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The Silent Moment
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From
Darkness to Light

THE SILENT MOMENT

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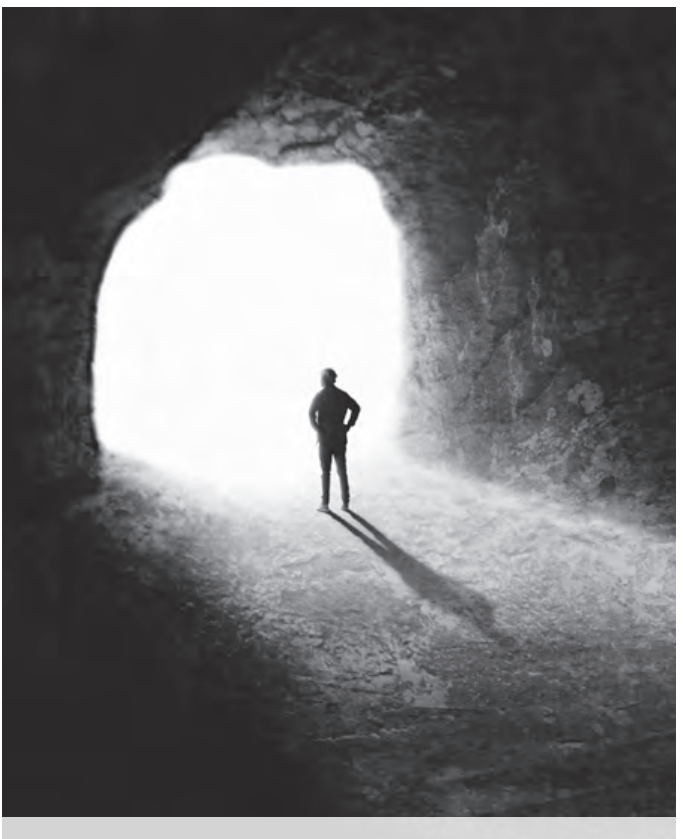
The Silent Moment

The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

— Romans 13:11-12



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From Darkness to Light

During the past few years, the church has been abuzz with intense conversations around *eschatology*, a word theologians use to mean "last things" or "end-time events." It's a topic that believers have been interested in and excited about since Christ's ascension (Acts 1:11). Since there are varying perspectives and understandings around these things, I'm not going to wade into those deep waters here. But this renewed interest in end-time prophecy reminds me that, as believers, our attention continually needs to be drawn back to and attuned to things of ultimate importance. So here's what I've been asking myself, and maybe you'd like to soul-search a little too:

- Am I living as though I believe life is short and that what I do matters for eternity?
- Am I living fully in the light of my profession of faith?
- Am I ready to refuse to deny Christ at *any* cost? (Many believers around the world already live in this reality. Am *I* prepared for that?)
- Does my life reflect that I truly believe what's been written in the Scriptures?

We have been saved by God's grace through faith. We've been called out of the darkness—out of the tyranny of our self-gratifying desires, out of the allure of the world's pleasures and baubles, and out of our deception by the devil's schemes. What a relief! In Christ we have been brought into the light of God's kingdom—a kingdom of righteousness and peace. What a tremendous reality!

But this calling is not a passive, "someday in Heaven" prospect. It's here! It's now! Consider Paul's words to the church in Ephesus: "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live

as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8-10).

And we find instruction in Peter's second letter that gives us a place to start: "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. . . . For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins" (2 Peter 1:3, 5-9).

We are not guaranteed tomorrow. Time is always short. So as God's people, let's shake off any cobwebs that may have formed around our commitment to Christ. For in Him, we do not belong to the darkness; we *are* children of the light (1 Thessalonians 5:5).

Peace to your heart!

Christine Dallman, Editor

December 1

Benefits of Forgiveness

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases (Psalm 103:2-3).

Scripture: Psalm 103:1-12
Song: "Forgiveness"

Did you know that you can help improve your health—including getting better sleep, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, and even reducing risk of heart attack—by something other than physical exercise? It's not a new diet craze or a miracle pill. It's the act of forgiveness, the decision to forgive. According to an article on the Johns Hopkins Medicine website, studies have shown a strong connection between forgiveness and improved health.

