

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 23:44-49

Reading: Matthew 27:45-56

Parallel Passages: Matthew 27:45-56, Mark 15:33-41 and John 19:28-37

Sermon #104

January 3, 2021

Righteousness Accomplished

As we prepare to read from God's Word today, I want us to be on the lookout for especially three things. First, Luke tells us that for a period of three hours, from 12 Noon to 3 pm the sun went dark. While this was going on another significant event was taking place, the veil in the temple that separated the inner sanctuary from the Holy of Holies was torn in two. Third, Jesus speaks His last words and then dies.

Key Truth: *Jesus died the death we deserve so God can give us the righteousness Jesus deserves.*

In our fallen sinful state, we have the great need to be reconciled to God. Because we are dead in our sin, we cannot do anything ourselves concerning spiritual life until God regenerates our souls. Since the fall in the garden, where Satan told Eve if she ate from the tree, **"You will not surely die."** (Genesis 3:4) Our great need is for a spiritual resurrection. Our corrupt and spiritually dead souls need to be brought back to life. We needed desperately for a righteous Man to die for us so that God could count our debt as paid and free us from judgment. Jesus is that sinless perfect sacrifice and only He can pay our debt.

We have the great need to trust God in every circumstance. When Jesus was in the process of dying, He entrusted God with His Spirit. This is a great example of how we too must trust God with everything, including our spirit.

With these thoughts in our minds, I begin with prayer.

Please open your bibles and join me as I read from Luke chapter 23, verses 44 to 49. Hear the Word of God, ⁴⁴ “It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ while the sun’s light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, ‘Certainly this man was innocent!’ ⁴⁸ And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. ⁴⁹ And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.” Amen.

Supernatural Evidence (v.44-46)

In Luke’s account of the events that led up to Jesus’ death, he tells us of two far-reaching simultaneous activities. The sun is dark and the veil of the temple is torn. These are reported by Luke not only because they actually happened but because these events speak volumes to us in what was going on in the process of Jesus dying and at His death. Why does Luke tell us these things and what does he want his readers to understand?

The Sun’s Light Failed (v.44-45)

I believe it is important that we understand what Luke is wanting us to take into our minds. Let’s focus now on verses 44 and 45, “It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ while the sun’s light failed. ...” First Luke tells us what time it is, saying it is the 6th hour, which means it is 12 noon. From 12 noon to 3 pm the sky was dark over Jerusalem and beyond, not just like on a heavy cloudy day, but the sun went dark – it was like a moonless night. Noon is the brightest time of day when the sun is at its full strength,

but God darken the sun. Can you imagine being there and the day is turned to night? Why did God do this?

Some want to remove God from all things and claim the darkness was a natural phenomenon caused by an eclipse. However, we know this cannot be true for two reasons. First, we know Passover always occurs during a full moon and therefore, the earth is closer to the sun than the moon which makes an eclipse impossible. Second, an eclipse dims the sun's light, it does not completely darken the sun and there is still muted light in the sky and lastly no eclipse lasts for 3 hours, in fact a total eclipse lasts only 7 minutes and 31 seconds. So, this darkening of the sun for 3 hours is not natural but supernatural. The question is, why did God take the sun's light away?

It was dark for three hours because it was during those three terrible hours that Jesus was enduring the wrath of God. He was drinking the cup of God's wrath. Darkness, especially in the Old Testament has always been connected to God's judgment. We could look to the plague of Egypt in Exodus 10:21-22 when Moses stretched out his hand and there was darkness in Egypt for three days. We could look to Isaiah chapter 8, "they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness." (v. 22) Isaiah 60, verse 2 say the people of Israel to expect, "darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you." We could look to Joel chapter 2 where the prophet warns, "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, ² a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!" (Joel 2:1-2) Then there is Zephaniah chapter 1 where Israel is warned of God's coming judgment, "A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness..." (v.15) Finally, let us go to the prophecy given by God to Amos and we will learn together that what happened during the day of Amos was simply a precursor to the day Jesus died. Reading at Amos chapter 8

beginning at verse 2, “ ‘The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them. ³ The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day,’ declares the Lord GOD. ‘So many dead bodies! They are thrown everywhere! Silence!’ ” How does this relate to Jesus’ crucifixion? Jump with me down to verse 7, “The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: ‘Surely I will never forget any of their deeds. ⁸ Shall not the land tremble on this account, *the land shook at Jesus’ crucifixion and everyone mourn who dwells in it, Israel mourned and has been lost ever since they put Jesus on the cross, and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?’*” *The Nile floods annually and great destruction is revealed when the waters subside.* ⁹ “And on that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “**I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.**” *This is just as the gospel accounts confirm.* ¹⁰ I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an **only son** and the end of it like a bitter day.”

(Amos 8:7-10) Amos was prophesying the coming mourning of Israel’s separation from God and its following destruction.

