

Temptations In The City

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] Chapter 31 Chapter 31 Where are you?

He said, I heard the sound of thee in the garden of my little grave. I hid myself. He said, I told thee that you were native. I be eaten of the tree.

And I did not eat. And I said, the one who gave us Jesus, he gave me the fruit of the tree. And I ate. And the Lord God said to the woman, what is this that you have done?

The woman said, purpose to die with me. And I ate. And I said, I said, I am not. If you were invited like anyone who were married to you, you were picked down in a place that longer left a more grueling man than you were invited by him.

And he who invited you both will come and say to you, this place for this man. And then you will begin to exchange with the world's place. And then you are in the land, you will always take in the world's place, so that when you are full of crowns and you are saving you, for him to go up higher.

[1 : 06] And then you will be honored in the present of the world, and you say that people are living. For everyone who is told himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Well, I think we have to pray still.

well I think we have to pray still so let's just bow our heads for a moment and our God as we are gathered for these few minutes together in this place and as we have the enormous subject and complex subjects of shame we ask that by your word and through the working of your Holy Spirit that you will allow me to speak and all of us to hear the things that you are saying to us concerning something which is deeply personal Father because some of us have a fairly low opinion of ourselves we want your Holy Spirit to guard us from despair because some of us have a very high opinion of ourselves we want you to guard us from the great illusion so grant us grace now to see your word and to hear it and to obey it in Christ's name

Amen which is the other mic oh I see this one over here okay alright alright alright I've got it this is getting to be a more highly technological process week by week the first passage is the one from Genesis which is sort of the discovery of shame at the dawn of history when Adam and Eve in the garden discovered they were naked and when God came to visit same in all of us that when somebody comes to visit we look around our house and want to cover up a little of the general melee that's there so out of this story there comes three basic questions the first one is is where and oh this is

I don't know whether you can see this anyway the answer is that they're hiding the second one is who that is who told you you were naked and the the answer is of course that somehow deep within them was the was the the reality of their nakedness and they had before been quite unconcerned and now were deeply concerned about it in the Jerusalem Bible it goes on to a third question which isn't worded quite the same way in the text that you have in front of you and it asks the question why that is why did you have to eat the forbidden fruit why were you compelled to do that and of course those are three sort of basic questions that everybody has to face in terms of their own life and the way I want to deal with those three questions is to talk about to try and talk in a personal way about my secret self of whom I am ashamed and that is that this is my world here this is the side that everybody sees here I am and this is the side which is cloaked in darkness and nobody sees so that you get to this side which is your public image and this is your personal awareness of yourself and this is where

[6 : 02] Adam and Eve knew themselves before God and this is where they started to hide and we try and make sure that this side of our life is hidden because shame is is the reality of that side of our life now it's a convention that we have and you know I live with a happy assumption that that you think better than the truth of me and I suspect you live with the fact that Harry thinks I think

better than the truth of him and so we're both quite happy and we we can reciprocate it you know that you think I think better of you than actually you are and you think better of me than actually I am and that's how society works you see and so you that's that's the world in which we live but

I have this sense that that there are things of which which I don't want you to know about my life and the reason is basically because I don't think you could handle it you know so I try and keep them from you for your benefit you know so that you don't have to you don't have to deal with that and that kind of benevolence goes on you know that when you misbehave you don't tell your wife because she couldn't really handle it so well you could go on from there and see how the story develops but it's that kind of thinking so the difficulty with all this is and I'm very conscious of this as the minister of a church is that that one of the great functions of religious activity is they help to enshroud this more deeply and they you know tend to develop this part of you more so that what you what you do in going to church is to enhance this side of your life and and bury more deeply this side of your life and that's that's what religion is for in the minds of most people so that you you discover as I think

