

A Strange Darkness & A Loud Cry

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- [0 : 0 0] Mark 15, and we'll begin reading in verse 21. This is the word of the Lord. A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus,¹ was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.
- They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.
- It was the third hour when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read, The King of the Jews. They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left.
- Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, So, you who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself.
- In the same way, the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. He saved others, they said, But he cannot save himself. Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down from the cross that we may see and believe.
- [1 : 1 9] Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. At the sixth hour, darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthanai?
- Which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Well, Mark, in his gospel, in the text we've come to last week and this week, puts us in the position where we're able to fix our eyes on Jesus, to look right into his face, as we just sang.
- And we see him being crucified in weakness, nailed to a cross bearing unspeakable pain. There were none to console him, none to help him or comfort him, but rather everyone to heap insult and mockery and shame on him.
- And we just heard it read again, how the focus of their shame was upon his claim to be the Savior. Indeed, he said that he'd come to seek and to save.
- Indeed, his name Jesus means he will save his people from their sins. And yet, the mocking crowd said, if he can't save himself, he can't save anyone.
- [2 : 4 3] He's no Savior at all. It seemed like a no-brainer to them, and so they piled it on. He saved others, he can't save himself. Let him come down from the cross that we may see and believe.
- Now, some of you last week said to me, if it had been you on the cross, you would have been down in a flash to prove your claim that I indeed can save myself.
- But thank God Jesus didn't come down to save himself. He stayed there and endured the cross and scorned the shame that he might save us. So I wonder if you're amazed at the self-control.
- Yes, he died in weakness, but oh, what strength of self-control our Savior showed on Calvary's cross that he didn't come down when challenged to.

Peter was impressed too, and he writes in his first letter, when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate. When he suffered, he made no threats.

[3 : 48] Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness.

So he did that for our salvation, but he also did it for our example, he tells us. To this treatment, you were called, Christian, to not retaliate, but to suffer for doing good and to endure it because this is commendable and pleasing to God because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

Well, that should be a clear mark in your life that you belong to this Jesus. You walk, you follow in his steps. Now, this morning, we're going to see more of our Savior's sufferings as we consider just two points, just two verses.

We'll see a strange darkness and we'll hear a loud cry. And then we'll consider some applications for us all.

First, the strange darkness in verse 33. At the sixth hour, darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. Now, we learned last week from verse 25, it was at the third hour that they crucified him.

[5 : 10] That's nine o'clock in the morning. And from then till noon, there was a whole lot of activity going on around the cross, seen here in Mark and also the other gospels.

The soldiers crucifying three men. A lot was being done just to do that. Then casting lots to divide their clothes. Then all the mockery of Jesus' claims from the soldiers, the thieves, the religious leaders, the passers-by, they all got in on it.

Jesus praying, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. Our Lord responding in tender mercy to that one repentant thief on the cross beside him who threw himself on the mercy of Christ the King.

Lord Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And he said the most encouraging, comforting words any dying man has ever heard. As Jesus said today, you will be with me in paradise.

And then we see him from the cross caring for his brokenhearted mother Mary. And there's his friend John. And he says to Mary, woman, behold your son.

[6 : 32] And to John, behold your mother. Children, you have a hard time sometimes honoring mother?

Think how hard it would be for you to honor her while you're suffering on a cross. That's when Jesus honored his mother.

Yes, while he was growing up and was your age, he obeyed her. But here he honors her while he's in such pain. What a savior. He has grace to help you children.

Seek him. He is the one who is mighty to save. Well, all of this happened then during those first three hours on the cross. But then at high noon, a strange darkness came over the whole land for three hours.

Luke says the sun stopped shining. The sun's light failed. It was lights out. At noon, when the sun would be at its highest point in the sky, it became dark.

[7 : 36] Now, it was clearly an act of God. The timing of it spoke of that. But how did he do it? I mean, it happens when his son is dying on the cross.

We don't know exactly how he did it. It certainly was not a normal astronomical eclipse. They don't last three hours as we've seen them in our own day, haven't we?

