When the Centurion Saw Jesus in the Darkness

Mark 15:39

“And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.”

There is something about the Roman centurion at the cross that has always stayed with me.

We don't know his name.

We don't know what happened to him after that day.

We don't even know for certain what was going on in his heart when he spoke those words.

But we do know that he was there.

He stood at Calvary and watched Jesus die.

And something about what he witnessed caused him to say,

“Truly this man was the Son of God.”

This was a Roman soldier.

A man who had likely seen things most of us could never imagine. He knew violence. He knew death. He knew what crucifixion looked like.

This wasn't his first execution.

But there was something different about Jesus.

Something about the way Jesus suffered.

Something about the way He cried out.

Something about the way He died.

The centurion saw something that went beyond what his eyes could see.

He saw Jesus in the darkness.

And I can't help but wonder if there is something God wants us to learn from that.

Sometimes People See Jesus in Our Darkness

We spend a lot of time asking God to get us out of difficult situations.

I know I do.

Lord, please change this.

Lord, please fix this.

Lord, please make this hurt less.

Lord, please let this season be over.

And there is nothing wrong with praying those prayers.

But what if sometimes God wants to do something through the storm before He brings us out of it?

What if someone is watching?

What if there is a person who doesn't believe in God watching how you handle your pain?

What if there is someone who has questions about Jesus, but they're not reading a Bible or sitting in a church?

They're watching you.

They're watching what happens when your life doesn't go according to plan.

They're watching how you respond when you're disappointed.

They're watching what happens when you don't get the answer you prayed for.

They're watching whether your faith survives the storm.

And maybe they won't see Jesus most clearly when everything is going right.

Maybe they'll see Him when everything is going wrong.

The Centurion Didn't See Jesus at His Best—At Least Not by Human Standards

The centurion didn't see Jesus feeding thousands.

He didn't see Him heal the sick.

He didn't see Him calm the sea.

He didn't see Him raise Lazarus.

He saw Jesus hanging on a cross.

Jesus looked beaten.

Broken.

Rejected.

Defeated.

And yet the centurion looked at Him and said,

“Truly this man was the Son of God.”

That makes me think about my own life.

Because sometimes I think I have to have everything together for people to see Jesus in me.

I think my testimony needs to look impressive.

I think I need to have all the answers.

But maybe that's not what people need to see.

Maybe they need to see me hurting and still trusting God.

Maybe they need to see me crying and still praying.

Maybe they need to see me disappointed and still believing.

Maybe they need to see that my faith isn't based on everything going the way I want it to.

Maybe they need to see that Jesus is still enough when life isn't.

Your Pain Isn't Wasted

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 1:4:

“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.”

I don't particularly like the idea that my difficult experiences might someday help someone else.

I'd much rather skip the difficult experiences altogether.

But God can take things we never would have chosen and use them in ways we never imagined.

The hurt we didn't understand can become the words someone else desperately needs to hear.

The storm we thought was destroying us can become the testimony that gives someone else courage.

The place where we felt completely broken can become the place where someone else sees the faithfulness of God.

That doesn't mean we have to pretend the pain doesn't hurt.

Jesus Himself wept.

We can cry.

We can grieve.

We can ask questions.

We can admit that something hurts.

Faith isn't pretending we're okay.

Faith is knowing that even when we're not okay, God still is.

What If Someone Is Watching?

Maybe there is a centurion in your life.

Maybe it's someone who doesn't believe.

Maybe it's someone who has been hurt by the church.

Maybe it's someone who thinks Christianity is just a list of rules.

Maybe it's someone who has never really understood what it means to have a relationship with Jesus.

And maybe they are watching you right now.

They aren't looking for perfection.

They're looking for something real.

So when the storm comes, let them see Jesus.

When you're hurting, let them see you pray.

When you're angry, let them see you surrender.

When you're disappointed, let them see you trust.

When someone hurts you, let them see forgiveness.

When you don't understand what God is doing, let them see that you still believe He is good.

Not because you're strong enough to do it on your own.

But because Jesus is holding you together.

The Light Shines Best in Darkness

Calvary was dark.

The sky itself became dark.

The disciples were devastated.

Jesus was dying.

It looked like everything had gone terribly wrong.

But heaven knew something the people standing at the cross didn't yet understand.

The cross wasn't the end.

It was the beginning of the greatest victory the world had ever seen.

And standing there in the darkness was a Roman soldier who recognized something extraordinary.

“Truly this man was the Son of God.”

The darkness didn't stop Jesus from being the Light.

And your darkness doesn't stop Jesus from shining through you.

In fact, sometimes it is in the darkest places that His light becomes easiest to see.

So if you're in a difficult season right now, don't assume God isn't using you.

You may not see what He's doing.

You may not understand why you're walking through this.

You may wish with everything in you that the circumstances would change.

But someone may be watching.

And they may see Jesus.

Your life doesn't have to be perfect to be a testimony.

Your storm doesn't disqualify you.

Your tears don't disqualify you.

Your weakness doesn't disqualify you.

Sometimes the most powerful testimony isn't,

“Look how wonderfully everything worked out.”

Sometimes it's,

“I don't know how this is going to work out, but I still trust Jesus.”

That's faith.

That's a testimony.

And maybe that's exactly what someone needs to see.

Reflection

- What does my response to difficult circumstances tell others about my faith?
- Is there someone who may be watching how I walk through my current season?
- Have I been asking God only to remove my storm, instead of asking Him to use it?
- What part of Jesus do I want others to see in me right now?
- Can I trust God with my pain even when I don't understand its purpose?

Carry This With You

Someone may never read the Bible, but they may read your life. Let them see Jesus—even in the darkness.

Closing Prayer

Father,

I don't always understand the storms You allow into my life.

Sometimes I want You to remove them immediately. I want answers. I want relief. I want to know why.

But today, help me remember the centurion.

He saw Jesus in the darkest moment.

Lord, if someone is watching me in my darkness, let them see You.

When I am hurting, let them see Your strength.

When I am afraid, let them see Your peace.

When I am disappointed, let them see my trust.

When I don't understand, let them see that I still believe You are good.

Take the things that have hurt me and use them for Your glory.

Don't let my suffering be wasted.

Let my life point people toward You—not because I have everything together, but because You are holding me together.

And if someone is standing at a distance, watching and wondering if You are real, let them see enough of Jesus in me to make them look toward You.

Let my darkness become a place where Your light shines.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.