

The Veil Rent

Good Friday

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Bible Text: Luke 23:39-56; Luke 23:44-46

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Congregation, the text for this morning's hour sermon is from Luke 23:44, 45 and 46. Luke 23:44-46.

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

So far.

The veil rent. Three thoughts. The foregoing darkness, it was dark before that so the foregoing darkness. Secondly, the violent rending, not unbuttoning but rending it, violent rending. And in the third place, a voluntary death, he died in a very special way, he gave up the ghost. So the veil rent: the foregoing darkness, the violent rending, and the voluntary death.

Congregation, we are still in Jerusalem, outside actually of Jerusalem, and on that little hill Calvary, the place of the skull, the shape of that little mountain was like the skull of a human. And we still see there those three crosses, children, young people. Three crosses, those malefactors on both sides and the Lord Jesus in the midst. Lots of people around them, some standing afar, some of his acquaintances and his mother from afar, John also, but they did not come too close, and lots of people and so this mocking Jesus. It's noisy there and bright sunlight, it's noon now. The sun is at its highest and the Lord Jesus is hanging there, suffering there. He just said to Mary, his mother, "Behold thy son," and he pointed to John, and he looked at John and he said, "Behold thy mother." So when he was suffering and in pain, excruciating pain, he still cared for his mother. "Behold thy son. Behold thy mother. Care for her." He really felt for her. He was so unselfish again. And then at that time, in this bright sunlight at noon, 12 o'clock, we call it the sixth hour, we say it's noon but they said it was the sixth hour, we say it's noon. Then suddenly it's getting dark, really dark over the whole earth and there was night meeting the land. That's also a good translation. We don't know. But it becomes really dark, suddenly dark and it's eerie, quiet. What's happening? I hear a soldier speak, some children crying, "Mother!"

And I don't hear the birds singing anymore. Darkness on the whole earth and the Lord Jesus also suffering in his last hours in darkness. How difficult also for the Lord Jesus, his last hours, to have no light, that loneliness to not be able to see anything, anyone.

Darkness. "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour." Three hours long. Children, do you like darkness when you wake up in the middle of the night? You're thirsty or so have to go to the bathroom and it's so dark you hardly dare to get out of bed and you cry, "Mom! Dad!" Or do you have a little light in your bedroom so you can see something? So, you know, usually we don't like darkness, right, because in darkness you feel threatened, in darkness you don't know where to go, in darkness you easily trip and fall. Darkness means kind of no light, no joy. It's kind of depressing.

Well, it became quite dark and people were shocked, had no idea what was happening. Jesus is on the cross, people around him, and it became very quiet. Miraculous darkness. No, this is not an eclipse of the sun because the Passover always was kept at full moon. So it can't be. It was a miraculous darkness. You can't explain the darkness but we hear some historians, Roman historians, for example, Phlegon, talk about that. There was a darkness and an earthquake, he said. It lasted three hours.

So eerie. So strange. So frightening. But you know, it has a meaning, right, and it also had a purpose. The Lord was asking attention for something like when he gave the law on Mount Sinai, remember? That mount was shaking and smoking and there was lightning as well and there was thundering. So often the Lord prepares people for something and is doing this to shock us awake, to shake us awake, to let us open our eyes. For example, also when the Lord Jesus was born and angels appeared and there was light. The shepherds were afraid. So creation was reminded of God the Almighty One, that he can make it light, he can make it dark.

Darkness. Just go back in the Bible and just look at that. Genesis 1:2. That's the second verse in the Bible and it talks about darkness. The Lord created the heavens and the earth, that's verse 1, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." So darkness is there the example also of chaos, of the void, of having no shape, having no form, having nothing organized. So that as a purpose to wake up people, also to show people that the Almighty God can disturb things, that all things are in his hands, that he's the Almighty One.

Also think of the ninth plague in Egypt. "Stretch out thine hand, Moses, toward heaven and there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt." Deep darkness over Egypt, the ninth plague. You know, that means no light. It means God is absent. It means no joy. It means you stumble. It means no colors. It means no shapes. It means you're blind.

But you know, against the darkness you also see texts in the Bible like Micah 7:8, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness,

the LORD shall be a light unto me." You see in many texts darkness is God's absence. Sit in darkness, and yet the Lord a light. Now you know we have chosen for the darkness, right? This world became a world of darkness. It was our choice. And we deserve that darkness. It's a wonder that there is light and we can see things. "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." This is all the same "darkness" word in the whole Bible. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

So the Lord let's people feel, "I'm God. I'm in charge. You're fragile. You're vulnerable." And the Lord also shows something of what sin is about and what sin's consequences are about. You know, the darkness apparently was a blessing because people left a couple hours after, left, smiting themselves on the breast and there was a centurion also who was really impressed about all of this. Do you see that in verse 47? "Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."