They come and they go in minutes. But this strange darkness lasted three hours. And neither was the normal kind of eclipse that we have seen because Passover occurred during full moon.

Always does. Full moon. Solar eclipses occur at new moon. So we don't know how God did it. But we do know what the strange darkness meant.

What it signified. What God was saying by this miraculous act of stopping the shining of the sun at noon.

[8 : 42] In the Bible, darkness is often a sign of God's judgment and wrath for sin. Now, we could consider many passages in the Bible.

Just consider two. You're familiar with Exodus chapter 10, 21 to 23, the ninth plague of God's judgment and curse upon the Egyptians and their gods.

Then the Lord said to Moses, stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt. Darkness that can be felt. And so Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days.

No one could see anyone else or leave this place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived. God's judgment was falling not on Israel.

They were wondrously preserved. But it was falling upon the Egyptians. I wonder if any of you kids have been to Mammoth Cave or any cave for that instance.

[9 : 48] And I know in Mammoth Cave you go deep into the cave and then the guide shuts out the lights. And it's pitch dark.

You can put your hand in front of you and you can't see it. And you say, Mommy, Daddy, are you still here? It's a scary darkness. A darkness that could be felt.

Amos chapter 5 is the other text. You see, darkness was a sign of God's judgment. And Amos 5, 18 to 20 prophesied to wicked Israel during the glamour period of the 8th century.

Everything was going well. Sinners were at ease in Zion complacently thinking that God surely ought to be pleased with us. We're his people. No idea what was coming.

So Amos announces God's judgment of captivity. The Assyrians are coming to carry you away. Under God's judgment for your sins. He says, Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord.

[10 : 53] Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear. As though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him.

Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light, pitch dark, without a ray of brightness? And then in Amos 8, verse 9, this amazing prophecy.

In that day, declares the sovereign Lord, I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.

God's judgment did indeed fall upon Judah and bringing the Assyrian army to destroy them and to carry them away into captivity.

And here, in Mark 15, on Good Friday of Passover, outside of Jerusalem 700 years later, Jesus hangs on the cross and the sun goes down at noon and darkens the earth in broad daylight.

[12 : 06] as if God is saying in this strange darkness, in case you missed what is happening here on Golgotha's middle cross, this is it.

My infinite judgment upon sin is here. This is a place of judgment. You see, this is not something that human eyes could see.

All you'd see is the Roman soldiers and the way people are tormenting Jesus. But that's not the issue at Calvary that we need to see. That's not the most important thing.

It's not what the Jews and Romans did to Jesus. It's what God Almighty did to His own Son. Jesus the Savior is here saving His people from their sins.

And He does that by suffering God's punishment for their sins. For the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.

[13 : 03] hell is God's punishment for sin, isn't it? His ultimate punishment. And it's interesting that in Matthew 8 and verse 12 our Lord Jesus describes hell, that eternal punishment of the damned as being thrown into outer darkness.

That place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jude also speaks in verse 13 of hell as the gloom of utter darkness reserved forever for impenitent sinners.

And that's why the commentator Hendrickson will say, commenting on this scene, that hell came to Calvary that day as Christ entered into that outer darkness of God's holy hatred and wrath for sin was falling upon him.

Isaac Watson the hymn sings, well might the sun in darkness hide and shut its glories in when Christ the mighty maker died for man the creature sin.

There's mystery here. It's a strange darkness and we hear nothing about these three hours from any of the gospel writers. It's silence.

[14 : 26] It's dark. It's silent. What was that hell that he bore for us there? There's a gospel song that speaks of it's written after Jesus' parable of the ninety and nine where the ninety and nine sheep were all left safe in the fold and the shepherd goes out looking for the one lost sheep and the second and brings back that wandering sheep.

It's all about how he brought us back dear believers found us and brought us back and the second verse says but none of the ransomed none of those who were ransomed by the blood of Jesus none of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through ere he found his sheep that was lost.

I don't even suppose in heaven we'll ever completely understand the depths of the horror and agony that our curse bearing substitute suffered during those three dark hours when the lights were out and men could not even see and where there was silence.

