

Songs in the Night

Silent Saturday 2024

3.30.24

Introduction: Living in the In-Between

A. I don't like being in-between.

1. Beginnings and endings are fun and exciting.
2. But the in-between is hard.
3. The middle is where we are tried and tested.
 - a. Israel left Egypt in power but muddled through the middle.
 - b. Often, our Christian lives begin amazing and end in glory, but the middle is far more complex and difficult.

B. This is certainly clear on Silent or Holy Saturday.

1. Between the cross and the empty tomb, there is silence.
2. Darkness seemed to overshadow the land.
3. The Apostles scatter and the faithful women must wait.
4. But the silence is not wasted.

C. Tonight, I want to share about those times when it seems all is silent.

1. Discouragement and despair try to set in.
2. Perhaps it seems nothing is going right or well.
3. And we wonder if God has forsaken us or forgotten us.

D. These next few verses speak to people who find themselves in a season that is dark, hurting, and hopeless.

1. What we see is that God is not silent, even in the darkest times.

2. And in the waiting, in the dark, in the in-between, the Lord ministers to us in a special and different way.

Five Scriptures for the Dark Times

Job 35:10 (ESV) ¹⁰ But none says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night,

Psalm 42:8 (CSB)

⁸The LORD will send his faithful love by day;
his song will be with me in the night—
a prayer to the God of my life.

Psalm 77:6 (CSB)

⁶At night I remember my music;
I meditate in my heart, and my spirit ponders.

Mark 15:33–34 (CSB)

³³When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.³⁴And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "**Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?**" which is translated, "**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**"

Acts 16:25 (CSB)

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

1. First, we see Job in the middle of his trial.

A. Job has lost everything that he had held dear.

1. Now, his friends have arrived to correct and restore Job, so they think.

2. The friend Elihu utters these words to Job:

3. "Where is God my maker, who gives songs in the night."

B. Elihu believes that if Job had been a good and righteous man, then God would have responded by now.

1. But verse 13 of Job 35 betrays Elihu's theology that God does not listen to empty cries.

a. Elihu cannot imagine a good, righteous man suffering.

b. His theology did not have room for a righteous sufferer, and could never have considered the supreme example, Jesus.

2. Therefore, the rest of the chapter is Elihu condemning Job in the midst of his pain.

a. And the wisdom Elihu has is this: You must have sinned; otherwise, this would not have happened.

b. If you will merely confess, then your trouble will stop.

3. Elihu believes he is helpful, but he is not.

C. Even amid all of his wrong advice and bad theology, he introduces this idea of songs in the night.

1. What does he mean?

2. Why is this appropriate on Silent Saturday?

3. For the Cross is finished, and the tomb will soon give up its treasure, but here in the middle, what is God doing?

D. The famous Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon said it like this:

Any man can sing in the day. When the cup is full, man draws inspiration from it; when wealth rolls in abundance around him, any man can sing to the praise of a God who gives a plenteous harvest... It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but he is the skilful singer who can sing when there is not a ray of light by which to read, — who sings from his heart, and not from a book that he can see, because he has no means of reading, save from that inward book of his own living spirit,

whence notes of gratitude pour forth in songs of praise. No man can make a song in the night himself; he may attempt it, but he will find how difficult it is. It is not natural to sing in trouble, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name," for that is a daylight song...Songs in the night come only from God; they are not in the power of man.¹

1. In those dark, hard moments when it seems that we are alone and abandoned, there is a ministry of the Spirit that takes us by surprise.

2. It is the ministry of a song, of words of praise that come from the deepest places, as if stored there for times like these.

a. I remember being beside the hospital bed of a dear saint whom I was sure was dying.

b. While we gathered around and prayed, we thanked the Lord for his faithfulness over the years.

c. And, in that moment, that dear sister raised her arms to the Lord like I had seen so many times before.

d. In that hard moment, there aroused in her a song of thankfulness to the Lord.

e. A song that was not rehearsed or scripted; but a song of praise in the valley of the shadow of death.

3. What enables a person to praise God during the hard, the sad, the painful and the troubling?

4. Is it not the Lord who gives songs to sing in the night?

2. The Psalmist learned how to sing at night.

A. David knew what it was to have dark nights.

1. He endured family struggles, threats, rebellions, and everything else.

¹ Spurgeon Sermon, Songs in the Night, slightly edited and abridged.

2. David had moments of brilliance, where he saw the visible glory of God.

3. He also had times when he cried out, "my God my God why have you forsaken me."

B. Yet, even in those darkest of times, the Lord would stir up a praise from within.

1. Perhaps they were songs of David's youth, learned during easier times.

2. Sometimes, they would be new songs spontaneously led by the Spirit of God.

3. But from the depths of his inner being, God stirred up songs within David that gave voice to praise when all around us is cursing.