Throughout the Bible, God models forgiveness for us. In Psalm 103, David's excitement and joy are palpable as he recounts all the benefits flowing from God's love and compassion. Chief among them are His forgiveness of sin, His care for the oppressed, and His compassionate heart that is slow to anger.

When we struggle to forgive a wrong done to us, it's an opportunity for us to pause and remember all that God has done for us. Then we can, in turn, extend grace by forgiving others as God has forgiven us. Our acts of forgiveness not only provide health benefits, but more importantly, they honor God's goodness to us.

Father, I praise Your name and remember how You have redeemed my life. Help me to forgive others so that I might honor Your gifts of compassion and forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Perfect, Everlasting Love

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him (Psalm 103:13).

Scripture: Psalm 103:13-22
Song: "How Deep Is the Father's Love for Us"

If you're a parent, you know your children better than anyone else does. You've weathered all their moods, rejoiced over all their achievements, and used their shortcomings as teachable moments to encourage them to do better next time. Some days the children seem to test your patience by the minute. But you know how they are wired, and despite their flaws, you will love them with all your heart until you draw your final breath.

David reminds us that God has a father's kind compassion toward those who fear Him. Our heavenly Father knows how we are wired and knows how limited and frail we are. He understands all about us—after all, He created us! But because God has an even greater capacity to love than we can imagine, it goes beyond the finite edges of our life span. "From everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him" (Psalm 103:17). God's love—like everything else about Him—is beyond our full comprehension.

Although we—limited and imperfect as we are—may not fully grasp the entirety of God's love for us, we can certainly join David in praising Him for this wonderful, undeserved gift.

Father, it is so good to know that no matter how we may fall and fail, Your love never fails. Thank You for bandaging our wounds and wiping our tears when we come to You with trust-filled hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.

December 3

Persistent Prayer

The angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John" (Luke 1:13).

Scripture: Luke 1:5-17
Song: "What Faith Can Do"

It hadn't occurred to me that starting a family in my 20s might be difficult. Nothing appeared to be out of the ordinary physically, but it still took a year before I conceived my daughter. It was 12 months of waiting and praying that *felt* like an eternity.

As Luke's narrative introduces us to the future parents of John the Baptist, we understand what a miracle *his* conception was—a twofold miracle, in fact. The passage clearly says Elizabeth had been unable to conceive *and* that she and her husband, Zechariah, "were both very old" (Luke 1:7). While the Bible doesn't specify their ages, it's generally believed that Elizabeth was over 60 and Zechariah was older still. This godly couple could have been praying for a child for 40 years or more! When all hope had likely been lost that they would be granted their desire, God sent an angel to tell Zechariah the astounding good news.

The miracle of conception and birth by parents of advanced years is plain, but dig deeper and see the miracle of faith two people possessed to pray for an exceedingly long time. If you've been praying a long time for someone or something, don't lose heart. God works in impossible circumstances, and His timing is always perfect.

Father, grant us Your strength to be patient but persistent while waiting on Your will and perfect timing. In Jesus' name, amen.

Speechless

The angel said to [Zechariah], ". . . You will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time" (Luke 1:19-20).

Scripture: Luke 1:18-25
Song: "He Still Does Miracles"

Speechless is a word people use to describe times when they're shocked by something unexpected, good or bad. Typically we use the term as an exaggeration. However, if ever we were to find ourselves in the presence of a holy angel, I'm sure there would be at least a few moments of literal stunned silence.

Such was Zechariah's initial (and understandable) response when the angel Gabriel appeared to him. After telling Zechariah not to fear, Gabriel laid out God's plan in detail from the birth and naming of the child to how he should be reared and what his purpose would be. Yet with all this information provided by God's messenger, Zechariah's response—when he finally found his voice—was to point out all the reasons it couldn't take place and to ask for proof otherwise. His refusal to believe God's message caused him to be struck dumb for nine months.

