9th November 2025

Darkness

"Have you understood the vast expanse of the earth? Tell me, if you know all of this. In which direction does the light reside? And where is the place of darkness?"

Bible, *Job 38:18-19*

We have a streetlight right outside our bedroom window. And, at the rear of our house, we have a streetlight in the service lane which shines brightly into our back bedrooms. So we've invested in blackout blinds to make the bedrooms dark enough to ensure a good night's sleep. It's easier in the winter months, of course, when the dark nights are longer. But in the summer, keeping the bedrooms dark certainly helps.

In the ups and downs of living, we have "dark days" – and not just with darkened windows – periods of time in which life is hard, decisions are difficult, lifting the spirits seems impossible. It feels that there's no light for us at all and we're living in darkness. For most of us, these "dark days" will pass. That's a reassurance I try to give bereaved people, for example. We *will* emerge from the darkness. Light *will* come again, in little glimpses or a slow dawning. But darkness won't envelope us all the time.

But we know, too, that for some of us, some of the time, darkness can be worse than that. Depression, mental health issues, suicidal thoughts, hopelessness, with *no* apparent sign of betterment, can be, and often is, totally overwhelming. Patience, support, understanding, talking, medication will all help. If you've been there, you'll know what it's like. If you've not, then the people you know who're in that dark place will need you to wait with them and be their companion in the darkness.

In Psalm 139 we find words which have been important to me in my darkest times. I offer them here, not as an easy fix, but as a glimpse of what I've held onto when I've felt hopeless. I'll let the Psalmist's words speak for themselves, and let them be our prayer in the darkest days.

A prayer for today

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea … your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

An original reflection © Tom Gordon Also available at https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com