



"And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – July 29, 2018

To Know Christ ...

Every last Sunday of the month, we will use this opportunity in the bulletin to explore knowing Christ and Him crucified. We will take application from the offering of our Savior, in order to better see our Lord and His heart. We will continue seeking to make His heart our own. The Lord will also grant our hearts to grow and be refined in faith, until we see Him face to face, as we conform to the life of His gospel.

"It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last. Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent." (Luke 23:44-47)

Can you imagine darkness falling over the whole land where you lived from Noon until 3:00 PM? How perplexing or even terrifying would it be to us? As the festival of unleavened bread was ongoing, the only begotten Son of God entrusted himself completely to His Father, even while the sun was obscured for three agonizing hours. During the darkness, our Savior suffered in order to pay for the sin He had never committed against His Father. Yet Jesus, unable to see because of the sun's obscurity, commits His spirit to the Father. In the midst of suffering, pain, the loss of blood causing weakness, and the agony of it all, He will not complain, but continues to commit His spirit to the Father.

We often find ourselves in darkness too. Not referring to darkness in terms of evil, but the darkness that means we cannot see what is coming next nor to have insight to our surroundings. We also feel the pain of difficult problems with our mate, co-workers, family, friends, or enemies. We know the strains to those relationships even when we eagerly strive to live Christ-like. We have experienced the open wounds of their words or even the scars left behind in our hearts and minds. We find ourselves in the darkness of how those relationships will continue upward to higher ground. But will we stay committed to our Lord and God? This is the question in the midst of darkness.

Jesus knew God's promise of being raised up on the third day. So, Jesus did not let the darkness change His mind about what to do and how to respond. He fully grasped how the religious leaders

hated Him. Jesus, our Savior, remained committed to the Father even in the midst of the dark unknown.

How do we respond when the darkness hides our eyes from seeing what is coming next? Will we become those who complain and stray from the character we find in Jesus? Or shall we instead, knowing that one day we will raise up with Christ too, continue to be committed to the Father? Peter says it this way, “**But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you are* blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts ... and keep a good conscience.**” (1 Peter 3:14-16) In other words, there will be suffering for living a righteous life in Jesus, but don’t be afraid of the dark or intimidated by the unknown but set Christ as the one we are fully committed to serve as Lord and keep our actions & thinking Christ-like. If we will remain committed in the midst of darkness, not knowing exactly how things will go, God will lead us closer home to be with Him, and He will in the end raise us up with Jesus! To see a little more, look at the prophet Amos (8:9-10), was this darkness God’s plan from long ago?

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