

The Light And The Magnetism Of The Cross.

Text: John 12:27-36

1) Its light

Suggested Hymns:

2) Its magnetism

70, 173, 224, 109, 171

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 John 12:27–36, ²⁷ *“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name.”*

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.” ²⁹ Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.”

³⁰ *Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” ³³ This He said, signifying by what death He would die.*

³⁴ *The people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”*

³⁵ *Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them. (NKJV)*

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus lived His whole life in the shadow of the cross. He knew what was confronting Him. He realised very deeply all that was approaching: suffering, disgrace, humiliation, and distress.

When Jesus was fasting in the desert, Satan tried to deflect His footsteps from the way of the cross into a path that would take Him to riches, to glory, to honour and renown.

We dare not think that the distress which Jesus felt when He thought of what was before Him was without sting and torture simply because He was omniscient.

He was truly human and more sensitive to evil than we are. He sighed when He touched the ear of the deaf and dumb, because His sympathies were aroused to the utmost by the suffering caused by sin.

He wept over Jerusalem. He wept at the grave of Lazarus. He fell to the ground in Gethsemane. He exclaimed: *“My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even to death.”*¹

Not only when Jesus was crucified, not only when He was lashed by soldiers, not only when He bore His cross, but during all His life, whenever the shadow of the cross became dark, His soul entered into gloom.

We have a case of this, right here in our text, where He states: *“Now My soul is troubled.”* Troubled His soul was, troubled with worse trouble than we have ever experienced, troubled with utmost distress, beset by satanic powers, overwhelmed with sorrow because of the sin of the world, troubled because of that tremendous burden, heavier than any one has ever borne.

It was the shadow of the cross, it was hell and the armies of hell which were approaching. Never was there such conflict in the soul of man as here in Jesus when He said: *‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.*

Oh, there was a darkness in that suffering of Jesus beyond all other darkness. There was a repelling force in that threatening cross, something that could frighten the most stalwart heart! But thanks be to God! Jesus conquered the woe of His own soul.

How did He do it? The Father showed Him the light and the magnetism of the cross. And right there lies our victory, and our salvation. The rest of our text speaks of this.

Let us therefore consider *The Light and the Magnetism of the Cross*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Light And The Magnetism Of The Cross.

Its Light

In order to appreciate the light of the cross, we must first of all know something of the darkness which that light is illuminating.

We may not always be conscious of it, but sooner or later everyone becomes conscious of it to a certain degree. There is a terrible darkness in this world and a terrible misery. It is the misery of sin, suffering, and death.

Some people make light of these things, talk of them as if they could be easily avoided; but they are the very ones who go down into despair when they begin to realise, even in a small measure, how dark the sin, suffering, and death of this world is.

We read in Proverbs 14:9 that ⁹ *Fools mock at sin*. The best people on this earth are in constant conflict with sin, groaning because of its assaults. We read in Romans 7:24, ²⁴ *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

People are aching under a deep sense of guilt. The Psalmist says in Psalm 32:3-4, ³ *When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long.* ⁴ *For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.*

And those who are not groaning, aching, praying, and repenting with tears,² but are laughing and walking the ways of sin, are the ones who are standing in slippery places.³ They will soon be brought to desolation as in a moment. They will be consumed with terrors.

Woe unto the uttermost will come upon them. They are on the road to that place where *their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.*⁴

Oh, the darkness of sin, the misery of our warfare with it, the terror of its slavery, the woe of its curse! Even in this world the prisons, asylums, and hospitals, together with their deformed and demented inmates, young and old, are a terrifying testimony to the darkness of sin.

And then, there is the suffering of this world, caused directly by our own sin, or by the sin of those who have gone before us, or by the sin of those who live with us.

We all know the very danger of sin and that it can make any one of us miserable every day of our lives. Why do mothers plead that they may live till their children have grown up? Scripture says in Job 5:7, ***7 Yet man is born to trouble, As the sparks fly upward.***

There is the agony of the mind which has driven common sense from its throne, and peace from the heart. There is hunger and thirst, pains and ills for every nerve in our bodies. Oh, the darkness of the suffering, the misery of it all!

And there is death, sometimes called the *“king of terrors.”* Every one of us knows that whatever of material things we gain in this world finally death will take from us.

And who has found a remedy? Those who die young are mourned because their sun set before it had reached its zenith, and those who become old are a pitiful sight to all who see them. The dread of it is upon us every hour.

We read in 1 Samuel 20:3, ... ***But truly, as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.*** We teach our little children to pray: *“Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray Thee Lord my soul to keep,”* and it continues *“If I should die before I wake, I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.”*⁵ The very uncertainty of it all, is a part of its darkness, misery, and gloom. The darkness and sorrow of it all has driven thousands of people to despair and to contempt life.

But for all this darkness there is the light of which our text speaks — the light of the cross of Christ. Jesus speaks here of His being lifted up from the earth. He speaks of His crucifixion, and in connection with this He tells the people: ***“A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light. While you have the light, believe in the light.”***

Jesus was pointing them to the light of the cross. It illuminates the darkness of sin of which we spoke; for through the cross, Christ took away the guilt, the punishment, and the dominion of sin, and through the Word of the cross He

bestows upon sinful people pardon, forgiveness, freedom from the punishment of sin, and power to fight against, and conquer, sin.

Oh, what a splendour of light the Christians have in the cross of Christ! It was this very light which cheered Jesus when He was in gloom, for the Father said to Him: ***“I have both glorified [Your name] and will glorify it again.”***

Has this light dispelled the gloom of your sin? Take comfort in the words of Isaiah 1:18, ¹⁸ ***“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.***

Learn to say with the hymnist⁶

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o’er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

And the cross illuminates the suffering of this world. We Christians know that whatever our suffering is, the curse is not in it. Jesus bore that for us.

