Sermon- The Total Eclipse of the Son

Scripture: Matt 17:45-56 Sunday, August 27, 2017

This week we got to experience a very rare phenomenon, a total solar eclipse. For this kind of phenomenon to be repeated here in Kansas City you will have to wait for more than 540 years so we were very very fortunate. When the sky goes dark in the middle of the day, it is so unusual that human beings have always associated a sun darkening as a message that something very unusual or different is about to happen. 2000 years ago when Jesus Christ went to the cross, there was a similar sky darkening in the middle of the day for 3 hours. Now before I go on I want to clarify that the darkening at the crucifixion was not the result of a solar eclipse.

We know this for two reasons. For one, the Bible is very clear that Jesus was crucified at the Passover festival which is a full moon festival. At a full moon the moon is completely lit up with sun light and for that to happen the sun is in the opposite part of the sky to where the moon is. Secondly, astronomers have charts that tell you where solar eclipses have occurred for thousands of years in the past and they have confirmed that so solar eclipse would have taken place over where Jesus was crucified in that time period. So that was not a solar eclipse and no one knows what that phenomenon was.

But today, I am not here to focus on the physical eclipses but something a little different. I am going to focus on a spiritual phenomenon that you may have already experienced, or something that you are experiencing right now or may experience in the future. The phenomenon of a spiritual eclipse. If you remember last Sunday I talked about how Moses went into the tent of meeting and had a super real face to face experience of God. We talked about prayer that sometimes takes us to a place like that where our awareness of God becomes extremely real. But today I am going to talk about the opposite of the tent of meeting encounter with God. We are going to look at the phenomenon where we go through a God eclipse. The eclipse of the S-o-n of God.

Now before we get to the eclipse part we need to understand the Son of God part. The Son of God according to the Bible is the being of God who came to earth for a specific purpose. John 3:16 says, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son What does it mean that Jesus Christ came into our world. It means first that he entered creation not like an angelic spiritual form, or an God in human form but he came in a mysterious form of someone who was fully God and fully human at the same time. John 1:14 says that *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*. But in Jesus Christ, humanity was not just exposed to someone who was fully God and fully human. Jesus Christ participated fully in the ups and downs of human life, he was fully exposed to all the temptations we are exposed to and suffered everything that any human being could be exposed to. And because of Jesus’ unique qualification of being fully God and fully human and also being fully exposed to human sin and suffering and coming through without any sin, he is able to be the perfect sacrifice for human beings. Jesus Christ can represent human beings because he was a human being himself. And because He was also fully God, Jesus’ death represents God’s sacrifice for human sin. If you have never understood this about Jesus Christ before now, I want you to take a moment to absorb this fact. God made a sacrifice on your behalf, and that sacrifice was Jesus Christ. The Son of God. Fully God and fully human.

Now if you do understand and do believe this the Bible says, you will be saved. What does that mean? It means you will be saved from eternal death and have eternal life. When does this eternal life begin? It begins the moment you accept the sacrifice that Christ has made on your behalf. It means from that moment you have access to God, you can begin to talk to him, God will talk back to you. You can share your problems and God will walk with you through your problems and help you be victorious.

So what is the result of the sacrifice Jesus Christ makes on your behalf? The result is that you get to walk with God and talk with God. You get God as your friend, your helper and your guide. And anytime you need to talk to God, you can walk into the tent of meeting like Moses did and have a heart to heart with God almighty. This is really amazing isin’t it? I think so too. When you have a personal relationship with Jesus you get to have an amazing intimacy with God. You get to have spiritual mountain top experiences. And not just that. You live in the knowledge that sin has been paid for, death has been overcome and the devil has been defeated on the cross. So sin has no power and death itself has been overcome. What an awareness to live in! When you get Jesus you get intimacy with God and you live in a world were the greatest challenges of human live have been overcome.

But now you might be saying, wait a minute! When I look at the news and read the deadlines it does not feel like we live in a world where sin has been overcome and death has been defeated. It just does not! In 2017 in the United States, we have white supremacists and neo-Nazis who were a very fringe movement now has become a real political movement with 22 million followers. We have opioid addiction at the highest levels than they have ever been and guess which age group is a problem now. Not teens but people over 60, the baby boomers! Slavery of every kind is the highest it has ever been globally, including in Great Britain and the United States. Talk about large scale violence, there are about 15 big wars right now with thousands of deaths a year and 43 armed conflicts with less that a thousand deaths a year. That is all at the global level. Now even if you are lucky enough not to be involved in any of these 57 armed conflicts or any other global crisis, it does not mean you are spared with crisis at the personal level. When you go through something that if difficult and unjust and something you are 100% sure God would not be happy about and then you pray and you don’t see any change, suddenly you begin to wonder, where is God? Where is God?