But hear me lost sinner friend if you continue to reject the Savior there will come one day when you will know better than we blood bought sinners what Jesus suffered on the cross when hell came to Calvary that day because you will have to suffer hell but you will never pay off the last payment for hell is forever.

Oh don't go there. Why would you when a substitute has stood in the place of sinners and suffered that outer darkness of hell for all who will repent and come to him renounce your sin what would keep you from him what renounce it receive Christ and in him you receive eternal life the strange darkness darkness if any are still doubting what it meant let Jesus own words help you because we're going to look next at the loud cry of Jesus and there's a strong link between the strange darkness and the loud cry his loud cry is the closest thing to explaining to us what was happening in the darkness and what it signified the outer darkness at noon was surpassed by the horrific inner darkness in the soul of our savior and it's heard in this loud cry both were calculated to arrest the attention and to strike fear even in the hardest of hearts so look at the loud cry in verse 34 at the ninth hour

[17 : 34] Jesus cried out in a loud voice Eloi Eloi lama sabachthani which means my God my God why have you forsaken me well David's quoting from Psalm 22 where an innocent man is suffering and crying out to God for help and it's only silence and Jesus takes those words upon his own lips in this loud cry we can only imagine that this strange darkness at noon had a taming effect upon the unruly crowd around Jesus after all this darkness darkness was indeed scary it was a symbol of God's judgment and indeed later we'll see them walking away beating their breast J.C.

Ryle says there were probably few houses in Jerusalem that night in which it was not said we have heard and seen strange things today perhaps a hush only murmurs falls over the place of the skull during those three hours of darkness there is a hiddenness to our Lord's torments the lamb is silent but at three o'clock the silence is broken by a loud cry even a scream an emotional loud cry that splits the silence and it's the scream of dereliction of abandonment of forsaken forsakenness my God my God why have you forsaken me now the ESV study Bible says these are some of the most mysterious words in the Bible and I don't pretend to be able to exegete them to you but he was bearing our sins and as he did he was to suffer our hell our forsakenness and that means feeling nothing of that love of the father for him and only his wrath as he dies in our place it is interesting isn't it that as the soldiers flogged him with those cat and nine tails we hear nothing coming from his mouth at least nothing recorded nothing recorded as they pounded the nails in his hands but when the father turns his face away and abandons him and he's forsaken and all alone he screams he shouts in a loud voice my God why have you forsaken me when

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us and when it pleased the Lord to crush him and cause him to suffer and make his life an offering for sin it was then that he cried!

intimate communion with his father for all eternity Remember he's got a human nature and a divine nature and as to his divine nature he had been face to face lying in the bosom of the father his father's dearest delight and the father his dearest delight face to face intimate communion for eternity past now here we're considering his human nature it's one like yours and mine and in his human nature as the perfect man he enjoyed communion perfect communion with his heavenly father

Isaiah 50 verse 4 Jesus speaks he wakens me up morning by morning he wakens my ear to listen like one being taught it was a two way communication God speaking to him and him speaking to God we read of it in the gospels his habit was to be up before dawn to go out and find a solitary place where he could pray and hold communion with his heavenly father we can imagine the intimacy of those times father the spiritual leaders are not having any of it their hatred of me grows daily and as for the masses they're more interested in filling their bellies and having their diseases healed they don't want a messiah to save them from their sins my own disciples are so slow to learn they're so proud and arrogant they're often arguing about which one of them is the greatest they don't understand that my mission as messiah includes suffering and dying daily pouring out his heart to his father the only one who understood the only one who upheld him and helped him and those daily times of basking in his love were so precious to our

