

Weekly Newsletter: 25th June 2024

Reflection: The treasures of darkness

By Lorna Ferguson

"I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name." (Isaiah 45:3)

When I was a child, we sometimes spent evenings watching family slides or cinefilm. My Dad would set up the screen and projector before asking one of us to turn out the lights so that we could enjoy watching the family memories. You could only really see the photos in the darkness.

Darkness is the absence of light. In literature and films, it usually denotes evil, sadness, hopelessness or fear. The Bible often uses the image in this way too. Darkness is not only physical; it can be emotional or spiritual too. Most of us experience periods of darkness in some form, times when life is particularly difficult, and it can be hard to see a way forward. If given the choice, I suspect that many of us would prefer to avoid dark times and the feelings that go with them. And yet, there are some things that we can only see, learn or experience when we are in the dark – the treasures of darkness.

For me, one period of darkness was in the years after David died, in particular the challenge of being a single parent on the mission field. Single parents are rare in missions, and for good reason. Not only are you responsible for all that goes with being a missionary (ministry, prayer letters, corresponding with supporters, finances), but you also have responsibility for your children without a partner to share the load, and far from family for support. You don't fit in with your single colleagues because you have children, and you don't fit in with other missionary families because you don't have a spouse. It can be a dark and lonely experience. And yet as I look back on those years now, I can see many things God has helped me learn or experience which I would not otherwise have done – some treasures in the darkness.

David and I had always worked as a team and in fact did almost everything together, both in ministry and in family life. Living without him felt like losing one of the legs of a three-legged stool. I'd lost my equilibrium. David's strengths had also helped cover my weaknesses in ministry, life and parenting. I felt exposed, as if everyone could suddenly see all my shortcomings. I am also an extrovert, ideas person and verbal processor (I can see some of you pitying David!). So, when he died, I lost the one person who (almost!) always listened and helped me process my thoughts and feelings.

As I reflect now, however, I can how God has answered each of these needs. David's absence, and that of the boys as they left home one by one, has made me so much more aware of God's presence, that He is

always with me. This has helped me to slowly regain my sense of balance. My feelings of exposure and vulnerability have driven me to rely on God's strength and wisdom in ways I never had before. And over the years I realise that God has now become my primary confidant, the one I bounce ideas off, talk with, and complain to and, if I can say it, He's an even better listener!

This awareness of God's presence, the ability to talk with Him throughout the day and draw on His wisdom, and experiencing Him enabling me to do things without David that I never thought I'd be able to do – these are some of the treasures I found in the darkness of grief and loneliness, things I would not have discovered or experienced otherwise.

As Joni Eareckson Tada shared on a radio show after many years of quadriplegia: "Jesus, do you see that wheelchair? You were right when you said that in this world we would have trouble, because that thing was a lot of trouble. But the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on you. And the harder I leaned on you, the stronger I discovered you to be. It never would have happened had you not given me the bruising of the blessing of that wheelchair."

We might not always realise the treasures we are receiving while we are in the midst of the darkness. It might only be later that we can recognise them. But we can trust that God is indeed giving them to us. As is written later in Isaiah, "Let the one who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on their God." (50:10). God is present even, or perhaps especially, in the darkness and has stored up treasures for us there.

Summer Appeal 2024



Summer Appeal 2024

Hannu & Hazel Sorsamo
Finland

Lorna Ferguson
Japan

James Stewart
Singapore

To contribute please use the bank details on holyroodevangelical.org (use reference 'Summer Appeal'), send a cheque to our treasurer, Nick Archer, or speak to your elder.

The summer appeal is open for 2024 and will go towards the support of our three overseas missionaries – the Sorsamo family in Finland, Lorna in Japan and James in Singapore.

The church bank details can be found [here](#) and please use the reference 'Summer Appeal'.

Cheques (made payable to Holyrood Evangelical Church) and cash in an envelope marked 'Summer Appeal' can also be placed in the offering box or given to Nick Archer.

Prayer Meeting – this week

Serenna has been doing an internship with Edinburgh City Mission this month. She'll be speaking at our prayer meeting on Wednesday about the current situation for refugees in Edinburgh and how we can be praying about it. Come along in person at 7pm (refreshments from 6.45pm) or online from 7pm.

Contact Liz@holyroodevangelical.org for the Zoom codes if you don't already receive them.

Join SASRA in Edinburgh - Saturday 27th July

On Saturday 27th July at 6.30pm for 7pm, Scripture Readers together with HQ staff, will be sharing about their work 'behind the wire'. There will also be an opportunity to meet some new Scripture Readers, as well as to hear about their evangelistic outreach to performers of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

Location: Ferniehill Evangelical Church, Edinburgh, EH17 7AA

Summer Holidays and Pulpit Supply

Joe will be on holiday for three Sundays in June and July and is speaking at the Moray Convention in August. Here's a note of who will be taking our services while he's away-

Date	Morning	Evening
30 th June	David Nixon (Carrubbers Christian Centre)	Jon Gemmell (Cornhill Scotland)
7 th July	John Tellis (Word of Life UK)	Caleb Shocklie (Church Planter in Meadowbank)
14 th July	Jon Gemmell (Cornhill Scotland)	Jon Gemmell (Cornhill Scotland)
4 th August	Communion Service - Bob Akroyd (Free Church of Scotland/ ETS)	Steven Randall (Free Church of Scotland/ ETS)

There will be no communion in July and Bob Akroyd will take our communion service at the beginning of August.

The prayer meetings will continue to be in person (with an online option) during July and August. There will be no refreshments beforehand over the summer.

For any pastoral matters when Joe is away, please contact one of the elders (Aaron Allen, Nick Archer, Alex MacDonald, Murdo Macleod, Mark Malaczynski, Robert Nelson, Alasdair Roberts, Andy Scott, Ernie Shippin, John Stewart or Roy Tatton)

Liz will be on holiday from Monday 8th July until Monday 22nd July. There will be no newsletter or prayer bulletin for these two weeks.

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Prayer meeting in person at 7pm (and on Zoom)
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and livestreamed). David Nixon preaching.
 - Equip – Overview of Zephaniah with Jon Gemmell



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