

## Darkness



When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Mark 15:33-3

Amid-afternoon darkness settled over the face of the earth. It was not a darkness that bids the weary rest, but unnatural, unsettling, fearful. Over the moaning of the dying, through the hush of the once noisy crowd, a single cry pierced the darkness and the condemned one on the center cross breathed his last. The darkness deepened, cutting now to the depths of the human soul and to the very heart of God. A handful of those gathered near the cross felt the darkness, but most did not. For most it was only one more death, one among three, one among hundreds, one among thousands the Romans crucified in the name of justice or the welfare of the Empire. But that's the way it is. You really don't understand the pernicious depths of the darkness until you've stood awhile in the light. A few of them gathered there had, but most had not. You live with something long enough and it becomes "the way things are." You don't know any better; you don't expect any better; you don't hope for anything better.

The piercing cry from the central cross and the body slumped in death, though, is not just one more death among thousands, but it is God's declaration of the death of "the way things are." The darkness may have appeared to conquer, but those of us who have stood in the light, know that no matter how deep the darkness may become, the light of God's love and purpose in Jesus will never be overcome.

*Deep were His wounds, and red On cruel Calvary  
As on the cross he bled In bitter agony  
But they whom sin has wounded sore  
Find healing in the wounds He bore.  
He suffered shame and scorn and wretched, dire disgrace  
Forsaken and forlorn He hung there in our place  
But all who would from sin be free look to His cross for victory.*

(William Johnson, 1953, Text and Music: Copyright 1958 Service Book and Hymnal).