

The Darkest Day

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- [0:00] Well, please turn with me in your Bibles tonight to the Gospel of John and chapter 10. Thank you for welcoming my family back to the church that was our home for eight years. We've been gone for almost six and a half, which in some ways seems hard to believe. Thank you for inviting our church family in Warsaw to worship with you as well tonight. It's good to see you all. When I come here, I'm reminded that I miss you. And it's good to see your faces again and to have the opportunity to preach God's Word to you. We've turned to John 10 and we'll come there in a moment. Before that, Matthew 27 and verse 45 says of the day that Jesus died. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And in one of the hymns that we sing, and that you all sing here as well, The Power of the Cross, we sing, Oh, to see the dawn of the darkest day.
- [1:12] In another hymn, Well might the sun and darkness hide and shut his glories in. When Christ the mighty maker died for man the creature's sin. Charles Spurgeon says about the darkness at the cross that day, Brothers and sisters, you can have no thought, it is impossible you should, Of the depth of the Savior's sufferings. Or Jesus himself, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And with those things in mind tonight, I want you to think with me for a few moments About some of the things that made that day so very dark. I want to talk about the evil of Good Friday. But before we get to that Friday, There were some things that happened that help us to see some of the evil of what took place on that day. As Jesus and the twelve gathered around the table to partake of the last Passover meal together, There were troubling signs that not all was well.
- [2:28] Jesus indicated that one of his twelve disciples at that table with him would betray him. Referring, of course, to Judas, who would deliver him into the hands of the Jewish authorities later that night. Jesus on that night as they sat around that table instituted a new covenant meal to replace the Passover, Which we look back and see is a good and a beautiful thing. We've gathered here tonight to partake of it together. But remember that he's talking about his body and his blood being poured out as they gather there. Jesus also predicted that besides one of them betraying him, That they all would fall away and abandon him that night. And in particular, one of them, Peter, would deny him. Three times. Can you imagine the ominous feeling that the disciples must have had As they gathered for what should have been a celebration of the Passover, The Exodus coming out of Egypt, Remembering God's great deliverance of his people, Perhaps a sense of foreboding.

- [3 : 46] And doom as they gathered there that night. And then later in the garden, As Jesus agonized over what he knew was to come, His disciples slept.
- They knew what he had said about they themselves falling away. And yet they didn't keep close watch. They didn't prepare. Some at least didn't pray.
- When Jesus requested they do that very thing. And then along comes Judas and a mob. And with a kiss, He lets that mob know which one is the one that they're targeting for arrest.
- And he was betrayed. And the mob takes him into custody to appear before the Jewish Sanhedrin, The council. But before that can happen, As Jesus had foretold, All of his disciples scattered.
- They ran. And he was abandoned. In addition to being betrayed. And then in that courtyard, Before the Sanhedrin, Jesus faced a farce of a trial.
- [4 : 56] A sham court. Where the Jewish religious leaders determined that he was deserving of death, Which meant they would need to get him over to the Romans in the morning, Because the Jews couldn't by law execute someone.
- And while all of that was happening, Peter, Who had managed, After fleeing, To follow him at a distance, Was busy denying that he knew, Or had been associated with Jesus.
- And in addition to being betrayed and abandoned, He was denied. And on this crucial, Painful night, Of the life of Jesus, He was in many ways alone.
- On the day leading to the day of his death, Jesus was betrayed, Abandoned, And denied. And that was by his friends. And then actually on that very dark, Darkest of Fridays, Jesus did go before the Roman governor, Pilate, Who couldn't find any reason to execute Jesus.
- But when the crowd stirred up by the religious leaders, Clamored for his death, Pilate had him executed anyway. They cried out, Crucify him!
- [6 : 28] And so Pilate released a man who deserved to be crucified. And he crucified a man who deserved to be released.
- Before that, The soldiers mocked him as a supposed king. He was flogged. And they did crucify him. They nailed him to a cross and hung him there to die. A slow, painful, shameful death.
- An accursed death. Death on a cross. And die he did, Breathing his last upon that cross, After suffering more, Mocking as he hung there.
- And then he was buried. The God-man. And you begin to see just a little of How dark that day was.
- The physical darkness that descended on the land For those three hours Embodied a spiritual darkness. An evil darkness.
- [7 : 42] You see why we sing of it in some of our hymns As a dark day. And why I speak of the evil of Good Friday. Now it may not sound like much The things that we've just reviewed Because it's so familiar to you.
- Or maybe because I haven't gone into great detail About the nature of flogging or crucifixion. Or because we haven't taken the time To remind you of how perfectly innocent Jesus was.
- He deserved none of this. Or maybe because we haven't yet Reminded ourselves. Though we did as we sang.
- That Jesus really and truly On that cross bore The sins of all of his people. And that includes you and me. It was my sin That held him there.
- It was your sin That held him there. But I don't have to tell you You know it was a dark day.