God's plan for our lives isn't usually spelled out to us in detail, but when we earnestly pray for His guidance and pay attention to His Word, we can take the next step in faith. Rather than telling God what is and isn't possible, we can move forward, trusting His kind intentions toward us, despite how impossible the circumstances may seem.

Father, I know I can trust You as I take this next step to follow You. In Jesus' name, amen.

December 5

A Life-Saving Message

"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me . . . ," says the LORD Almighty (Malachi 3:1).

Scripture: Malachi 3:1-6
Song: "The King Is Coming"

A carrier pigeon named President Wilson played an important role during World War I. The bird was tasked with delivering messages between frontline troops and commanders. In the autumn of 1918, he took flight with an urgent message from his unit. They were under attack and desperately needed artillery support. The pigeon carried that message for 25 miles, delivering it in just 25 minutes despite losing a leg and being wounded in the chest by enemy fire along the way!

Malachi prophesied the coming of John the Baptist, who declared the greatest life-or-death message of all: repent and prepare for God's promised Messiah, who was coming to bring salvation to a world lost in sin. Not everyone liked this message, and John died at the hands of those who rejected it. Yet he faithfully fulfilled his calling.

Today we are God's messengers, sent to urge others to prepare their hearts for Christ's second coming. The message isn't always welcome, and relaying it may come at great cost to us. But we can press forward, knowing that the gospel has the power to save countless lives.

Father, You will one day judge the world. In Your mercy, You have provided a way of escape from the wrath our sin deserves and have given us time to embrace Your salvation. Grant me courage to faithfully carry the gospel message to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Time to Stop Running

"Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty (Malachi 3:7).

Scripture: Malachi 3:7-18
Song: "We Are Returning"

At 16 years old, Frank Abagnale Jr. ran away from home. He began to live a life of crime—committing forgery and impersonating a doctor, lawyer, and even an airplane pilot. He was eventually caught and served time in French and Swiss prisons. He was later released to American authorities, from whom he escaped, but he was captured again and spent another five years behind bars. Amazingly, this young man, who had become famous for running from the law, later worked with the FBI to help them fight check fraud. Today Abagnale is a security consultant.

For a time we may enjoy going our own way. We may feel a sense of freedom and excitement. But like the prodigal son realized, lavish lifestyles and earthly affections eventually leave us wanting (Luke 15). The path of selfishness, pride, and misplaced devotion does not lead to peace. Instead, we end up chasing a happiness that always eludes us.

The good news is that when we recognize our bad choices and humbly return to God, He meets us with compassion and forgiveness. In His presence we discover that His plan for us is so much better than we could ever have envisioned. In Him we have protection, provision, freedom, and rest. We no longer have to run, because within His care we find everything we need and more.

Father, thank You for Your mercy that calls us out of the trappings of this world and into Your incomparable blessings. In Jesus' name, amen.

December 7

The Same Sun

Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings (Malachi 4:2, *KJV*).

Scripture: Malachi 4:1-6
Song: "Safety in Divine Protection"

When I was dating my now-husband, I was invited to go with him on his family's annual beach vacation. I was never a beachgoer growing up, so I wasn't fully aware of how harmful prolonged direct sun exposure could be. And I did the worst thing possible: I fell asleep underneath the afternoon rays. For the remainder of my time there, I suffered from terrible sunburn. If only I had respected the power of the sun! I could have simply enjoyed its warmth rather than being scorched. I quickly learned that how I experience the sun depends on how I go about in relation to it.

Malachi prophesied of a coming day—symbolized by fire and a furnace—when those who disregarded the Lord would suffer complete destruction. But in almost the same breath, he announced great hope in that day for those who fear (or revere) the Lord. Healing and not destruction is being prepared for them, and they will experience great freedom and joy.

God has never failed to warn of coming judgment against the wicked. But He has also never failed to offer grace to those who come before Him in humble faith, full of awe and gratitude. May our hearts revere Him always so that we may experience His protection in the Day of Judgment.

Father, we bow before You in awe and gratitude. We want to revere You daily as we prepare for eternity with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Lifted to Life

You will do well to pay attention to [the prophetic message], as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Peter 1:19).

