

A Glimmer
Isaiah 64:1-9; I Cor. 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

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Last Sunday afternoon I was taking some time to read a national newspaper and as I read each article seemed to be a little bit more pessimistic than the last. The best thing about that afternoon was when I was done reading those articles. And if that wasn't enough, this week we're reminded of the evil that is out there, the terrorism that strikes, as with events of India. In some ways as we came to the close of the week and the fog settled in, it was almost a physical symbol of some of what I felt - a pressing in of the world by all those worries, wondering how to see into the future, just as it was hard to see down the road in that fog. It felt like it was pressing in, pressing down. That pressing down idea is the root of the word depress down, or depression. Now I'm not talking about the clinical depression or biologically caused depression, but I think we all feel in some parts of our lives that sense of being pressed down, of feeling some weight of the world or some struggles in our lives that weigh us down. I don't think we are alone in that. It's interesting...even as we look back to some of the Scriptures for today, although we didn't read the Psalm of the day, the Psalmist says in that particular Psalm they lived on a diet of tears. Do you think he was feeling a little pressed in upon, feeling like he lived in the dark? And Isaiah crying out to God, "Don't let us live in our iniquity forever." - this feeling of pressed down, feeling pressed upon.

As I recognized that this is an experience from time immemorial it seems that those Scripture writers did something interesting with that time. The very moment when it seemed so dark they used it as an opportunity, an opportunity to cry out to God, believing that even then, especially then, that God would hear them. You see they still remained those who had hope in God. Jesus, in some ways, is telling his disciples the same thing. Though the hard times come and the struggles happen, though it seems like the powers of the universe tremble, God comes into your life and will come. He's offering a promise, a gift of hope.

One of the images that came to my mind as I was thinking about these verses and this crying out, and Jesus' response to his disciples, it was like when we used to go up onto this point and watch the sun set and the darkness envelope us. And then we would look up and see the sky and while it seemed pretty stable, and staid almost, with the stars shining, every now and then there was that shooting star that etched its brightness across the night sky. It was that shooting star that as it etched its way across the sky, that showed us everything is not quite the way it seems. There's more going on than meets the eye. There's a lot happening and every now and then we see the evidence of it. There's that glimmer of hope that we have the opportunity to see like a shooting star going across the sky, like Jesus' words to his disciples offering that hope of God's coming, His coming again. We have that glimmer of hope as we trust in Him.

Jesus gives another illustration of that. It's as you see the very first buds of spring you know something is around the corner; you know something's to come. One of the things we know that is to come, that is right around the corner, that's always coming from God is that glimmer of hope, that light that enters our lives.

One of the interesting things about that image of light is as we think about how God sends forth light, think about when we enter a dark room. Does the darkness ever come out of the room into the light room? No, the light ALWAYS enters in and dispels the darkness. I think it's that way with God as well. God's light always dispels the darkness, which makes me wonder why am I not always feeling like I'm living in the light, if God's light dispels the darkness. It's because I have that option. Just because I see the glimmer ahead of me, I see the light available, doesn't mean I go there. Too often I simply turn and walk away into the dark, turn my head away from the light. Things as simple as noticing when someone cares, and I write it off. Why don't I turn and appreciate it? It's when I see the opportunity for fellowship and I find some excuse not to go there, it's like turning from the light. It's like - and I have to admit that I'm as bad as anybody else - going to worship and seeing what is not right with what's happening, instead of seeing the glimmer of hope, of noticing the possibilities, of recognizing that God can be worshipped whether everything goes the way I think it should or not. So often it seems I turn from the light. Jesus is suggesting to his disciples to watch, to notice, to see that glimmer of light, to see that glimmer of hope and I believe as we hear him go on, he would suggest that as you see like the bud as it forms, we do something. That we announce what's happening perhaps, that's in this passage. In other passages I think he suggests we get ready. We begin to till the soil and prepare the seed because we know what's coming.

Paul, as he's talking to the Corinthians, encourages them to recognize that God's strength is with them, that God is walking with them, that they've seen even now a bit of the light, they've begun to walk into the good news and now they can continue because God will walk with them, and their strength in Christ will be with them to the end. There's an encouragement then to let their lives begin to be evidence of Christ among us.

That's the amazing thing, where these verses lead me was to notice that there is a glimmer of hope and that I can begin to notice those glimmers and see how they begin to become more than a glimmer, and that I can begin to walk into them and enter those places of goodness and grace. And as I do that I'm changed, that each of us are and no longer are we looking at a glimmer somewhere in the distance but we become glimmers of hope for others. Even as we recognize the world that presses down upon us we can see that glimmer of hope that God gives us and live into it and the amazing thing is that as we live into God's hope we not only find the experiences of joy that are there, we are able to stand on those promises and, we become glimmers of hope for each other. I believe that there is at least a glimmer of hope for all of us and indeed that we each can become those glimmers of hope that show the very grace of God, the love of God in Christ. Amen.