

SEEING THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Scripture used: [Isaiah 45:3A \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

In our Scripture today, we hear the story of God raising a non-Jewish leader, Cyrus, to shatter the Babylonian kingdom. Cyrus received the political and financial capacity to make huge changes, and he ended up liberating the Jewish people, in part through treasures that he found buried or hidden in secret or unlikely places. Today, Pastor Hurmon walked us through similarly finding unexpected treasures in the dark and hidden places of our lives, when we confront suffering, pain, or other circumstances that we never would choose for ourselves.

KEY POINTS

- 1) One major false assumption is that life is either all good or all bad.** We cross the line into perceived security, but then we are suddenly faced with danger and uncertainty when suffering comes. The belief is that, if we do everything right, life will turn out OK. Yet we must remember that we are only making the best choices we can in the context of a shattered and broken world. For example, when lung cancer strikes a non-smoker; when a person lives with faithfulness and integrity and yet their hopes to find a life partner keep coming up empty. It is eminently confusing, and sometimes pastors contribute to the confusion when they convey that faith can “magically” prevent difficult circumstances. Yet that does not guarantee absence of suffering. Jesus reminded us of what He experienced before His worst suffering: “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world” [John 16:33 \(NLT\)](#). This is addressed directly to the many people struggling to reconcile the image of an all-powerful and good God with the reality of life. Suffering is commonplace, and we can experience joy and sorrow in the same stream. We must not glorify the darkness, but be ready to face it and go through it.
- 2) In times of darkness, God provides lasting treasures that we can't find any other way.** We may get the ability to comfort others. We may find a new sense of purpose and calling. When Rick Warren's wife, Kay, hit her darkest moment, after their son's suicide, she found a precious treasure of grace and trust in God in the deepest darkness, that gave her a visceral hope of heaven that she did not have previously, a certainty that death will die, and we will be restored to our loved ones.
- 3) We ought to process our pain, not endlessly recycle it.** Not feeding off of it, like an addict, or continuing to retraumatize ourselves. If we obsessively focus on mess and misery, we miss magnifying the Master of our Miracles.
- 4) When life doesn't make sense, we can still trust in God's grace.** We are reminded that Jesus gave his life through unbelievable suffering to atone for our sins, so that death would not have the last word. We have to remember that whenever we doubt: Jesus is the ultimate authority, and death is vanquished. Pastor Hurmon quoted the lyrics from the 1966 song “Sound of Silence” by Simon & Garfunkel. We interrogate the darkness, and in our suffering, we can experience mystery and isolation, yet we ultimately realize we are not abandoned. Instead, we are surrounded with God's loving presence.

DISCUSSION

- 1) HEAR** - Are you currently bearing pain and suffering? Are you able to take it to God? Why or why not?
- 2) UNDERSTAND** - Consider [John 16:33 \(NLT\)](#). Re-read this verse, giving time to focus on each phrase. Which phrase speaks to you most right now? When you think about your relationship with God, how has it been affected by seasons of pain and suffering? When has your faith grown, and when have you tended to grow more distant from God?
- 3) DO** - Consider the reflection question for this week: In what ways have my life and faith been enriched through suffering? First, be honest about any emotions or reactions you have as you reflect on this question. Sometimes in our pain, we encounter the greatness of God in a miracle and answered prayer according to our desires, and at other times we may be called to embrace the grace of God that has the last word even in the midst of tragedy or sorrow. Do you trust God for both of these gifts?