

And Then God Showed Up

Isaiah 9:2; John 1:1-11; John 6:44 | Mark Friestad | 12.29.24

God has a way of showing up at unexpected times, in unexpected places

It's a biblical pattern:

- Bethlehem was a “nothing town”...and then God showed up
- After the Fall (Genesis 3)...by Genesis 4, people are calling out to the Lord from their desperate place
- Abraham – a stranger, brought to a strange land
- Sarai – old & barren, yet God shows up by bringing her a son who would become the father of Israel
- The Exodus – God shows up by revealing his name (“I AM”), his miraculous deliverance (the Red Sea) and his character (through the Law)
- The Exile – “the people walking in darkness have seen a great light”

Total darkness is a scary, desperate place to be. Something in us knows that's “off”.

- John 1 – “the light shines in the darkness” and “the darkness has not overcome it”

And yet...we can “miss” the light

- Jesus was not recognized by his own people!
- We can be so accustomed to the light, it isn't “special”...until we experience darkness again

And, we can shun the light

- John 3 – people loved darkness more than light(!)
- Pessimism is en vogue today – “Everything is bad...and getting worse”
- Light & life are good! As eternal properties, they point us toward transcendence

The Catch:

- John 6:44 – “No one can come to the Son unless the Father has enabled them.”
- God takes a step towards us before we take a step to him (through the Son)
- Otherwise, Christian testimonies center on our cleverness, rather than God's lavish love that never gives up

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God “shows up”...

1. In the desolate places
2. Quietly
3. Small, at first
4. After starting small...it demands more & more
5. ...and works in surprising sequences! (“I planted the seed...Apollos watered it...but God made it grow!” see 1 Corinthians 3:6-7)
6. ...and then calls us to “follow him”
 - a. We are “Christ’s ambassadors” (2 Corinthians 5:20)
 - b. A warning: “Being the light” and “showing up as God” is not the same as “being God”! God showed up as Jesus...Jesus did not show up as God the Father
7. ...and leads us to face hard things, just as Jesus did
 - a. His temptation, the oppression from religious rulers, his arrest & crucifixion, death & the grave

Jesus goes to dead places...where in your life does he need to show up?

But – the following is HARD.

But – we do it because “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

Romans 8:28 – “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[i] have been called according to his purpose.”

Is God calling you? Pay attention to that!