[23 : 58] Lord Jesus but then Jesus perfect human nature was also created and hard wired for social interaction with other men for human friendship and human fellowship and this too was a real desire of Jesus and an enjoyment of Jesus he loved his father and mother and his brothers and his sisters it hurt to see his brothers not believing in him he loved his 12 disciples he spent three years camping out with them you get to know them and he told them you're my friends he had an even more intimate friendship with those three Peter James and John the closest of friends and then in John 6 when massive crowd is following him with full bellies and they hear a message from Jesus that was hard to swallow they didn't like it and we read from this time many of his disciples turned back and followed him no more don't think it just rolled off like water off a duck's back no it hurt these were those who followed him now following him no more and we know it because he immediately turns to the 12 and says you don't want to leave too do you and Peter answers for the 12

Lord to whom should we go you you have the words of eternal life we believe and we know that you are the holy one from God and then in the upper room just hours before his betrayal by Judas Jesus tells his disciples a time is coming and has come when you will be scattered each to your own home you will leave me all alone you yet I'm not alone for my father is with me here was his unfailing anchor his ever present comforter in all his troubles the one who always understood cared and encouraged him my father is with me we hear him speaking we hear Jesus speaking in Psalm 16 in verse 8 he's right here at my right hand so I will not be shaken he's with me oh but he's shaken now shouts my God my God why have you forsaken me

I understand why they would reject me and they would leave me but why have you forsaken me well he must experience what it is to be forsaken by God if he's going to take my place and your place in hell and suffer what we had coming and here the father hides his smiling face as a brother reminded us in our worship turning his face away the greatest blessing of all to have the smiling face of God upon you he knows nothing of it as he hangs on the cross the agony of the depths of which we cannot flung because now the unclouded fellowship with his father is broken forsaken this is part of hell's horror and punishment you see it's it's telling us

God is far from indifferent toward our sins he can't ignore it and say well let's just pretend it didn't happen what did happen and his justice says it must be punished he's too righteous to just act like it didn't happen light cannot dwell with darkness is that true you go into a dark house and and you turn the light on and immediately darkness is gone or you go into a dark a light room and you turn it off and now there's darkness the two cannot dwell together by the very nature of light and the nature of darkness they can't dwell together and it's the same with the holy God and man sinful man John writes this is the message we've heard from him from Jesus who came to tell us about God God is light and you might be thinking oh he's light no no God is light and in him there is no darkness no none at all it's a triple negative and it matches the

Old Testament triple positive holy holy holy is the Lord God almighty even the sun in its brilliance if you have the right lens you can see it has sun spots on it spots of darkness not our God he's perfectly light and by nature he cannot dwell with men who by nature are sinful sin separates you see it separates husbands and wives it separates brothers and sisters it separates church members it separates neighbors and nations but most of all sin separates God from man we read in Habakkuk 1 13 recently that this thrice holy God is of two pure eyes than to behold iniquity with complacency as if it's nothing no sin separates the sinner from

[29 : 51] God we saw it in the garden of Eden Genesis chapter 3 as soon as Adam and Eve sin they're out they're chased out they're shut out from the dwelling place of God there on earth in the garden Isaiah 59 2 your iniquities Judah have separated you from your God and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear you sin separates God and man Paul tells the Thessalonians what will happen when Christ returns to judge the world 2 Thessalonians 1 8 9 he will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ they will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out shut out from the presence of the Lord eternal separation from God there's no love of God in hell there's no patience of God in hell there's no common grace or mercy of God in hell no pity of

God that's why Jesus cried out he is tasting the forsakenness the separateness between himself and his heavenly father and so God will punish sin no one's getting away with anything there's coming a day of judgment and every sin God says vengeance vengeance is mine don't you repay vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord and he will repay every sin that has ever happened in his whole universe either in hell forever by the sinner or on the sinner's substitute at Calvary but either way it's a horrifying and agonizing thing that's why he cries out my

God my God and don't miss the my God my God you know some people when deep tragedy strikes they blame God and they grow bitter against him they don't want to have anything more to do with him they're done not our Jesus those stricken smitten and afflicted by God he still claims to him as my God twice my God my God that's faith what great faith though I cannot see or feel or experience anything of your loving favor at this moment but only the darkness of your wrath and forsaken yet you are my God my covenant God and I'm holding on to your faithfulness what a savior this is the man of faith par excellence you know Hebrews 11 has all these heroes of faith and we're to learn from them but never does the

