

## **Rays Of Glory**

### **In The Darkness That Accompanied Christ's Death.**

Text: Mat 27:45

1) Shows that Christ is the Lord of nature

Suggested Hymns:

2) Shows that nature sympathised with the dying Lord

77, 375, 61, 49T267, 48

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 27:45, <sup>45</sup> ***Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our text mentions a most wonderful incident which occurred while Jesus was hanging on the cross. It was about the third hour in the day when Jesus was crucified, that is, about nine o'clock in the morning. Up to the sixth hour, that is, up to twelve o'clock at noon, the sun was shining bright and fair.

During these three hours many of those things were done that are related in the Gospels in connection with the crucified Christ. The soldiers divided among themselves His garments and cast lots for His coat. The Lord entrusted His mother to the care of John. The soldiers and chief priests, the people and the robbers that were crucified with Christ reviled Him. Finally, the conversation took place between Jesus and the penitent thief to whom Jesus gave the promise of paradise.

By this time the sun had reached its highest point. It was noon. And behold, the day is suddenly changed into night. One person commented *"The sun refuses to shine at midday. No man sees his fellow, or sees him only in the faintest light. The Crucified One is screened from view. The scoffs and shouts are silenced, and there is a terrible stillness and solemnity"*<sup>1</sup> And as our text says, ***from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.***

We hear no more mocking, reviling, and blaspheming. Even the most daring enemies of Christ are silenced. There are no more taunts from the lips of the

Pharisees and chief priests. The heathen soldiers lean upon their spears and dare not say another word. The people are standing by, subdued with awe, and many a heart is agitated with alarm and beating faster at this sudden darkness, which hangs over the land like a pall of death, and saying, *What does this mean?*

We know what it means. It means that the man who is dying on the cross is more than man, that He is God blessed forever.

In our sermons during this Lenten season we have been looking at the rays of Christ's glory on various occasions. And now again, by a most remarkable occurrence in the realms of nature, we find this important truth attested that the Man of Sorrows who died on the cross for the sins of the world is the Lamb of God, the almighty Ruler of the universe.

The subject of our sermon shall be with the help of God's Holy Spirit, the divine glory of the dying Christ made manifest by the darkness accompanying His death. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Rays Of Glory**

#### **This Special Darkness Shows That Christ Is The Lord Of Nature.**

On the night of Jesus' birth, the sky above Bethlehem was lit up by the heavenly host who appeared to the shepherds. But on the day of His death, the sky was darkened. The angels' hymn, "*Glory to God in the highest!*" was replaced by the cry of the people, "*Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*"

No Wise Men came on Good Friday to worship the King of the Jews. Only Pilate's notice that was posted over His head and the plea of the penitent thief who died beside Jesus proclaimed Him to be the King of the Jews.

No gifts of gold or frankincense were presented to Jesus. He was offered only wine mixed with myrrh to deaden His pain, but Jesus refused to drink it.

The sixth hour of the day was the sixth hour after sunrise. So from about noon until about 3:00 P.M. there was an eerie darkness over the land. It is impossible to offer any natural explanation for this. It could not have been an eclipse of the sun because an eclipse of the sun cannot occur when the moon is full. And we know that the Jews observed the Passover during the full moon in the month of Nisan, which corresponds to our March and April.

The Father was providing a covering for His Son. You could compare it to a paramedic spreading a blanket over an accident victim before they can get him onto a stretcher and load him into an ambulance.

According to the testimony of antiquity, this darkness was observed in Egypt, in Greece, in Rome, and even in China. It was not confined to the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem.

Remember the plague of darkness, the ninth of the ten plagues that came upon the land of Egypt during the time of Moses.<sup>2</sup> The tenth plague, of course, was the death of the firstborn, which was the occasion for the slaughtering of the first Passover lambs. History was now repeating itself as three hours of darkness preceded the death of Jesus, our Passover Lamb.

We are reminded of Jesus' sermon on the signs of the end, "*The sun will be darkened.*"<sup>3</sup> Since God's judgment on sin was poured out upon His Son as He hung on the cross, many of the signs of the end appeared on Good Friday: persecution, an earthquake, and the resurrection of the dead.

The darkness which accompanied Jesus' death was a most peculiar phenomenon. It was an occurrence which no astronomer could predict or explain. It was a miracle in itself. It was not an eclipse of the sun. For this was the time of the Jewish Passover, and the Passover was held in the time of the full moon. An eclipse of the sun can never take place when there is full moon.

The very words of our text plainly show the extraordinary character of this darkness. It says, *Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.* So the darkness lasted fully three hours, and it seems that for these three hours preceding the death of Christ the whole earth was shrouded in darkness. When there is an eclipse of the sun, only a part of the earth is covered with darkness.

The church fathers of olden times refer to this darkness at the time of Christ's crucifixion in their books as a fact well known among the heathen and tell us that a record of this inexplicable darkness was kept in the annals of Rome.