So the darkness was kind of a blessing for the people and so also other things can be a blessing. Darkness can be a blessing, afflictions can be a blessing, a horrible pandemic can also wake up people so they begin to think and realize and question themselves, "What is the purpose of life anyway?" It can be a real blessing. J. C. Ryle writes about this and he says God knows the stupidity and unbelief of human nature, and that's why he's giving the darkness, because of that stupidity and that unbelief of the human nature. May the Lord bless it. The Lord compels man to consider it, to at least pay attention now. God shows the sneering unbelieving world that he is able to suspend the laws of nature. He's God.

But also it meant something for Christ himself, right, the darkness? It was not only for others, not only a message for the people of Jerusalem and all the bystanders to wake them up, it also meant something to Christ himself and how did he experience the darkness. Did this mean that Christ was left in the dark? Was his Father hiding his face to him? I think so. I think of someone dying at night, nobody around, in the dark literally or figuratively. Oh, what a difficult three hours in darkness. And during those hours in darkness, he cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I connect that to the darkness. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" There's no light.

Darkness. Loneliness. Think of dying alone, no wife, no husband, no children, no parents, no friends, nobody. Just dark and nobody is saying anything. Psalm 38, "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off. I watch and I am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop." And yet I can't explain it but I found something else in John 16:32, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." So somehow the Father is hiding his face and somehow still looked upon him. God the Father was hiding his face but could not hate him, could not forget

about him, could not forsake him. He was hiding his face but he kind of knew that he was still there. "Father, in thy hands I commend my spirit," right? He said Father as well.

What a price that he paid. The beloved Son of God, he was in darkness to give sinners light. He was forsaken so that they that believe in him, truly believe in him will never be forsaken at all anymore. So lowly to give his presence and God's presence to bring to God, to make it light, to shine upon us. So what does it mean for Christ suffering loneliness? What does it mean for the bystanders? They're in shock. What does it mean to us that he was in darkness? Have you realized that we deserve that darkness? That we deserve to be forsaken? Do you know that? Do you agree on that? And has it become a wonder that he was willing to be in the dark to make it light for you, gives life? That's Good Friday. If you see his darkness, it's by light. And my curse is on him. And he was forsaken so I don't have to be forsaken. That sweetness of the gospel, that peace with God through Jesus Christ, through his darkness, light for me. And yet God's children also still experience sometimes darkness, often our own fault in that straying away from him, but he is still the light of his people and he would not forsake them. He was forsaken himself.

Foregoing darkness, and then the next verse, 45, "And the sun was darkened," that's repetitive, "the sun was darkened" it says again in 45 because it was really something, "and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst." The veil of the temple was rent in the midst. Now the children remember this, right? Have you seen a map of the temple or the tabernacle with the court, and then inside the holy place with the table of showbread and the altar of incense and the golden candlestick? And next to that separated by the veil, the most holy place, the Holy of Holies with the ark and the cherubim. Now look at that curtain, thick curtain, several layers. And look at the colors, blue and purple, and angels embroidered on the veil. And the veil was closed so the priest could go in there every day for the incense altar to offer incense but nobody was ever allowed, well, that's not true, most of the normal priests were never allowed to go in there, only the high priest once a year. Once a year. Why only once a year? To show that something had not been solved yet. To show the people that, in a sense, the door was closed so far, that they could not come through there because the Lord would consume them like he did also the sons of Aaron. So they could not go into that most holy place, only the high priest once a year to let them see that in the future that door would be opened. Only once here on the Day of Atonement, that's not much, right, only once a year?

Listen to what we read in Hebrews on that and they speak about the first and the second tabernacle. The first is the holy place, and the second is the most holy place. But into the second.... Let me just back up, verse 6, "Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God." On the altar of incense, always into the first tabernacle. And then the next verse, Hebrews 9:7, "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." And then the explanation, "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." So the Holy Ghost signified that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, not revealed, not opened. So when the Lord

Jesus was hanging on the cross in Jerusalem, that veil was yet intact. It was just hanging there blocking the road, a closed door, so to speak.

And the sun was darkened the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. You know, that veil has quite a meaning. One meaning you kind of know, right, the door. There is also another meaning I will keep for later. Now the first thing about that door, we closed that door, that that veil is there is our fault. That means separation. It means you stay outside, you don't come in. And now that veil is rent not with a sharp knife, not with scissors, not unbuttoning it, but just rent, violently rent from the top to the bottom as if the hand of God was tearing it apart.