These events prophesied by Amos were fulfilled in Jesus. It is this that Luke wants us to see. He wants us to see that the death of Jesus Christ is the most major and important event in human history since God created Adam. God promised Amos, “And on that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “**I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.**” This is exactly why Luke tells us what time these events take place. The sky goes dark at noon or the 6th hour. We also need to understand that this was no localized darkness. Half of the earth was already dark, for it laid in night, but God turns out the lights on the other half as well. For 3 hours the whole world is completely dark while Jesus suffers the wrath of God for our sins.

Amos also tells us that when this happens, those who normally are joyous at the feast will not be joyous but in mourning. The truth is this Passover does not

celebrate the release of the Jews from Egypt, but mourns the death of the Messiah. Because the Jews are separated from God, they blindly celebrate the Passover to this day, instead of being in mourning for Jesus' death and living in anticipation of the Second Coming. By Luke's specific language, he wants us to see that the death of Christ is, in fact, fulfilling many Old Testament passages. The Jewish religious leaders missed all the Old Testament prophecies and proofs that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah because their hearts were blinded to God by their sin.

Amos 8:8 says, "Shall not the land tremble on this account" and Matthew recorded of Jesus' crucifixion, ⁵⁰ "Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ... And **the earth shook, and the rocks were split.** ⁵² The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many." (Matthew 27:50-53)

What are the Gospel writers trying to tell us? What do they want us to see? In Amos, and we could look to others Old Testament prophets, we see God's wrath and judgment being poured out on Israel. Something has changed – it is dramatic; the sun goes dark, the earth trembles, and the people who should be celebrating Passover instead are mourning and beating their breasts. Jesus Christ absorbed the wrath of God's judgment on the cross that people should have received. That is why the sun is dark and the earth trembled as Jesus hung on the cross. He was enduring the judgment Amos and Isaiah and Joel and the others spoke of. It would not fall on God's people, it would fall on God's Son. Yet, Jesus prayed to His Father to forgive them and God forgave.

The Curtain Torn (Mt. 27:51 & Mk. 15:38)

Luke reports that at 3pm when Jesus died, the curtain was torn. Both Matthew and Mark write that there was a certain way the curtain was torn, "**behold, the curtain**

of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” (Matthew 27:51 and Mark 15:38) In other words, it was torn in such a way that it could only be God who tore it. Let me give you an idea of what the veil or curtain looked like.

The veil was 60 feet high by 30 feet wide and 4 to 5 inches thick and was woven from blue, purple, crimson and white thread, and embroidered with cherubim, we learn these facts from 2 Chronicles 3.14. It was considered such a valuable piece of fabric that both Antiochus and Titus took a veil when they looted the temple (1 Macabees 1.21-2; Josephus, War 7.162). In the second temple it is recorded when the veil contracted uncleanness and had to be washed, three hundred priests were needed for the job as stated in the Shekalim 8.4-5 found in the Mishnah. The Jewish historian Josephus says it was a curtain embroidered with a panorama of the heavens (War 5.213). The Jewish people considered the Holy of Holies as heaven on earth with the presence of God and the veil separated it from the world. The veil could not be torn by an earthquake or armies, but by God alone. Many people will tell us that the temple veil was torn so that we can now have access to God. In a sense that is true. We must see this event as the Bible relates it. Let's begin by going to Hebrews chapter 6, ¹⁷ “So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” (v.17-20) Now to chapter 10, ¹⁹ “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh ...” (v. 19-20) What the writer of Hebrews so plainly tells us is that at the death of our Lord, He opened the veil. He

tore it from top to bottom so that He would be our High Priest and based on our High Priests perfect sacrifice we now have access to a place where formerly only one priest once a year could go. Jesus has taken our hand and placed it in God's forever.

Trusting God's Purposes (v.46)

After 3 horrific hours, ⁴⁶“Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last.” These are His last words; His first words from the cross were ³⁴“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” In between His first and last words Jesus endured God's wrath against sin. Jesus desired the outcome – salvation for believers, but I think dreaded the process. Because of my belief in Jesus, I do not fear death, but to be honest, I do have some fear of the possible process of how I die. Jesus struggled with the process He knew He faced as we observe in His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. I do not believe it was the beatings and mockery of men He feared, but it was enduring the wrath of God the Father that was on His mind and in His heart – 3 hours of God's wrath. The sin of all mankind was being judged and Christ received God's judgment and wrath for all mankind's sins; past, present and future. The cup Jesus prayed might be taken away was the fury of God's judgment – but despite the suffering, He drank God's cup of wrath dry because of His love for His people. In eternity past, when Jesus asked the Father for a people, He knew what it would cost for the Father to grant His request. Jesus knew it would mean His own death. He also knew that this death would come about as He endured God's just judgment for the sins of those people Jesus prayed for and asked God for to be His people. Jesus knew that in order for Adam and Abraham and Peter and John and you and me to be His bride, He would have to die.