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:16-21
Song: "Light of Life"

Late at night on July 24, 2002, miners in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, broke through a thin wall of earth that separated their mineshaft from an abandoned older shaft (the location of which was poorly documented). The breach released more than 70 million gallons of water, trapping all nine men 240 feet below the earth's surface. Imagine the relief these miners felt at the sound of rescuers working to help them. First an air shaft was drilled so they could breathe. Then in the early morning hours of July 28, they were finally raised to the surface through a larger rescue shaft. They would all live to see the light of day!

Our sin has plunged us into a darkness from which we are helpless to escape. But in His grace, God established a rescue plan and announced it through the Old Testament prophets. The New Testament apostles then carried the gospel message of Christ's fulfillment of God's promises.

Today, through God's written Word, we have the most complete revelation ever of God's rescue plan for humanity. Through faith in Christ—receiving salvation through His death, burial, and resurrection—anyone can be lifted out of darkness and into the light of assurance of eternal life.

Father, thank You for not leaving us in the depths of darkness. We rejoice in the light of hope that comes from You alone. In Jesus' name, amen.

December 9

Strong by Association

The clans of Judah will say in their hearts, "The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God" (Zechariah 12:5).

Scripture: Zechariah 12:1-10
Song: "Be Strong in the Lord"

As a young teen, Daryl struggled with self-esteem and became the target of a group of bullies at school. He was changing clothes after gym class one day, when they began picking on him. When one bully punched him, Daryl tried to defend himself; but when the rest began closing in around him, he prepared for the worst. Then something amazing happened. Daryl's big brother arrived and stood behind him. His brother's presence was enough to scatter Daryl's enemies.

God chose Israel as the nation of people through whom He would declare His redemptive plan to the whole world. Though His people often failed to trust Him and tried to face their enemies alone, the Lord remained faithful to His promise to protect and preserve them. In fact, Zechariah prophesied of a future day when any nation that came against Jerusalem would only hurt itself, because the Lord would faithfully protect His people.

We live in a fallen world and certainly will face opposition as we walk with Christ. But we know that our strength comes not from our own feeble efforts to defend ourselves but from our Lord, who promised He would remain with us to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). In His compassionate and powerful presence, we find ultimate strength and protection.

Father, thank You for Your faithful presence and for Your promise to be our strength and refuge from those who would seek to harm us.

Created for a Purpose

Everyone who heard this [news about Zechariah's experience] wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him (Luke 1:66).

Scripture: Luke 1:57-66
Song: "For the Music of Creation"

It was clear there was something special about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart when he began playing the harpsichord at age 3. His first composition was published when he was 5, and by his teen years he had written several concertos, sonatas, operas, and symphonies. He performed in concerts and royal courts throughout Europe. When he died at age 35, he left behind more than 600 pieces of music and is still known as one of the world's greatest musical geniuses.

John the Baptist was still in the womb when it was clear he would be someone special. Born to Elizabeth and Zechariah in their old age, John was a miracle child. An angel announced that his purpose was "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). Even the people in the surrounding region recognized the events pertaining to his birth as divinely unique. The Lord was going to use John in a big way.

While most of us won't make the kind of historical impact that Mozart or John the Baptist did, we have been made to uniquely glorify God. What a privilege to bring glory to His great name in the special way He has made us to do just that!

Father, You have specially prepared each of us to glorify You. By Your Spirit we will serve You in such a way that Your goodness and greatness will be made known. In Jesus' name, amen.

December 11

The Light of Mercy

Zechariah . . . prophesied: . . . "You will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, . . . because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven" (Luke 1:67, 76, 78).

Scripture: Luke 1:67-80
Song: "I Will Sing of the Mercies"

A man recounted his story of growing up with abuse, addiction, and violence. He hated his life and longed for a way out. A turning point came when he survived a severe accident that sent his vehicle over an embankment. Recognizing the mercy of God toward his *physical* life, he decided to turn to God for *spiritual* life as well. Today that man leads a ministry that reaches out with the light of Christ to those who are hopeless and hurting as he once was.

Jesus' coming to earth was tangible proof of God's faithfulness to His rescue plan. Despite our sin, God did not leave us in darkness. He showed us how good and forgiving He is by going so far as to die in our place so we could know eternal joy.