Rent. That word "rent" is used for rending your clothes when people are mourning. In the Old Testament when people were mourning, they just grabbed their garment and they just tore it as an expression of grieving. It was something you had to have the strength for. It was violent and loud, even. Rent. I hear violence. I hear the mighty hand of God ripping the curtain open, the mighty hand of God that is opening that thick-layered curtain. That hand came from on high, from the top to the bottom, not from the bottom to the top. It was a heavenly hand. It was God's hand, God doing it himself. Oh, do not doubt the power of God. He can open doors, the thickest, the hardest. He can open also the hearts, right? If God can open a curtain like this that signifies that he can also open the hearts. He doesn't only call sinners, he opens the door to them. He makes sinners willing.

Nobody could stop God from rending that veil. So what does that mean? That the door is open, right? I may preach you that today, the door is open. He opened it himself. And the reason, Hebrews 10:19, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us," let us go in boldly because that door is open. Let's preach to sinners, it's an open door. The Lord leads people through the door but in the preaching we show the open door.

So what does it mean, open door? What does it mean that the veil was rent from the top to the bottom? It means that you don't have to linger. You don't have to say, "Well, let me now first know my misery and a lot of it, and more of it, and more years of that, and then let me just wait and see what happens. Maybe the Lord will be mindful of me. Just wait if it might please the Lord to remember me. I just sit and await in my misery." Is that biblical? Oh, the Lord teaches people their misery, absolutely, but should they wait for more and more and more? Know their misery so they qualify somehow? That's the devil saying it. Or should we then say to such people, "And now just wait. Now just hope for the best and wait until the Lord comes." No. I see the point, we have no rights, but I may preach the door is open and you may come through the door, inviting you to come through the door.

The Lord has not said, "Just wait." "Yes, but in Psalm 130 we read, pastor, we read about wait upon the Lord. Wait upon him, Lord, and watch for the morning." Right, but what waiting is that? That's a waiting in faith. That's a waiting in coming. That's a waiting in looking upon him and having your eyes on the Lamb of God. That is an example of believing. That is an example of going through the door.

So I hope you don't remain seated and say, "I can't do anything. I just hope for the best." Take heed. Take heed. Come without money, without price, buy milk and wine. To touch the hem of that garment is so crucial. Without believing in him, we will perish. So we invite sinners to come through the door, we command sinners to go through the door, and yet we know that it is the Lord bringing them through the door. It is his work, the work of the Holy Spirit, that irresistible work of Christ.

The veil was rent, something you may not know, something new maybe. Let me first explain what I meant and then prove it with the Bible. That veil was rent, right? Did that hurt? "No, minister. That curtain does not feel any pain. It's just a curtain." Right, but that veil if it could feel pain, it would really hurt, right? It was torn. Would it be possible that rending of the veil was talking about Christ's body being wounded and bleeding and suffering, being torn? Then also the whip is on his back and he was crucified? Is it possible that that curtain points to the human nature of Christ? Of course, in his divine nature he cannot suffer but is that veil maybe something of his human nature, his humanity, that in his humanity he was torn, he was suffering, he was bleeding, he was vulnerable?

You know, I firmly believe so and I have proof of that. I quoted Hebrews 10:19 and 20 but I left a few words out so now I will quote the whole text and listen for that. This is proof that the veil points to the human nature of Christ's suffering. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Do you see? By a new a living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. So that veil points to his flesh, his body, him suffering. Connected to Colossians 1:22 explaining the word "flesh," "In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight." So the body of his flesh through death to present. So look at that veil rending from the top to the bottom. God's hand is letting his Son suffer. It's God. It's God rending that veil. It's God cursing, in a sense, his Son, letting him suffer. It's God's hand doing this to his only begotten Son. He has given him over unto death. He has given him over to the death of the cross.

So that rending of the veil points to the blood, to the pain, to the agonies. Oh, if that curtain could feel and therefore humans can be saved because we should be torn apart, the Lord should just tear us apart in his wrath at his displeasure, but he was rent so we don't have to be rent. Christ took upon himself the flesh in Mary, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. He took the human nature, the human nature of after the fall, without sin. Oh, what a precious veil. It was rent from the top to the bottom. It preaches to us, "I am not going to rend you if you may be hiding under his wings." He rent for you that you should not be rent at all. Be healed. So that veil is an example of the door, the door being opened, but that veil also represents the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I told you before that I will never forget that sermon on a Good Friday years ago upon that text, that the veil was rent from the top to the bottom. And one of the things the minister said was, "And now we are so foolish, even God's people are, we sow that veil

together again from the bottom to the top." That's unbelief. And then the minister said, "Now let go. Let go. The door is open from the top to the bottom. Don't deny that. Don't stand in the way. It has been opened."

So do you feel worthy to be rent? Do you feel your beauty should melt as a moth? Do you realize that your life is only a handbreadth, or how frail we are? Some day we die and kind of God is rending our body and separates soul and body. What will that be if you're not prepared? A violent rending of the veil.