Bible say you know as you live your life fix your eyes on Moses Abraham or fix your eyes on Noah no but when we come immediately after that chapter 11 we come to Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2 we are told fix your eyes on Jesus he's the man of faith excellence he there's none like his faith you say where was his faith who for the joy set before him endured the cross scorned its shame he couldn't see it he couldn't feel that joy but by faith he realized it and that faith made that coming joy so real to him that he's willing to go through the hell of the cross to experience the joy of bringing sinners to glory you me brothers and sisters oh let us then run the race looking unto

Jesus consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart in your struggle against sin you have not resisted to the point of shedding your blood but he did ever faithful ever trusting even in the darkness of alienation and forsakenness he forsaken that we might never be he counted sin that we might be counted righteous he cursed that we might be forever blessed he condemned so that we might go free let me just finish with a few lessons from our savior suffering on the cross let me just say first of all what the apostle Paul says when he writes to the Corinthians and he says to them we must all

[35 : 11] Paul includes himself we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body whether good or bad knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade man I don't know any other place outside of hell where we will know the terror of the Lord so much as we see it and know it at Calvary hear your savior crying out loud and then knowing the terror of the Lord what it will be for the sinner to stand in the day of judgment without a savior but on his own and have to face that judgment knowing that knowing that your children your parents that are unconverted your friends your neighbor that they will not be able to handle that they will be crushed for all eternity knowing therefore the terror of the

Lord let's persuade man let's not stand by and just see them moving on to hell you know it's interesting isn't it that a few days before the storm weathermen go on TV and on the media and they warn us about the coming storm people go to the stores they get ready for the coming storm when when God sends his servants to warn people to flee the coming wrath to be ready for that day of judgment to get into Christ the one safely people ignore it as if it's nothing friends that's a storm no one will be able to stand through only those who are in Christ and that's these people all around you they're just writing it off as a fairy tale it's not going to happen we must persuade them says

Paul that's the first application knowing the terror of the Lord let's persuade them the Lord Jesus then gives us in Isaiah 50 in verse 10 a word and here this is Jesus in Isaiah 50 it comes from the suffering servant of the Lord song the third song in Isaiah and we've seen this morning the light of the world walking in darkness hanging in darkness and it's this Jesus who has a word for believers who may be going through darkness walking in darkness he he teaches us how to walk in the dark he says who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant let him who walks in the dark who has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God this darkness is not describing people walking in sin that's a different kind of darkness this is not the darkness of sin!

this! leading you you don't understand why this why that why now why ever and you're confused you're in the dark why is this going on in my life that's the darkness and it's a wonderful thing to know that Jesus knows your condition he knows darkness better than any of us and he's got a word for us you who are walking in the dark trust in the name of the Lord rely on your God those are words of faith aren't they and it's coming from the one who while he was on the cross was exercising faith in the coming joy and he's saying to us trust on brother trust in the name of the Lord your God the name stands for all that God is all of his attributes trust in all his attributes they're for you know that his wisdom knows what is best for you trust in his wisdom know that his power is able to bring about what is best for you trust in him know that his love guarantees that he will fulfill his purpose for you trust in the name of the

Lord your God and rely on your God because he's 100% reliable so rely on him he cannot lie we don't need to know why this or why that as long as you know him the one who's leading you learn from Jesus how to walk in the dark by faith it's there on the cross that we see him with his eagle eye of faith piercing the present darkness and spying the unseen future joy well let's let's come to Jesus to have him teach us how to walk in the dark and then let's come to the cross as the greatest medicine for our overall health you know people are all concerned about what vitamins what nutrients do I need to have what food and drink do I need to have the utmost physical health it's a valid concern but here here is the greatest medicine for your overall health spiritually