Karl Barth pointed out that the best place to hide from God or from the gospel is in church you know you never look for you there if it's it's almost like you know if you've murdered somebody you it would be good for you to get put in jail for five years for robbing ten thousand dollars so that nobody will find out what you've really done because you're in jail anyway and they won't discover the reality well that's the way we use church sometimes is that it's a kind of place where you can hide from the deeper realities of your life and I apologize that that's the case but that's the way human beings tend to to use religion the fact of the matter is of course that while the church is the best place to hide the pulpit is the best place in the church to hide and it's it's quite a lot easier telling other people that they're going to hell in a hand basket than to face your own the judgment on your own life you know and it's a bit startling to find out that that Martin Luther in his usual blunt way said that the road to hell is paved with priest's skulls that's that that sense because it's a very dangerous place to be underneath all this you see is something and this is where we get into the counseling business in a big big way is counselors come along and say to you what about this person over here and the thing that the counselors are after in a sort of general principles is is that you will begin to acknowledge this person and the sense that this person has been abandoned that there are God forsaken and man forsaken and they live with the fear that this person when he is discovered that this person will be totally eliminated and this will be all you're left with is this person over here who is a kind of God forsaken person anyway and then they go deeper than that and they find out that deep in your heart is the sense that not only are you forsaken by man and God you've forsaken yourself because basically you look on yourself as one of God's mistakes and you hope that nobody will find out and so this is the thing of which we are ashamed and this is what we lock in the cupboard so that nobody sees it and the difficulty is of course that we lots of us are really quite successful at it and we we managed to do it there's a

I mean an interesting story of of a young doctor and his wife and the doctor started administering drugs to himself till the point where he had this large practice and he was maintaining this large practice and fighting this terrible battle he and his wife knew what the problem was but nobody else did until somebody from the medical association came along and put the finger on him and lifted his license and he said thank you very very much because he just couldn't stand it any longer you know he couldn't go on with the duplicity and that that was a great relief to him that somebody even came along and said look you you can't go on like this so this is the this is this is how we lock ourselves in the cupboard and when a homosexual says he's come out of the cupboard what he means is that that this guy here who he didn't want to tell you about is now public and

[12 : 56] I think that that can be very therapeutic in some ways but we have a fair amount of perversity to deal with in any sense so what I want to tell you about secondly then is another another kind of world in which we live and this this is a world which looks like this and you can see this can you it's a broken world which is held together with string and I use that broken world image because that's what Gordon MacDonald used when he wrote his book you know recovering you know remaking your broken world I think that's the name of it and he describes in a very personal way how he as a very senior Christian elder in the United States a very senior pastor and Christian writer got clobbered you know by a personal circumstance that disgraced him publicly and tore his family apart and everything else and he's lived through it and he's lived through his broken world and you know how we get caught in the situation where we're afraid that the cracks in our world will

begin to widen and our world will fall apart and so we struggle to tie it together as best we can to hold our world together against the eventuality which we all regard as almost unthinkable and I think that's why

Gordon MacDonald's book is such a help because his world came apart a number of years ago and he's working at putting it all back together again he says that there are far more broken worlds out there than anyone realizes or admits you know that are being held together with scotch tape and crazy glue maybe but that that that is a fairly universal kind of experience that there is a broken world which we're holding together so that the thing we fear is that it won't be revealed he goes on to say and these are just chapter headings from his book but they tell a story in themselves he said almost no one bears a heavier load than the carrier of personal secrets of the past or present you know you know where the great fissures are along which line your world is going to collapse and you know where the weaknesses are and you know how perhaps perhaps visibly or perhaps quietly your world could come apart he says the person who carries a secret has sentenced himself to a dungeon you know that locking this secret in and you are really imprisoned by it by trying to hold your world together he also quotes

G.K. Chesterton to deal with our smugness and G.K. Chesterton was very good at that he said the only spiritual disease is thinking that one is quite well and you know that that's I think fairly penetrating in terms of my experience and he warns about this thing about how the fissures come how the breakdown comes he says when the body and the emotions and the minds and your mind is stretched to the limit which is almost a way of life for many people when your body emotions and mind are stretched to the limit the risk of sinful choices climbs out of sight and so that we are very subject to this kind of thing happening to us and only we just desperately hold the world together for fear of the shame that's involved and so what you need what all of us need is a church community a Christian community in which the people who can handle your broken world who can help you to put it together again you know so that you don't have to spend all your time in this sort of desperate effort to hold your world together and somebody who can come along and say to you what God said to Adam and Eve where are you why are you hiding why did you have to eat the forbidden fruit because once you can sort of face those questions then your world can begin to be put back together again see but most I mean our whole tendency humanly is that we don't want to face those questions until I mean we put them off as long as we can now the third picture