Let's go to the third part. Let's first sing.

Congregation, what a beautiful verse, verse 46, "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice," not just whispering, "with a loud voice, he said, Father," not God but Father, "into thy hands," those kind trustworthy hands, "I commend my spirit," I commit it, I give it, "and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." Not the Holy Ghost, ghost with small print, the breath. He gave up the breath. Not the soul, no, his breath, his human breath. He died. So during those dark hours, the Lord said, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani," and he said, "I thirst," also in that same darkness. In that same darkness he said, "It is finished!" And then in that same darkness or almost at the end, he said in a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

There's something very special in the way he died. People don't die that way ever. You know there are differences, not everyone dies the same way. Some people die unconsciously, unconscious, in deep coma, or in an accident, or in their sleep, suddenly eternity without even noticing anything. Some die conscious and some fight and don't want to die, and cry out to God, and surrender if it has to be that way but don't like it, or upset about it and angry. Some are willing because it's too much and they're tired of life and they say, "Well, let it come now. I don't want to fight anymore." And others go forced and some people commit suicide and there are so many different ways, and some people are longing to be with Christ, gladly leaving everything behind and to be with the Lord, and some of God's people leave almost singing.

So how did Christ die? In what sense was this different? Well, he died in a conquering way. He was in charge himself. He did not die reluctantly. Not at all. He did not die because he had no choice. No. Did he die angrily? Absolutely not. Was he discouraged in something? Neither. Was he happy? Well, I can't say that but in a sense he was. But you know, the thing is he died not only consciously, he also experienced death as a curse, but more importantly he died actively. He died actively. His way, his time. He was involved. Nobody took it. It was not so that the Father took it at his time and the Lord Jesus just resisted it, or just gave in. No, he gave it.

"Into thy hands I commend my spirit." That's similar to what Stephen said and yet different. "And having said thus, he gave up the ghost." He laid his life, his breath in the hands of his Father. With a loud voice conquering. Not in weakness but conquering. And he laid his life in those loving, governing, righteous hands of God. He commended his spirit. He laid it down.

Let me show you from the Bible the Lord Jesus actively involved in dying, he died himself. Nobody dies himself, even if you take your life, you don't lay down your life. John 10, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." I lay down my life for the sheep, for those sheep given to me, to save them. Come back to that. "Therefore doth my Father love me." Why? Why does the Father love him? "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." The Father loves his Son, that he was willing to lay down his life and to take it again on the day of resurrection. Oh, did the Father love his Son for that reason. "Greater love has no man than this, that the man lay down his life for his friends. And hereby perceive we the love of God because he lay down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

So the Lord Jesus lay down his life in order to take it up again. He lay down his life. Why did he do that? He fulfilled his promise. He promised, "Here I am to do thy will, O God." He is fulfilling what he promised, to fulfill the scriptures, to please his Father, so the Father could be satisfied with his sacrifice to pay for his church, to pay for those sheep. "I lay down my life for the sheep." To give them conversion, that they will receive conversion because the Lord paid for that. To give them salvation because the Lord paid for that. To pay the price for their unbelief, so their unbelief could not keep them out because the Lord Jesus paid for the unbelief of his sheep. He paid for the application of the Spirit. He paid for everything included so he would have them. "Other sheep I have, and I must bring them in."

So the Lord Jesus, he yielded up the ghost, he gave up the ghost, he actively died to save his people from their sins, to so make death an entrance to life. You heard that from the Heidelberg Catechism, didn't you? If the Lord Jesus died for his people, why do his people still have to die? That's not a payment, that's not a curse, it's an entrance into life eternal, to go through that door and to inherit what God has in store for his people. So the Lord Jesus gave up the ghost to open the door for his people, to take their sins away so they would be not experiencing any curse, no outstanding debt, to bring them to God, to give eternal life, to make them really at ease, to give them the only comfort, to give them that great peace with God. That's why the Lord Jesus died.

Are you prepared for when the day comes? Not everyone receives a deathbed. Some people are just taken and it was just like that and they had no time to think, to pray, to read, to listen. Use your time to redeem time. The days are evil and you heard it, that we have chosen the darkness but the Lord Jesus in the darkness to make it light. We have heard that the door is open, the veil was rent from the top to the bottom and that veil pointed to the body of Christ being rent so that sinners that take refuge into Christ with all their sins and iniquities will not be rent but healed. And the Lord Jesus gave his life to effectually save his people.

So we preach the death of Christ to all of you. We preach the crucified Savior to everyone that hears it. But although we preach him to everyone and command to repent

and to believe, we also know the Lord Jesus effectually will save his sheep. "The Father knows me, even so I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep." Amen.