Through all this; 3 years of teaching and preaching, 3 years of mockery and abuse, 3 years of men's scheming against Him and 3 excruciating hours of God's

wrath Jesus remained faithful to and trusting in His Father. His last words were words of trust, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” At most grave side services, the preacher speaks words of committal. The earthly body of the loved one is committed to the ground and their soul to God. In a sense, Jesus is speaking at His own funeral as He speaks His own committal.

Even though He is physically weak and words are hard to speak, fully in control, Jesus shouts His last words. He was in charge even to the end. So much so, that Luke seems to use language that indicates that Jesus was even in control of the time in which He died - Jesus spoke His last works and stopped breathing, as Luke recorded, ⁴⁶“Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last.” I want us to take note of something here. Jesus had just endured an eternity of God’s judgment for all whom God would save throughout all history in three hours. At the end of all this - He still trusts God His Father.

My beloved church, this should speak volumes to us today. When we find ourselves in various trials, we too must continue to trust God to the very end. We too, must persevere to the very end trusting and loving God every step of the way. Thanks to Jesus and His power and the His Spirit, we will never endure such a trial as He did that day, in the dark and completely alone. If at the end, He can still love and trust God we too must in all occasions love and trust our heavenly Father as well. Jesus gave us a wonderful example of the extent in which we must trust our Father.

Awakenings (v.47-49)

Now that Jesus took His last breath, we observe two reactions. Reading verse 47 to 49, “Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, ‘Certainly this man was innocent!’ ⁴⁸ And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their

breasts. ⁴⁹ And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.” Both reactions; of the centurion and the people are potentially good.

The Centurion (v.47)

The Roman Centurion who was stationed at Golgotha to guard the three men being crucified had seen everything that day close up and he reacts in verse 47, “Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, ‘Certainly this man was innocent!’” Here is a man who knew and observed all the events; Jesus arrest, the kangaroo trails, the trial by Pontius, he knew Jesus had been falsely accused and wrongly condemned. He was there to hear Jesus’ words of love and compassion and warning as they walked the path to Calvary. This man heard Jesus prayer for forgiveness and what He told the repentant thief. He experienced the 3 hours of total darkness and he was shaken by the earthquake. He had received reports of the great veil in the temple being torn. All of this brought him to a conclusion that was to-fold; first this was an innocent Man and second, this Man was the Son of God.

The People (v. 48)

The people of Jerusalem and all those who had come to Jerusalem because of Passover but spent their day gathered to watch a show, to be entertained by suffering; scouring, spitting and crucifixion – what about them? Reading verse 48, “And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.” The Day of Passover, which was celebrated for God freeing them from Egypt was turned into a day of mourning. This is exactly what God had revealed to His prophet Amos, who wrote, “ ‘The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day,’ declares the Lord GOD.” (Amos 8:3) Some in the crowd at Calvary had been at Pontius Pilate’s earlier yelling, “Crucify, crucify him!” (v.21) But now, God had touched the souls of some and they left convicted that they were

responsible for the brutal murder of the Son of God. Some now realized they were responsible, like the Centurion, for the shedding innocent blood. I am sure they lamented and thought. “Oh, why did we listen to those wicked priests? What were we thinking when we cried out for the release of Barabbas?”

Leaving the site of the crucifixion beating their breasts was a sign of deep mourning and guilt. It is no wonder, when on the Day of Pentecost, Peter stands up accusing them of the murder of Jesus the Christ in Acts 2, there is no argument. They knew what had taken place and had been grieving the fact for a number of weeks.

The Followers (v.49)

Luke ends this passage by writing in verse 49, “**And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.**” Who were these acquaintances? Most likely Mary and John, remember from the cross Jesus “**saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’**”²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “**Behold, your mother!**” **And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.**” (John 19:26-27) Perhaps Nikodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, for they would arrange for Jesus’ burial. Probably Salome the mother of James and John and Mary Magdalene. Some of Jesus’ acquaintances were close and some further away. They all heard Jesus as He cried out, “**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!**”

All these acquaintances thought at that point God’s Son, the Messiah had been murdered and all hope was now lost. However, from our vantage point we know it is Black Friday but Sunday is coming! This brings us back to the truth we began with this morning; *Jesus died the death we deserve so God can give us the righteousness Jesus deserves.*

Jesus paid for our sins; yours and mine and for every believer, so we are able to come into the presence of God, live lives that bring God glory and begin to experience eternity now through Jesus, God's Son and His Holy Spirit that lives within. As we grow and mature spiritually, we are being formed more and more into children of the Living God. Jesus suffered the wrath of God and because of Him we do not have to. Jesus trusted God the Father with everything, including the cross and all the suffering and He rose on the third day and is seated at God the Father's right hand. So, we have come to understand this morning because of Christ we too can trust in God's love, mercy and promise of salvation. Let us live each day praising and glorifying God and may by the saving power of God, we persevere until the end. Amen!