Dionysius the Aereopagite, a learned man from Athens in Greece who was converted to Christ by Paul's sermon in Athens remembered this darkness after his conversion, and he tells us that at the time he was in Heliopolis in Egypt and so great was his horror that he did not know what to make of it.

He could find no cause for it, and, although a heathen, he felt that some special act of God must be connected with it. *He said at the time: Either the God of nature is suffering or the machinery of the world is being dissolved.*

So the darkness which accompanied Christ's death was something unusual. It was a miracle equally as great as when upon Joshua's command "*the sun stood still in the midst of heaven.*"<sup>4</sup> And as God in some way unknown to us could prolong the day in answer to Joshua's prayer, so can He also darken the sun in some inexplicable manner.

But what does this wonderful phenomenon, this inexplicable darkening of the sun in connection with the dying Christ indicate? Would any such thing have happened under the ruling of divine Providence if Jesus had been nothing more than mortal man? Do we find any parallel to it in the entire history of the world? Would the Creator have given such an indescribable sign to the whole world if the One who was now dying on the cross had been nothing more than a prophet and religious teacher? Certainly not! It would be too great a distinction shown to an individual, it would be an unparalleled preference, it would be inconsistent with the common way of God's dealing with the children of men.

The only reasonable explanation is, that this darkness was to indicate that the great Sufferer on the cross is the Lord of nature Himself. Dionysius was right when he surmised that the Lord of nature must be suffering.

Look at the divine glory of the dying Saviour! He is bringing the great sacrifice of His life now. He is shedding His heart's blood for the sins of the world. Yet to the last moment Jesus is the same person who quieted the sea and hushed the Storm, whom the winds and the sea had to obey.

He is the Lord of nature, and even now He has the power to make the sun spread a pall of death over the earth to let the children of the world know that something unusual is going on, something that effects the whole world, and that these are the most solemn hours the world has ever witnessed.

**2. Rays Of Glory**  
**By This Darkness Nature Sympathised**  
**With The Dying Lord.**

Why was the death of the Son of God accompanied by this wonderful phenomenon? Why did nature take an interest in the great tragedy on Calvary? The answer is: By this darkness nature sympathised with the dying Lord.

The crucified One was by whom all things were made. The dying One was He who upholds all things by the Word of His power. Nature could not let such a stupendous event, the death of Jesus Christ who is the Light of the world, pass by unnoticed. Nature was mourning for the Lord of nature, whom man, His noblest creature, was putting to death.

We must not think that Nature shows no concern for man. In Romans 8:19-21, we are told that *the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.* <sup>20</sup> *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;* <sup>21</sup> *because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

If nature then shows such concern for the children of God, how much more for the eternal Son of God? The earth was drinking the blood of Him who is the Giver of life, and that blood cried up to heaven, as it were, and horrified the light of day. Compare this to Abel's blood.

When some ghastly sight is presented to us, we feel loath to look upon it and turn away not to see it. This is what the sun did when Christ was dying on Calvary. The sun was hiding its face, as it were, not to see any more of those horrors that it had been forced to witness from the early morning of that day, the creatures torturing and killing their Creator.

The supernatural blackness of the sky symbolised the black wickedness of that fearful crime. It was a stern rebuke to the murderers of the Son of God. It was a sign from heaven revealing God's wrath and pronouncing upon the murderers of His own Son His judgment, that He would take away from them the light of His grace and leave them to their own blindness and depravity.

There is a prophecy by Amos, who says in Amos 8:9, <sup>9</sup> *“And it shall come to pass in that day,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon, And I will darken the earth in broad daylight.”* Many prophecies have a near and far fulfilment. The near one was that in the days of the Babylonian captivity the children of Israel shall be deprived of God's favour. The far

prophecy was that his words found a literal fulfilment when the sun refused to shine at the death of the Son of God. The meaning of that awful sign was the same as that intended by Amos' prophecy. God's anger and wrath upon His chosen people.

This darkness, at the same time, pictured the utter darkness that enveloped the soul of Jesus at the time of His death. The sins of the whole world were resting upon Him and weighed down His soul. He had to bear the full wrath of God for the sins of the fallen human race, and there was nothing to comfort Him. His soul was as dark as night. He was forsaken by God, and the agonies and suffering of His soul during these three terrible hours preceding His death must have been something simply appalling and beyond description.

O how we should love Christ who was *wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities*, upon whom the Lord laid the iniquity of us all,<sup>5</sup> who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows!<sup>6</sup>

Let us sincerely believe in Jesus Christ and thank Him from the depth of our hearts.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,<sup>7</sup>

Our sins, not Thine, Thou bearest, Lord;  
Make us Thy sorrow feel,  
Till in our pity and our shame  
Love answers love's appeal.

This is earth's darkest hour, but Thou  
Dost light and life restore;  
Then let all praise be given to Thee  
Who livest evermore. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Pulpit Commentary, Luke 23:44

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 10:21-29

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 24:29

<sup>4</sup> Joshua 10:13

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<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 53:5-6

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 53:4

<sup>7</sup> Hymn 49, v 2-3