

**“WHEN DARKNESS
OVERWHELMS THE
DECORATIONS”**

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Over the last few weeks, more people have shared with me that they are discouraged than at any other time in the history of our Church.

- So many people at the end of themselves asking, as I have...
 - How do I get out of this place?
 - How do I overcome this?
 - How do I make it all stop?
- As I look around words like Hope, Joy, and Light are being preached to death every Sunday morning, all while people remain isolated, sick, lonely, and depressed.
- After a while, I myself began to feel discouraged, especially as I tried to come up with even a few good solutions for us as a Church community. If I was to try and put all of this into words...

Lately, “It has begun to feel as if the Darkness was slowly overwhelming the Decorations.”

- This is the place many are listening from today, so this is the place I’m going to speak from and to.

An “Unclean” Man born Blind in John Ch. 9...

- Everything around him is against him.
- We could clearly say He was born in a very low valley...
 - His Society has rejected him... Outcast!
 - His Parents have rejected him... Embarrassment!
 - His Church has rejected him... Disqualified!

And then, right here in this low dark place, Jesus meets him...

- AND, without asking for anything in return, heals him of his blindness.
- After this, Jesus tells him to go present himself to the Church, so that he can have relationship with his Parents, and so that he can reenter Society.

- He willingly does this, where once again...
 - His Parents reject him... He's the same Old Embarrassment.
 - The Church rejects Him... With the same Old Disqualifications.
 - Society rejects Him... Seeing him as the Same Old Outcast.
- Incredible! Even after being healed, Nobody wants him, nobody cares!

Side Note: I would argue, that in spite of all this, this man is still much better off than he was before.

- It's not that complicated to figure out...
 - His social reputation isn't restored, but His eyes have been opened!
 - His family life is restored, but his eyes have been opened!
 - His Spiritual standing in the local church isn't even restored, but His eyes have been open! He sees the face of Jesus!
- I don't think we should doubt for a second that even with all around him still against him, this man's life is forever changed for the better by Christ!

And, Christ isn't finished with him yet!

- Because of all that he has experienced, this man is now ready for the next step in his healing.

(Vs) John 9:35-38 ESV – Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, He said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.”

We are told in scripture that a Christian life is a life that produces fruit...

(Vs) Gal. 5:22-23b – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...”

- But what we often fail to remember is that...

“Although we all love Mountain Tops, the fruit grows down in the Valleys.”

Life happens down here!

This leads to an Interesting Question:

- “How much of this man's healing, both body and soul, is tied to his own personal suffering?”

- Notice: Within this story, it's the 'Church People,' the 'Sighted' People, the "Healthy People," that are all closed off to who Jesus is claiming to be, and yet this begging, blind, outcast responds with belief and then worship!

What if this is the gift that discouraging dark times bring with it?

"Darkness is a gift in that in the dark everything loses its shape and so becomes on the same level." - John O'Donahue

- Meaning within our struggles, things tend to reset and we tend to be more receptive to offers of healing and wholeness...

Question: What if God is trying to reshape core parts of our stories?

(Vs) 2nd Cor 12:9-10 ESV - But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

- I was sitting with a local therapist a few weeks ago, and we were speaking about extreme struggle and discouragement... crisis!

"A midlife crisis is only a midlife crisis if you don't know it's happening. Once you know it's happening, it's called a middle passage, and it's not like you come out the other side and get all the goodies. The beautiful stuff happens while going through the darkness within."

I opened my talk today by saying...

- Lately "It has begun to feel as if the Darkness was slowly overwhelming the Decorations!"
- Sharing that I heard a lot of people along with myself asking...
 - How do we get out of this place?
 - How do we overcome this?
 - How do we make it all stop?
- The Answer is: We don't.
- We don't get to escape the reshaping of our hearts, or easily come up with good solutions for others.
- Instead... When Darkness overwhelms the Decorations, we like the Blind Beggar, must choose to decorate our discouragement and despair with the presence of Jesus.
- He is the great overcomer and bringer of New.

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

*²I will praise the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.*

*³Put not your trust in princes,
in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.
⁴When his breath departs, he returns to the earth;
on that very day his plans perish.*

*⁵Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord his God,
⁶who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,
who keeps faith forever;
⁷who executes justice for the oppressed,
who gives food to the hungry.*

*The Lord sets the prisoners free;
⁸the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.
⁹The Lord watches over the sojourners;
he upholds the widow and the fatherless,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.*

*¹⁰The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the Lord!*

PSALM 146