[8:57] That's the evil Of Good Friday. But I want to talk about More than just the evil Of Good Friday. I want to talk about The beauty Of the willing Savior.

So hold on to everything That we've just said About the evil of that Darkest of days. And come with me now To the Gospel of John In chapter 10. And listen to the Remarkable truth Of the beauty Of a willing Savior.

John 10 verse 11 Says I'm the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays Down his life For the sheep. And then down in verses 17 and 18 For this reason The Father loves me Because I lay down my life That I may take it up again.

No one takes it from me But I lay it down Of my own accord. I have authority to lay It down and I have authority To take it up again. This charge I have received From my Father.

Now think about that. In light of everything That we've just said That made Friday That Friday So dark So evil So troublesome To our Savior Jesus He went Willingly To face all of that evil.

[10:23] To face those things So that He might call us His friends His brothers His sisters He walked the road To Jerusalem He resolutely Set His face Determined To go to Jerusalem Where He knew What was waiting for Him Not turning aside To the right Or the left And when He arrived He didn't dodge The issue at hand He had His disciples Go and prepare That last Passover meal And there He instituted That new covenant meal Which was to commemorate His own death He said This is my body And this is my blood He's walking Willingly Willingly He wrestled In the garden With the magnitude Of what He was about To face And He bowed Himself To the will of God He went willingly Into the hands Of the mob The betrayal of Judas

Didn't even turn out To be necessary Except maybe To identify the location Where He might be found Jesus went willingly He didn't argue His case Before the sham courts That found Him guilty And pronounced His execution He didn't call A legion of angels To deliver Him He didn't come down From the cross He stayed there And He died Our Savior Endured all of this Willingly And that's one of the things That should Cause us to marvel And wonder And worship tonight He went willingly He laid down His life Hebrews 7 27 He Jesus has no need Like those high priests To offer sacrifices daily First for His own sins And then for those Of the people Since He did this Once for all When He offered up Himself Jesus was the priest And the sacrifice And as such

He offered Himself Hebrews 10 12 But when Christ Had offered for all time A single sacrifice For sins He sat down At the right hand of God There was an agreement Among the persons Of the Godhead That the Son Would accomplish The plan Of redemption But Jesus Wasn't coerced Into it He gave Himself As the perfect Sacrificial Substitutionary Offering In our place I hope that I hope that Makes you I hope that Draws out your heart In greater love For and worship Of our Savior Tonight To think of the evil That He endured And to think That He Walked willingly If you knew All of that Was coming on Friday And The night Leading up to it If I knew It was coming You know what I would do I would do

Whatever I could Do I would dodge it Don't prepare The Passover Don't Let this cup Pass from me But probably Not a But your will Be done But our Savior Laid His life down The other thing That should cause us To bow and worship Is that He Willingly did this For us You see that In verse 11 There In John 10 It was for the sheep I'm the good shepherd The good shepherd Lays down his life For the sheep I think Paul helps us Appreciate this That we might Imagine doing Enduring this evil For someone That we love Someone that's A nice person Someone that's good But listen to Paul This is Romans 5 Verses 6-9 For while we were

Still weak At the right time Christ died For the ungodly For one will Scarcely die For a righteous person Though perhaps For a good person One would dare Even to die But God shows His love for us In that while we Were still sinners Christ died For us Since therefore We have now been Justified by His blood Much more shall we Be saved by Him From the wrath of God It was for sinners Like us That Jesus did this We will do nice things For other nice people But showing such deep love And affection For such utterly Unlovable People Unattractive Dead Wicked Rebellious People That is an act of God

[15:27] And so we say Hallelujah What a shepherd A shepherd that would Lay down His life Not just for the sheep That were nice And were good And didn't go astray And stayed where they were But for all of His sheep The sheep like me And like you If Jesus was like us If He was plagued With our self-centered Selfishness We wouldn't be here today We wouldn't be sitting here tonight Jesus faced the darkness Of Good Friday Willingly for us He did it willingly And He did it for us And those two things Should make us Wonder And worship That's the beauty Of the willing Savior In the face of the evil Of Good Friday So what then?

