in the example of Jesus. Jesus didn't go it alone, and if Jesus needed others around how much more is that true of you and me.
- Jesus knew what he was up against and he took the three people who were closest to him to pray. When the going gets tough it may be time to get others to help us.

Eccles. 4:9-12, Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

- Awhile ago I said that I have a tendency of walking away, shutting people out. I do that as a way of protecting myself and it was the example that was shown to me. If I couldn't trust my family growing up, how can I trust anyone. People will only hurt and betray you.
- Guess what? People will hurt and betray you, not everyone, but ones that make it feel like everyone.
- If we are believers and followers of Jesus, we have a new example of how we are to do things. Guess what? Most contradict what we naturally do.
- Don't go it alone, Jesus didn't why would you?

III. Shut feelings out.

- When a crisis happens, a life altering darkness comes, we can respond by shutting our feelings down, try and act like it doesn't bother us.
- Remember that when Jesus said in **Matthew 26:38, Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."**
- We must take the risk of asking someone to share our sorrow and pain. We need to identify someone or a small group of people, that we can invite into our garden of Gethsemane, the time of our deepest sorrow. That does not mean that you should tell everyone you run into your problems. Be prayerful and ask God to show you some one that can be a mentor in your life.

In Galatian's 6:2 the Apostle Paul reminds us as believers that we have a duty to "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."

- Christians are to continually (present tense) bear each other's burdens. The word "burden" (baros) refers to heavy loads that are difficult to lift and carry. As it is used here it represents any difficulty or trial a person has trouble coping with. Just remember it is not spirituality but pride that make a person want to "go it alone."

IV. Do it your way.

- It is such a temptation to do it your way. Especially when the crises or hour of darkness seems to never end, like God is on vacation. All you must do is look around and see how people try to do it their way. The bottle, drugs, addictions, secular counselors, self help books and other distractions.
- Look at Jesus example. He asks three times, that this cup be taken away. That he could be excused the sufferings of death, delivered from the curse of the law, and shielded from the wrath of God, that He was to bear, the cross because He carried in His person all the sins of all mankind.
- The pain that Jesus was about to endure was not just the physical torture of the Cross but also the mental and spiritual torture that He would endure because He was going to the cross as our substitute.
- Jesus did what we all must do whenever we are faced with great pain or great trials, we must pray. Whether we find ourselves in a hospital room, the courtroom, or the funeral home, these are moments for prayer.
- Though the answer was for Jesus to fulfill the law and pay the penalty for our sins. He stayed the course.
- Rather than telling Him how he could avoid the cross, God sent an angel to feed and encourage Him. Jesus is not spared the trial, but what is supplied is the strength to face it. He is not lifted out the trial but given the strength and encouragement to go through it.
- Often, we are not lifted from the trial, but we are given the strength and encouragement to go through it.



V. Be disobedient to God.

- **Read verse 42, “nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”**
- Jesus had prayed that if there was any other way, that mankind could be saved from their sins, that was his desire, but only if it is within His father’s will.
- But greater than his fear, greater than his loathing for the task ahead, was his overriding desire to please God the Father. The greatest possible good is to do God’s will whatever the cost!
- If you are in a crisis of obedience it is all right to tell God of your reluctance, it is not as if He doesn’t already know. Just make sure that to do what he tells you to do despite your reluctance.
- People that are supposed to be there for you will fail you. Look at the 3 disciples, Jesus asked them to pray for him 3 times and they kept falling asleep.
- **Luke 22:41**, says he prayed a stone’s cast away, he fell on his face within eyesight, maybe even within ear shot. They must have noticed Jesus was in a place of sorrow. He said he was! **“he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (v.44)**
- Jesus will never fail you, forsake, abandon, fall asleep on, and he knows what it feels like to have it done to.
- When you and I face dark times, we need to make our requests known to God. And because we ask, God says He will turn on the lights in our darkness. Now, it may not make any sense. It may surpass all understanding. But when we make our requests known to God, He promises to turn on the lights... to give us His peace.
- When dealing with crisis, with the dark times in life, remember that God is nearby. He’ll never leave you nor forsake you. He’s the adult in the room.

Closing

For those of you who may at this moment be in the most difficult trial of your life, I want to ask:

- Have you brought loved ones and trusted friends in to help or have you isolated yourself?
- Have you honestly expressed your feelings, or do you believe that you have put on a false front?
- Have you taken your problems to God and have you asked others to pray for you as well?
- Finally, are you being obedient to God’s leading in your life or you using the difficulties in your life as an excuse to run from God?