I want to show you there was the sort of dark world and the secret world and the open world there's this broken world then there is this other world which Paul talks about which is the crucified world and this is important and this is why I put in that passage on Luke 14 8-11 where it says when you were invited by anyone to a marriage feast don't sit down in the place of honor lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him and he who invited you both will come and say to you give place to this man and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place now the human tendency is to recognize that there is sort of there is room at the top and you want to be in that chair up there and so every effort is bent to take the highest place possible for you and so as you know people according to a certain principle tend to get way up beyond their level of competence and to blow their brains out because they can't sustain it it's too high now but it's also a very clear picture of what

[20 : 24] Jesus did in his own personal life he came as king of kings lord of lords bearing a name which was above every name in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God and the word became flesh and dwelt among us so that Jesus who deserved to sit in the very highest place took the very lowest place a condemned criminal hung naked on a cross in public the very lowest place and you see that really is the secret of the kingdom is to get to the lowest place the secret of the world is to get to the highest place but the secret of the kingdom is to get to the lowest place and that's what

Paul meant when he said God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which I am crucified to the world and to that desire to get to the highest place and the world is crucified to me that is that's not where I belong and so what Paul says is that this is no longer the thing that sets his goal and that he is happy to be related to the despised and rejected one who is Jesus Christ that's where he wants to identify and that's what basically Gordon McDonald says in this story of his own broken world that here he discovered a reality when his whole world came apart and all the reputation that he built up over years and years and all his social standing and everything else was smashed on him and he says don't fool yourself when you get caught in that

situation there is no such thing as damage control you don't have control the damage just goes on and on and on and in many cases is quite irreparable as far as this world is concerned but you see in that broken world he found that there is a reality about the lowest place which makes sense and we wonder why we have to be driven to it just let me conclude by saying this to you to try and summarize it for me and

I you know I'm just trying to put myself on the spot here just because I want to put you on the same spot for me my shame is this existential secret that cannot be told you know I don't want you to know that's the reality of my life at certain level you know I don't want you to know the second reality is that the existential secret must be told you know I can't live with it unless somehow I can acknowledge it you know I mean it may be in a very private situation but somehow it must be told and you and and you see the third thing is that having told the secret it's not you don't you don't make a return to innocence you can't go back to the garden of

Eden you know Adam and Eve didn't go back to the garden of Eden they went on to well it was the beginning of God's purpose of redemption which spoke of a new Jerusalem a new creation a new heaven a new earth something beyond where we were we don't go back to innocence we go on in the fulfillment of God's purpose of redemption towards us and that's that's my experience you see that my shame cannot be told my shame must be told the direction for me is I can't return to innocence the reason I tell you that is because I know certain therapy groups which after extensive therapy and sharing intimately with one another then have a kind of ritual bathing ceremony in which they strip before one another and bathe together in the nude a kind of acting out of a return to innocence innocence but you don't go back to innocence you go forward to something else and and that's you know why it's important for Paul to say that it doesn't happen here okay so that's that's the way it works the three things

I I can't tell my secret I must tell my secret and it's not a return to innocence well then you see what happens then is you discover that at the heart of the Christian gospel is the story that can't be told God was crucified you know I mean that just can't be that God should be totally humiliated he wouldn't be God if that could happen unless you come to recognize that only God could allow that to happen God's secret is that I mean the secret that can't be told or can't be faced perhaps more by us is that God was crucified and the folly of preaching is making that a public secret that [26 : 57] God came in the flesh and was crucified and died on the cross and I want you to know that that's what happened in the same way that you have your secret and your secret ultimately has to be made known and that the kingdom therefore is open because because we meet with God in the place of our humiliation and his you know that at the point of our own deepest humiliation our shame we meet God who was humbled on the cross and that's where life begins it's not where it ends as we suspect I mean most people stay away from there because they say that would be the end to admit that guilt to admit that situation that would be the end but the secret of the kingdom is that it's not the end it's the beginning that's why shame which starts in the beginning of of of the Bible with Adam and Eve finds its fulfillment and that when Christ said don't look for the highest place look for the lowest then when the host comes along he will say go up higher and that's the story let me pray God grant us understanding that as we think about these things and as we try and deal with the secrets of our own lives we might find the redemption and the good news of your kingdom as we face the bad news of our own lives we ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ Amen what Pepper is here man and when we will see about one
Bye God while