We focused in many ways A lot on bad things tonight But on your calendar It says Good Friday Good Friday And you all know why It's not the first time We've talked about that contradiction And we aren't the first To point out That the day That we remember Is Good Friday Was actually The worst And the darkest Day in history While every appearance On that day Was the evil Of men The things that took place Behind the scenes That day Mean that it was Indeed a good day So think about that Every appearance of evil The reality is Great good So men mocked Him Putting on a crown of thorns And a robe And saying If you're the Christ Then save yourself Men mocked Him They put that crown on Him And that robe But God

Put our sins on Him And later would exalt Him To His right hand As King Over all For us And His men Poured out their hatred On Jesus God poured out His wrath On Jesus For Our sins And wicked men Celebrated His death And His followers Mourned His death In fear But God accepted His death He accepted that Perfect sacrifice And wiped the ledger Where we were owed Punishment for our sin That debt was paid That day at the cross All one could see With their physical eyes On that Friday Seemed to indicate That evil had triumphed But for those With eyes of faith And a heart to believe God's word We see that in reality Jesus triumphed Over sin that day And on the third day

He rose from the dead And triumphed over the grave Over death itself So Acts 2:23 Peter puts these two truths Side by side Great evil And yet great good This Jesus Delivered up According to the definite plan And foreknowledge of God So you know It's going to be good Because it's God's plan You crucified And killed By the hands Of lawless men It's great evil But the evil That took place That day Was part of God's Very good plan Of redemption For His people The unspeakable evil Endured by Jesus Was that so We might Enjoy unspeakable good And that's why We're here tonight It was a dark And a good Friday And Sunday is coming And that's why

We regularly gather Around this table Not to commemorate Evil But to celebrate The good That comes to us That flowed out of that Evil By God's design Now Without Much elaboration Here A few suggestions For some I trust Humble responses To The truth Of the evil Of Good Friday And the beauty Of a willing Savior Who suffered For us First May those of you Who don't yet Know the Savior If you're here tonight Maybe you're visiting Tonight And you have not Come to put your faith In this good This very good This gracious Savior of sinners Then I would call you To set aside Your excuses Your doubts

[20:33] Your fear Your selfishness Your pride Whatever it is That is hindering you From coming to Christ Pray that God Would tear down Those barriers To your hard heart And come to the shepherd He's a good shepherd He lays down His life For the sheep Having done that When he sees One of us Wandering He goes And he brings us Back To make sure We're safe And fed Loves us Provides for us Everything that we Need As we walk Through this Evil world This world That hated Our Savior Hates followers Of the Savior To the shepherd Watches over us Keeps us Every step of the way You might have heard Things about the shepherd You might hear That he has strict rules And that his people Are hypocrites And all sorts of things But if you look closely At his word

And you look past Our flaws We own them I'm I'm not the sheep I ought to be You'll see a perfect shepherd Who gives us grace For every step of the way And who loves us I hope you see the beauty Of a shepherd Who would endure evil Like we've talked about tonight Who would love Unlovable people So much that he would endure That evil So that we might enjoy The greatest good Eternal life Pleasure forevermore In abundance Everything that we need He's a good shepherd Come and put your faith in him For those of you

That have done that Let us repent of And hate our sin That the sinless Savior Bore to the cross In our place In our stead That which was the source Of such great evil And suffering Our sin Was the source Of great evil And suffering That must not be Something that we enjoy And embrace And are unwilling To deal with Let's repent of it And seek forgiveness And seek to follow Our Savior afresh Let's delight Tonight In the salvation That is ours He did this for you Remarkably He did it for me And so praise Thanksgiving Worship Wonder Awe Marveling Amazement

All appropriate responses The opposite of what His friends did That night before When they When they forsook him Faithful following Of our Savior That should flow Out of hearts That see the evil That he endured Willingly for us We should be glad To worship him May we be quick To show the same Sort of selfless love To others That Jesus has shown To us So that others Might not be drawn To us And see how great We are But that they might Be drawn to our Great shepherd Our Savior And that Showing kindness To others Who are undeserving Is so contrary To our selfish nature It will be obvious And if it's not Obvious to someone Then we can gladly Tell them It's not me It's God's grace It's him Let me tell you About the kind of Love and grace He showed to me Which is the only Reason that I am Able to show it To you As we come to

The table tonight Let's partake With a fresh Appreciation of Who Jesus is Good shepherd And what he's done He willingly Laid down his life For us And I gave it away And who he's done it for For us Who he is The great shepherd What he did Laid down his life And who he did it for For us Because when we sing The power of the cross Oh to see the dawn Of the darkest day Christ on the road To Calvary That's the beginning Of this song It's not the end Is it?

[25:19] It's not where we finish Because we also sing This the power Of the cross Christ became Sin For us Took the blame Bore the wrath We stand forgiven At the cross This the power Of the cross Son of God Slain For us What a love What a cost We stand forgiven At the cross You see it was a dark Day Great evil On that day But you also see That it was a good day Because of the good God Working behind the scenes To bring about His perfect plan Of redemption For sinners like us Who had rebelled Against him May God move our hearts To wonder And amazement Let's pray

Father we thank you For Your love We thank you For the demonstration Of that love In our Savior Jesus We thank you That he went Willingly To face the evil Of that day To sacrifice himself To lay down his life For sinners like us And we pray That you would fill Our hearts With an appropriate Response Of genuine worship Love And thanksgiving We pray for Jesus sake And in his name Amen