Whatever suffering we must endure, in the light of the cross we learn that it is but chastisement, or that it is but a trial, and we learn to rejoice in suffering for Jesus’ sake. We read in Acts 5:41, ⁴¹ ***So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.***

Or whether it be that suffering which must be endured as members of the mystical body of Christ,⁷ or whether it be the chastisement which we receive as children and which shows the loving care which God bestows upon our training, we can endure it while faith clings to the Cross.

It is the cross which teaches us to say with St. Paul in Romans 8:18, ¹⁸ ***For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.***

And the light of the Cross illuminates death, for through the cross of Christ we know that we are delivered from death. We read in 2 Timothy 1:10 that ... ***our Savior Jesus Christ, ... has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light.***

Through the light of the Cross we learn of the resurrection and learn to say:⁸
⁵⁵ *“O Death, where is your sting? O [grave], where is your victory?”* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

What a splendour of light the Cross sheds in the darkness of this world! The prince of darkness is put to flight; sin’s guilt and curse vanish. Suffering becomes sowing in tears that we may soon reap with joy. Death becomes the gateway into the many mansions that Jesus has gone to prepare for us.

The hymnist continues,⁹

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide.

Are you living in this light of the Cross, or are you foolishly and wickedly excluding it from your life and living in the darkness that is certainly all around us? Are you helping to let this light shed its lustre into the lives of others, or are you carelessly permitting them to go on in the darkness of despair?

Let us help shed this light as the hymnist expressed it,¹⁰

Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation, O salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till each remotest nation
Has learned Messiah’s name.

2. The Light And The Magnetism Of The Cross. Its Magnetism

But there is something else about the Cross that brought joy to the heart of Jesus and must bring joy and gladness to us. That is its magnetism. The Father reminded Jesus of that.

In our text Jesus declares, ³² *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*” There is need of such a power to draw us away from our own folly, sin, and destruction, for there are terrible powers of evil that hold people captive.

The Bible calls the prince of this world “a strong man armed,”¹¹ and Paul declares in Ephesians 6:12, ¹² *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.* He uses these terms to impress us with the fact that the powers of darkness are not insignificant, but are far superior to our flesh and blood.

Luther also declares this battle against darkness:¹²

*With might of ours can naught be done,
Soon were our loss effected.*

Haven’t you heard of people being held in the bondage of sin and of bad habits? Many of them confess that they are helplessly lost because an evil power obsesses them? Have you not felt the power of sin? Do not some poor desperate people take hold of the most ridiculous superstitions and follies in order to receive some help against the powers of darkness?

What we need is some magnet to draw people away from their own wickedness, sin, and guilt! Where is there a power that will draw us to God and to holiness?

Here it is in the cross of Christ. That is the magnet of which Jesus says: ³² *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*”

When Jesus is lifted up, that is, when His name is proclaimed, His crucifixion, His death for sin, in other words, when the Gospel is preached, then the Word of the Cross exerts power.

We read in 1 Corinthians 1:23–24, ²³ *but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,* ²⁴ *but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

That is what drew Paul away from his violent hatred and persecution, drew him to Christ, and made out of the wolf the lamb. That is what drew Peter from

the gulf of iniquity into which his sin had cast him, and placed his feet upon a rock and led him in the way everlasting.

That is what drew David away from his filth and shame and drew him again to holiness till his heart was filled with godliness and his lips began to speak the praise of the Lord again.

Throughout all these centuries the cross of Christ has drawn all men unto it. True, some flee from it, some oppose it, some ridicule it, but there are always many who rejoice to be drawn to the Cross and led in the path of righteousness, and away from error.

For example Moses as we read in Hebrews 11:24–26, ²⁴ *By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,* ²⁵ *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,* ²⁶ *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.* Other examples include Rahab and Ruth.

Therefore we pray:¹³

Jesus, grant that balm and healing
In Thy holy wounds I find,
Ev'ry hour that I am feeling
Pains of body and of mind.
Should some evil thought rush in,
And provoke my soul to sin,
Show the peril, and from sinning
Keep me from its first beginning.

It is because by looking at the cross we see what it means, as written in John 3:16, ¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

We are drawn away from the folly, the wickedness, and the filth of this world and we are drawn to the fountain where we are washed from every guilty stain, and we are drawn to walk in the paths of holiness.

Therefore we pray also:¹⁴

Draw us to Thee;
For then shall we

Walk in Thy steps for ever,
And hasten on
Where Thou art gone,
To be with Thee, dear Saviour.

Draw us to Thee;
O grant that we
May walk the road to heaven;
Direct our way,
Lest we should stray,
And from Thy paths be driven.

Is this magnet drawing you? Has it drawn you? It is the only power that can draw us to God and to heaven. Be sure that you daily consider it, look upon it, so that through its magnetism you may be drawn there where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. Amen.

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

¹ Matthew 26:38

² Matthew 26:75

³ Psalm 73:18

⁴ Isaiah 66:24

⁵ Little Folded Hands, Evening Prayers, 23, "Now I lay me down to sleep;"

⁶ Hymn 171 v 1

⁷ Colossians 1:24

⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

⁹ Hymn 171 v 4

¹⁰ Hymn 224

¹¹ Luke 11:21

¹² Hymn 195

¹³ Hymn 100 ALHB, see also LH 543 v5

¹⁴ Hymn 109