We face all kinds of pain in this life, but into such darkness the light of Christ continues to shine. His work of atonement—His death, burial, and resurrection—that defeated the sting of death is complete. Now the light of mercy and grace is set to shine on all who turn to Him.

Father, thank You for Your light of mercy that defeats the darkness of my sin. I worship and praise You for saving me! In Jesus' name, amen.

The Cradled King

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14).

Scripture: John 1:1-14
Song: "There's a Song in the Air"

"There's a song in the air! There's a star in the sky! / There's a mother's deep prayer and a baby's low cry! / And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing, / For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!" This song, written in 1872 by Josiah G. Holland, has always been a favorite of mine. I understand well a mother's deep prayer and a baby's low cry.

My babies, though precious beyond words, were merely human babies. The baby who lay in that manger in Bethlehem was a heavenly King—the King of kings! Today's Scripture calls Him "the Word" who "became flesh" (John 1:14)—the flesh of a newborn baby.

God has worked many miracles throughout history. While we don't always recognize some miracles as such, others are clearly and undeniably God's doing. A number of them are recorded in Scripture. Yet of all God's miracles, the one that is perhaps the most amazing is that He became flesh—fully human and still fully God—and lived among us.

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to earth as a tiny baby to experience all the things we experience—and then through His sacrifice on the cross, to make a way of salvation for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

December 13

A Lesson in Humility

John replied, . . . "He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie" (John 1:26-27).

Scripture: John 1:15-28
Song: "To God Be the Glory"

If you heard the phrase "known for greatness and humility," who would come to mind? Abraham Lincoln, perhaps, with his humble beginnings as an uneducated child born in a log cabin, who rose to the office of president of the United States? Or maybe you'd think of Nelson Mandela, who spent 27 years in prison before becoming president of South Africa and leading the effort to abolish apartheid?

Throughout history, the world has considered various men and women to be great because they've possessed significant power or substantial wealth. But only a few such people have also displayed humility. John the Baptist had a large following and could easily have thought much of himself. Yet he proclaimed boldly that he was not even worthy to untie Jesus' sandals. John readily acknowledged Jesus' greatness.

Revealing more than just his humility, John the Baptist's words also show his accurate understanding of spiritual truth. Having such a perspective will keep us humble too. No matter what human accomplishment we may achieve, when we view our situation through spiritual eyes, we see that the Lord is the only true greatness there is. The gifts we have come from Him, belong to Him, and were given to us to serve and give glory to Him.

Father, thank You for good gifts given to us. May we remember they are from You and not of our own doing. Keep us humble. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Lamb of God

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Scripture: John 1:29-42
Song: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

As a child, I lived in the African country of Nigeria because my parents served as missionaries there. I grew up with sheep and goats all around me. They wandered the villages, bleating constantly. The two kinds of animals looked alike to me and were sometimes difficult to tell apart unless I paused and observed their behavior. Goats did whatever they pleased, but sheep did what their owner told them to do. In some ways goats seemed smarter, since sheep were completely dependent upon and obedient to their master's direction.

Among these animals, the most precious, the most tender and blindly obedient of the sheep were the babies, the lambs. And it was such young lambs that the Jews used to offer as sacrifices for their sin. John the Baptist called Jesus the Lamb of God. Indeed, like a lamb, Jesus obeyed His master—His heavenly Father—even unto death. Jesus willingly laid down His life on the cross for us in an act that reflected His great love for us but also demonstrated His complete obedience to the Father.

Are we acting like sheep or like goats today? What motivates our choices and actions? Does our behavior reflect our own desires, or our obedience to God?

Father, we pause to survey the wondrous cross. We want to walk in obedient trust. Renew our devotion to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

December 15

Follow Me

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me" (John 1:43).

Scripture: John 1:43-51
Song: "Wherever He Leads, I'll Go"

As a child, did you ever play follow-the-leader? It's a game in which one child is chosen as the leader and the others do whatever the leader does, mimicking his or her actions. It's a great outside game where children can hop on and off steps or on sidewalk pavers in sync with the leader. Usually to begin the game, the leader is appointed by someone, a teacher perhaps.