[41 : 00] Frederick! Leigh says it's my conviction and at times my sad experience that as the cross goes out of focus in the Christian's life coldness and back slidings set in and we've seen it in 1 Corinthians as Pastor Collins has been preaching on Sunday nights that that church in Corinth had many problems many back slidings much coldness there was disunity party spirit there was sexual immorality complacency towards sin in the body pride in their spiritual gifts looking down their noses on others lack of love Paul has a lot to say as we've heard on all those points but he keeps coming back to one thing as the cure-all the panacea for all of their ailments and I came to you I purposed to know nothing while I was with you save Christ and him crucified that's it and I found that my spiritual health is the best when I'm walking nearest to the cross

Jesus keep me near the cross there's a precious fountain a stream that brings healing to us and all the healing and health that comes to us from this fountain of Christ and him crucified I'm only safe when I'm near the cross I recently heard the scientific studies have showed that a half hour walk in the woods does something healing and health giving to the body there's something about the atmosphere in the woods I don't know if it gives off from the leaves the cane leaves or what it is but that's what they claim scientific proof whether it's true or not I do know this that the!

I'm in my healthiest state when I'm near the cross we've seen how already how the cross is the remedy for our unbelief for there we learn to trust God like Jesus trusted him but it's also the remedy for our cooling hearts of love we sang it 418 confessed our always love God as we ought and even that we would not be caring about his love for us you see there's a simple principle revealed in scripture it's 1st John 419 we love him because he first loved us so our love for God grows as we drink in and taste his love for us and there's a proportional relationship between our drinking in his love and our reciprocating Leahy goes on to ask if our meditation of the cross be meager can our love for the

Savior be great no that's why our Lord calls us over and over as a church to stop what we're doing to come to the table of the Lord's supper and here to take the bread and the cup and to remember our Savior's sufferings of pouring out his life his body and blood given for us do this in remembrance of me come and park a while at the foot of the cross because this is where food is being given to your soul to strengthen and nourish all of the virtues of the Christian life greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends so here is a love greater still the son of God laying down his life for his enemies this is even how we know what love is that

Jesus Christ laid down his life for us so will you make plans to be here Sunday evening and to remember him to get near to the cross again in the way of his commandment and take the bread and cup and remember what he did for you there oh we draw near because we want to love like you love Lord Jesus at the cross our faith grows at the cross our love grows and lastly at the cross our humility grows Christ in him crucified is the remedy for my pride I'm in my best spiritual condition when near the cross because I'm most humbled before the self humbling of Christ at Calvary who's God he humbles himself and becomes man and becomes a servant and becomes obedient even unto the hellish death of the cross what stoop what humility pride humility is

[46 : 16] Jesus like and we we grow in humility at the cross it's hard to be proud at the cross pride is more like the devil that's the sin that caused him to fall and pride is the main door by which he comes and tempts us gives us an over inflated view of our self that rises up in self defense whenever anyone criticizes me makes me think I deserve better than what I'm getting that puts myself and my desires above and before the consideration of others oh but before the cross we're embarrassed we're embarrassed for our pride I think of those disciples that night of the betrayal and there's everything there the basin the water the towel and everything ready to wash the feet but there's no servant there and these guys aren't about to wash each other's feet they've been arguing about who's the greatest pride so he created all things and has come into the world to save sinners he rises from the table takes off his outer clothes wraps the towel around him gets down on his hands and knees and washes his feet he's stooping and Peter says no never me

Lord if I don't wash you Peter you have no part in me oh then wash me everything Jesus is saying what I'm going to do tomorrow on the cross is now here being illustrated I your teacher your master am going to stoop that you might be washed and cleansed not by this water but by my blood shed on the cross for you humility thrives near the cross of Jesus remember our study on humility being the emptying grace it empties us of pride and it's the soil out of which all the other Christ like graces grow faith hope love patience kindness goodness self control saints pitch your tent near the cross where you can look at your savior suffering for you crying out for you in forsakenness that you might never know what it is to be forsaken but embraced with the love of

God the favor of God forever remember that at that time you were separate from Christ excluded from citizenship in Israel foreigners of the covenants of the promise without hope and without God in the world but now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ for he himself is our peace amen