

When Darkness Reigns
Luke 22:53b

Friends, it might sound a little strange for us to hear Jesus say those words... *“this is your hour... when darkness reigns”* and I’m sure it would have been strange for the disciples to hear Him say this as well...

This Jesus whom they had been following - whom they had seen walk on water and calm a raging storm, whom they had seen defeat a legion of demons - casting them out into a herd of pigs and restoring the possessed man to his right mind... this Jesus who could cure leprosy and disability with a single word...

This Jesus who had said to Peter *“upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it!”* (Matt 16:18)

This Jesus now says to his betrayer, the Chief Priests, the Elders, and the mob that has come to arrest him *“This is your hour, when darkness reigns.”*

And as I was reading through these two chapters of scripture in Luke, where all the events of Good Friday are recounted – it was these words of Jesus that struck me.

“This is your hour, when darkness reigns”

And in stating this simple fact Jesus surrenders himself to over to those who had unwittingly become pawns of the prince of darkness, and what the devil could not accomplish by temptation in the wilderness, it seemed he was about to achieve through force.

And friends - while we cannot understate the horrific abuse and beatings Jesus would receive at the hand of his captors, and we can barely fathom the pain of being crucified...

it must have been agonizing for Jesus – the Word of God made flesh – to acknowledge that in what was about to happen – the powers of darkness, which he could have no doubt thrown back with a single word – had been given free reign...

And Jesus surrenders himself to them – *“this is your hour, when darkness reigns”*

Why does our Lord surrender? Why does He not fight?

His disciples are ready to take up arms; they are ready to lay down their lives for him, to fight for the cause of the Messiah – to do battle against injustice, to seek freedom from oppression, to lead the Godly against the ungodly!

The confrontation has finally come to a head – and Jesus surrenders...

And perhaps we’ve never noticed this before, and even if we have - we make very little of it, or we avoid it all together... because we live on the other side of this story.

Because we know now... that it was necessary for Jesus to lay down his life in order to purchase forgiveness for the sins of the world, and we know how it turned out – Jesus comes back to life, there is victory!

So what if darkness reigns for a short time – it’s insignificant, Jesus will be victorious, why focus on all those horrible things, what good can come of that?

But friends let us not too quickly jump ahead to the empty cross and the empty tomb – and in doing so simply gloss over the reality that darkness and evil had their way with our Lord, they chewed Him up and spit Him out.

Because the truth is friends that while our Lord has risen and has conquered and ascended – He has not yet returned...

and until that day comes, we still contend with the darkness and evil in this world

and though they may not have the last word – there are still times when it certainly feels as though it is the hour when darkness reigns, and that it has chewed up and spit people out...

The awful tragedy this past Tues where five families lost sons and a daughter, and one of their friends stands accused of their murder, the ferry disaster in South Korea, and the countless natural disasters that we've witnessed over the past year...

Friends if we jump to quickly to Easter Sunday and new life and victory and all the good news about our sins being forgiven without facing the darkness and evil and brokenness in our world – and in our own lives...

Then our good news sounds hollow and empty.

Proverbs 25:20 says *“Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on a wound, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.”*

Friends tonight is not the time for glib Easter truisms that so quickly brush aside the real pain and sorrow that is going on in the world around us, simply because we know how it will all end...

Tonight is the time to stand in solidarity with those whose hearts are heavy because they have suffered loss, they are battling illness, and their life seems to be coming apart at the seams.

We stand with them so that they know they are not alone, and we stand with them and we go through the darkness with them because that is what our Lord did.

Redemption comes about by entering in and taking on, and going through... this is why our Lord because Human. This is why he surrendered to the darkness and the evil and the sin in our world...

And this is why we cannot bypass or skip over the uncomfortable suffering and pain that goes on in the world around us and also in our lives – if we do it goes unredeemed...

Easter Sunday comes only because Christ surrendered himself and entered into darkness, sin and death – and redeemed them.

So tonight we stand together as the Body of Christ, and we face the darkness in our world and in our lives together - as our Lord did on the night He was betrayed.

And as we listen to the details of His arrest, trial and crucifixion, as we journey through the events of Good Friday, friends I want to encourage you to allow the Holy Spirit to use Christ's suffering and agony and His death to prepare you and empower to you enter into other people's pain and suffering and sin so that you might be used as an instrument of redemption.

Just as our Lord was for us... just as our Lord did for us...

Friends – tonight we hear our Lord's words and we acknowledge *"this is the hour when darkness reigns"*

Let us face that darkness with Him...