In real life we have to decide on our own whom or what to follow. There are numerous worldviews and influences trying to gain supporters, fans, or devotees. Who we choose to follow is very important. In today's passage, Jesus told Nathanael something about this soon-to-be disciple, something Jesus could not have known unless He had ascertained it supernaturally. Nathanael marveled and was immediately convinced that Jesus was worthy of following. Jesus assured Nathanael that he would "see greater things" in the days to come as he followed Jesus (John 1:50-51).

We too will see amazing things if we follow Jesus. This is not limited to the amazement of Heaven we will someday experience. Following Jesus also leads us through a lifetime of seeing extraordinary ways God works in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

Father, we are in awe of You. Lead us in the way we should go as we listen to Your Word and follow You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Good Advice

"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-11
Song: "How Firm a Foundation"

In December 1853 at the tender age of 21, Hudson Taylor arrived in China. He went on to live and serve there as a missionary for the next 51 years. He learned to live like the Chinese, eating what they ate and dressing like they did. Fellow missionaries from the West had difficulty understanding this approach and criticized his unconventional methods. But the pioneering Taylor aspired to be like the apostle Paul in his approach: "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

Taylor understood that things like styles and cultures vary according to location, season, and era. Yet despite his willingness to bend his cultural preferences to reach the Chinese with the gospel, Hudson Taylor knew that God's Word itself does not change or vary, that it "endures forever" (Isaiah 40:8). He did not compromise its message.

God's Word was Taylor's priority, and he gave some good advice we all can take to heart: "Do not have your concert first, and then tune your instrument afterwards. Begin the day with the Word of God and prayer and get first of all into harmony with Him."

Father, thank You for giving us Your enduring Word. We want to commit to answering this godly challenge to spend time each day reading it and getting closer to You. Thank You that when we draw near to You, You draw near to us (James 4:8). In Jesus' name, amen.

December 17

Great and Kind Creator

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom (Isaiah 40:28).

Scripture: Isaiah 40:21-31
Song: "This Is My Father's World"

In the summer of 2021, some places in North America experienced a reemergence of a certain type of bug called a cicada, something that happens once every 17 years. The area where I live was one of those places, and my neighborhood was inundated with the flying, buzzing insects. They clung to the walls of my house, crunched under my feet as I walked on the sidewalk, buzzed at my windshield when I drove . . . And later I had to brush their dead carcasses off my patio table to enjoy a meal outside.

Memories of that summer of cicadas came to my mind when I read today's passage, specifically verse 22: "He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers." I can just picture how, from God's perspective, people look as small and swarming as the myriad of cicadas I saw that summer.

However, God's disposition toward us is different from mine toward those critters. I was annoyed, but God loves us deeply and knows us all by name. He knows our circumstances and gets involved to help us. This great God, who created our world and everything in it, knows and loves us.

Father, You are above all things, yet You are interested in and involved in my individual life. Thank You for caring for and helping me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pointing to the Light

[John] went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3).

Scripture: Luke 3:2b-6, 15-18
Song: "The Light of the World Is Jesus"

A friend once told of a time he explored deep inside a cave as a teenager. It was all a grand adventure until his flashlight stopped working. He was frightened, afraid to go another step, so he just sat down where he had been standing. It took a few minutes, but finally his eyes grew accustomed to the dark; and once they did, he was able to see a tiny beam of light way off in the distance. He stood back up and slowly made his way toward the light, which grew as he closed in on it, and in that way he managed to find his way out of the darkness of the cave.

Today's passage tells of a man named John, the son of Zechariah, who later became known as John the Baptist. He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3-5. He was "the voice of one calling in the wilderness" (John 1:23). John faithfully pointed people to Jesus, who said, "I am the light of the world" (8:12).

What about us? Do we help people come out of their personal darkness? Do we point them to the light? Is ours also a voice crying in the wilderness of today's evils, teaching godly truths?

Father, You led me out of the darkness of my lost condition. Help me to be a steady beacon that points others to You. In Jesus' name, amen.