Have you ever asked this question, where is God? Did you know that you can pray, with that question? Just take that question and ask, “where are you God?” Where are you God? I am sure there are people asking this question in South Texas right now. Especially the people who lost their property or families of those who lost their lives in the flooding. When you look around you and suddenly you are not able to sense the presence of God, what you are going through is a spiritual eclipse. The spiritual eclipse is probably the scariest of all human experiences. And even this is something that Jesus has experienced. It is that moment on the cross that we read in our scripture today, where he cries, my God, my God why have you forsaken me. That is the moment when God the father hid his face even from God the Son.

Now you will ask the question, why is that necessary? Why did God the Father have to hide his face from God the Son? And why does God have to hid his face from us? Well, please make sure you ask Jesus Christ this question when you meet him in heaven. But I will say this. I don’t think it was possible for Jesus Christ to fully die if God did not hide his face from him. But even besides that Jesus Christ came to suffer everything any human being could and that was the hardest thing that human beings can suffer.

You remember when God taught the priests how to bless the people, God said when you bless the people, say this, “may the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord shine his face upon you and be gracious to you, may the Lord lift his face upon you and give you peace” Remember that? Now imagine the opposite of this priestly blessing. God hiding his face from you. That is what happens when you experience a spiritual eclipse. Jesus experienced it and we experience it too. But here is the deal. We human being always take for granted what we always have, right? We only miss something when it is taken away from us. So one of the reasons God needs to hid his face from us occasionally is so that we will really appreciate his presence with us when you have it.

There is a second reason. Sometimes we can only reflect on what what God’s presence means to us when we don’t have it. In other words in a paradoxical way, we get to process and understand God better when we don’t have him for sometime. Kind of like the solar eclipse itself. You see a lot of research NASA does about the sun is just during the time of the eclipse. And that is because to appreciate certain aspects of the sun you have to study it when the sun is actually blocked. When you look at this picture of the corona, you only get to study the corona when the main disk of the sun is blocked. It is like that with our spiritual walk with Christ too. It is in moments when God’s presence is hidden from is that we really get to appreciate what it means to have his presence. Then you start craving his presence all the more. During a spiritual eclipse we reflect in his presence. Finally it is during a spiritual eclipse that our trust in God increases. You see, the Bible says, without faith it is impossible to please God. Unlike a solar eclipse when we know exactly when it is coming, we don’t know when we will go through a spiritual eclipse. But just because we don’t feel God’s presence at some point, it does not mean he is not there. The Bible also says, I will never leave you or forsake you. And we have to trust that even when we don’t feel God’s presence, his promise to never leave us is still true. The Bible also says that no power in heaven or earth can separate us from his love. Even when we don’t feel God’s presence we trust God’s promise when he tells us he has not gone anywhere. Just because we could not see the sun and it became dark during the eclipse, did you ever doubt that the sun had ceased to exist? I didn’t think so. So it is with God. Just because you don’t feel his for a period in your life it does not mean he has gone away. In fact what God is doing is building our faith, because without faith, it is impossible t please God.

There is one more aspect of the eclipse analogy that I think is relevant to what we are talking about today. You see not only does God want us to hold on to our faith when we don’t see him or feel him for sometime, I believe looking at the eclipse, God also wants us to know that eclipses do come to an end. Before you know it within a fraction of a second it starts getting bright again and things are back to normal. Do you remember how quickly the solar eclipse was over? When know this friends. If you are going through a spiritual eclipse, then know that your spiritual eclipse will be over really quickly too. The Son will come out, and be very pleased that you held on to your faith even when you could not see the results. Yes my friends, the Bible is very clear, God wants to bless. In fact He does not wish to withhold his blessing on anybody. God’s blessing is available to anyone who receives His Son and His Son’s sacrifice. If we receive his Son into our lives He will not judge us for our sins but in fact make his face to shine brightly upon us and give us peace.

So if you have never experienced the face of God shining upon you, receive his Son Jesus Christ into your life and you will know what I am talking about. If you have received his Son a long time ago and are going through a spiritual eclipse, then hold on to your faith, it is how you can please God. And be patient because very soon the Son will start shining on you again. Let us pray.