

TREASURES HIDDEN IN DARKNESS



“And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness – secret riches.

I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, The God of Israel, the one who calls you by name.”

Isaiah 45:3 (NLT)

Sometimes we find ourselves in places of utter darkness.

As a small girl, I was once plunged into utter darkness inside a cave. I was with my family on a guided tour. The air was cool and dank inside that cavernous place, and the deeper we meandered through the tunnels and hollows, the colder and more damp it seemed to get. A tour guide led us into a cathedral-sized chamber and gathered everyone around. As I stood beside my mother gazing at an enormous stalagmite, the tour guide suddenly switched off the light.

Darkness swallowed all of us up.

The blackness was blacker than anything I had ever known. Blacker even than my bedroom at night-time. Every person vanished from sight, including my mother. Deep down, I knew she stood beside me,

but I could no longer see her. Not even a faint outline of her body. I suppose I could have reached out to grab her hand, but that black abyss had turned me into a statue. I dared not move.

As the light disappeared, so did the sound. Everyone fell silent, and an eerie hush descended over the cave. Unable to see or hear anyone and hidden in utter darkness, I felt overwhelmingly alone.

There have been times since then when I have found myself not in a physical darkness but an emotional one. Many of us have been there. Life plunges us into seasons of aching aloneness due to grief, loss, trauma, disappointment, illness, or other unexpected hardships. Never do we choose to enter such seasons, but enter them, we must. Times of suffering are inescapable in this imperfect world.

Joseph, in the Bible, found himself in great darkness. His jealous brothers threw him into a deep well and left him for dead. Then, sold into slavery, he was later accused of a sin he did not commit and was unfairly thrown into prison. Joseph’s season of darkness lasted many years. Torn away from his loved ones and taken to a foreign land, did he sometimes feel forsaken and forgotten? There must have been moments when he felt overwhelmed.

But, throughout his afflictions, Joseph was never alone. The Bible tells us that “the Lord was with him”. (Gen 39:3,21,23).

If we know Jesus and belong to the Father, we can also rest in knowing that the Lord is with us in every situation. We may not be able to see him or always feel his presence, but God has promised to never leave his children alone. He is always with us. Never are we hidden from him. When I was a little girl standing in that black cave, my mother stood beside me even when I could not see her there. That knowledge helped me to remain calm, although I momentarily felt terrified.

The Lord also makes another promise: He will give us treasures hidden in the darkness — secret riches that we would otherwise know nothing about (Is 45:3). Our natural human inclination is to grumble, become bitter or wallow in self-pity in tough circumstances. It is certainly vital to be able to express our emotions in healthy ways, but when we do find ourselves in darkness, it is a time to be still before God. It is an opportunity to listen for his voice and wait for him to act. It is in the darkness that God promises to give us his precious treasures. If we don’t learn to listen or wait, we might miss the riches he wants to share.

So, what are these treasures?

Scattered throughout the pages of his Word, God tells us what they are. They can be unearthed in the accounts of his servants who all knew great struggle: Joseph, Job, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others.

Listen to what God says. Here are a handful of treasures he wants to impart in seasons of darkness:

- *Knowledge of God and a deeper relationship with him (Is 45:3).*
- *Wisdom, understanding and the fear of the Lord (Job 28; Dan 2:21-22; Prov 2:4-5; Is 33:6; Col 2:3).*
- *God’s strength to empower us through difficult circumstances (Ps 18:28-29).*
- *Trust and reliance on God, and the knowledge that he alone is God (Is 42:16, Is 45:3; Is 50:10).*
- *God’s guidance, comfort and love (Ps 23:4; Is 42:16; Lam 3:2-6).*
- *God’s refining power to remove sin from our lives (Is 49:2; Is 9:2; Matt 4:16; John 12:36,46).*
- *Compassion for other people (Isaiah 58:7-8)*

Our struggles will not last forever. Seasons of darkness always come to an end. When I was inside that cave as a little girl, the darkness lasted momentarily. The tour guide only wanted to demonstrate how the first explorers had encountered the cave. When he flicked the switch back on, bright light drove all the blackness away.

Joseph would have discovered God's treasures as he languished in the darkness of trauma, slavery and prison. After many years, God suddenly "flicked the switch", and Joseph found himself in the light again. God then raised him up and used him as his instrument as governor over Egypt. Joseph would not have been prepared for the calling on his life had it not been for the hard times and the treasures he had received. What had been intended for evil, God used for good to accomplish a greater purpose: the saving of many lives (Gen 50:20).

Whenever you find yourself in utter darkness, remember that it is good to hope, seek and wait patiently for the Lord (Lam 3:25-26). As you wait, make sure you listen carefully for God's voice. He has treasures he wants to give. And after you have received them and are back in the light, you also may be used to help other people.

Jesus declared, "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). Jesus is our "tour guide" leading us through the dark valleys. He is also the source of light itself. Rest in him, and one day, he will suddenly "flick the switch" and drive all the blackness away.

I am in the process of unearthing God's treasures in my own life. There is still much to discover, but the gems I have found thus far shine and sparkle more beautifully than all the rubies, diamonds or sapphires in the world. They are more precious than silver or gold. Only in the darkness has God led me to the hiding places of his riches. Had I not known struggle, I would never have begun to discover their worth.



Afterword...

The treasures mentioned here are for God's children to find. If you are not yet one of God's children, then know that his great love is beckoning you to join his family. God's most precious treasure is that of salvation (2 Cor 4:7). Every person needs a saviour, for no one can overcome the darkness inside the human heart by their own efforts. All humans are born into this world with a fallen nature and, because of this, are separated from God. He longs for all people to come to know him. You may be a follower of another religion or spiritual system, or you may have no faith at all. False gods and idols have no power to save. Spiritual practises, rites and rituals have no power to save. Human intellect, human strength and human philosophies have no power to save. Good deeds, no matter how many are performed throughout a lifetime, also have no power to save a human soul. All of these will leave you stumbling blindly in the darkness, unable to find your own way out. Jesus Christ is the only light of the world and the only one who can bring illumination. He is the only one with power to save. Because he died on the cross in our place and then conquered death, he can wash the black stain of sin from our lives. He says, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness (John 12:46)." Trust in Jesus Christ, and you will receive the right to become a child of Father God. All you need to do is reach out and accept this treasure of salvation from Jesus. It is a gift given in loving kindness.

Dear Father,

When I find myself in the darkness of suffering, please guide me and be my light. Teach me to hear your voice and teach me about your treasures in the darkness — I am willing to receive them. Show me how I can use these treasures to help other people. In Jesus' Name, Amen.