C. The hard times betray our inner life.

1. Hard times expose what is really happening within.

2. Yet, a ministry of the Spirit is to sing when all the songs have stopped.

3. A ministry of the Spirit is to praise when all the blessings have seemed to disappear.

4. No one knew this better than Jesus.

3. Jesus knew what to sing at the darkest moment of human history.

Mark 15:33–34 (CSB)

³³When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.³⁴And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "**Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?**" which is translated, "**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**"

A. While Jesus is upon the Cross, he repeatedly echoes the words of Psalm 22.

1. This ancient Psalm that foreshadowed Jesus' suffering became the liturgy for the moment.

2. And as darkness descended upon Earth during those terrible hours, Jesus had a song in the night.

3. A cry that declared the feelings of abandonment but also the hope that the Lord would not abandon him to death.

B. Yes, dear saint of God, there will be times of darkness.

1. Jesus said, "in this world you will have trouble... but I have overcome the world."

2. Great victories often follow terrible darkness.

3. Silent Saturday reminds us that God does not stay silent forever.

4. Just as God heard the cry of Israel in their slavery, David in his distress, and Jesus on His cross, so God will not abandon us or forsake us.

5. As the song says, "Friday's good cause Sunday is coming."

C. If you find yourself in a place of discouragement, pain, or frustration, fear not, for the Lord does hear our cries, and He does give us songs to sing when all the other singers have gone to sleep.

1. This is powerfully evident in the example of Paul and Silas.

2. One last verse tonight:

4. Paul and Silas knew how to sing in the depths of a prison cell.

Acts 16:25 (CSB) ²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

A. There is nothing darker than an ancient prison cell at midnight.

1. No security lights.

2. No moonlight.

3. Just utter darkness.

B. Paul and Silas were imprisoned here in Philippi for casting out the demonic darkness of a young woman.

1. The authorities and rulers, not wanting their darkness exposed, throw Paul and Silas into a dark prison.
2. But what they could not distinguish was the light of Jesus within them.
3. Thus, at midnight, Paul and Silas can be heard singing and praying to God.

C. While many of us would have been complaining, they were praising.

1. They knew of God's love and power.
2. And they were able to sing even when all seemed hopeless.
3. They didn't know God was going to send an earthquake and shake them free or that deliverance was minutes away.
4. When they began to sing, they sang because even in the darkness, God was good.
5. Even in the in-between and the not knowing, God was on the throne.
6. And whatever happened here on Earth was nothing more than a temporary setback.
7. Therefore, why not sing in the night.

Apply: Even though we know Sunday is coming, the songs of Saturday often become the most memorable.

A. Horatio Spafford knew something about life's unexpected challenges. He was a successful attorney and real estate investor who lost a fortune in the great Chicago fire of 1871. Around the same time, his beloved four-year-old son died of scarlet fever.

Thinking a vacation would do his family some good, he sent his wife and four daughters on a ship to England, planning to join them after he finished some pressing business at home. However, while crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the ship was involved in a terrible collision

and sunk. More than 200 people lost their lives, including all four of Horatio Spafford's precious daughters. His wife, Anna, survived the tragedy. Upon arriving in England, she sent a telegram to her husband that began: "Saved alone. What shall I do?"

Horatio immediately set sail for England. At one point during his voyage, the captain of the ship, aware of the tragedy that had struck the Spafford family, summoned Horatio to tell him that they were now passing over the spot where the shipwreck had occurred.¹

As Horatio thought about his daughters, words of comfort and hope filled his heart and mind. He wrote them down, and they have since become a well-beloved hymn:

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll—
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to know
It is well, it is well with my soul.²*

1. Horatio Spafford knew what it was like to sing a song to the Lord that was born from tragedy and pain.
2. Some of us here tonight are in similar seasons.
 - a. Loss of parents, strained relationships, difficult finances, and physical pain are realities for many of us here tonight.
 - b. And although we know that breakthrough is coming, it too often feels like Saturday lasts forever.

B. What do we do in the in-between?

1. Surround ourselves with better friends than Job.
 - a. Have people in your life who will remind you that God is still good, even when we are sitting on a heap of ashes.
 - b. And remember that Sunday is coming.
2. Ask God to give us songs to sing in this season.
 - a. David prayed and meditated in the times that were dark and heavy.

b. Saturdays are not a waste of time, but a time to reflect on God and His Goodness, even when the goodness feels far away.

3. Like Jesus, return to past songs that have depth, meaning, and are full of God's Word.

a. Jesus knew Psalm 22 and, during His time on the cross, this is what Jesus so often quoted and fulfilled.

b. When we are in dark seasons, return to the roots.

c. Sings the old hymns, read the familiar Psalms, and return to the ancient altars and meditate upon what God has done.

4. Like Paul and Silas, sing and pray louder in the dark because we never know who is listening.

Prayer: Tonight, we close with prayer.

A. In just a moment, we will leave the room and I ask that all leave in silence so that the next words in the building will be the shouts of joy on Resurrection Sunday!

1. But I want to pray for those of us in the in-between.

2. In Between:

a. The miracle

b. The reunion.

c. The provision

d. The release of vision.

e. The pain of Friday and the joy of Sunday.

B. Prayer:

Tonight, I pray for those of us who are waiting. We are waiting for a miracle. We are waiting for your divine intervention. We are waiting. So, God of comfort, I ask that you comfort us in our mourning, in our waiting, in the darkness of Saturday. And would you help us to not

waste this time, but to take the opportunity to sing the songs that can only be sung at night. Help us be attentive and receptive to what you are teaching, revealing, and doing in the silent times. For even the Saturday between your death and your resurrection is called Holy, for where you are is holy.

Grant us rest tonight and give us joy in the morning. In Jesus name, Amen.