

The Shelter In The Storm

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[0 : 00] ...Bibles and turn to Luke 639, which is on page 61 of the New Testament section of the Blue Pew Bible. Luke chapter 6, verse 39. And I'm going to give you as long as it takes me to read it, just to be quiet. You can read it if you like, but I'd like you to. 639 to the end of the chapter. Just, if you would read that over quietly to yourself. And let me just pray. Our God, we are confronted by this perhaps too familiar passage of Scripture.

And as this word may be obscure to our minds, so our hearts may be obscure to you. So we pray that the obscurity of our hearts may be taken away as the obscurity of your word is taken away by the work of your Spirit in our hearts. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

That's the passage I want to talk about. I want to begin by telling you that the congregation is split this morning between here and the parish conference which is going on in the first down in Bellingham. I went to the conference as I have every year, somewhat reluctantly because I've been there before. But I must say that it is the most amazing and delightful experience of the congregation. To have a weekend together and to meet with people of this congregation and get to know some of them. And you suddenly become aware how very rich you are in the company of people among whom God has placed you. And so I could wish that every weekend we as a congregation could get together on Friday night for supper and stay together until sometime Sunday afternoon.

I know it would interfere with your private plans, but it would also make wonderfully apparent to you that the most important thing in the whole of your life is your relationship to the Lord.

And out of that relationship directly emerges your relationship to one another. Harry Blamir's in a book in which he conjectures the possibility of moving from earth to heaven, it reminds me of coming across the border late last night in a car full of people and wondering that knowing that I myself had no reason why I should be stopped, but wondering about the people with whom I travel, whether we would be stopped on their account. But we were all let through.

[3 : 23] And Harry Blamir's in his book says, when you get to the gates of heaven, you will not be traveling alone. You will be traveling in a company of people. And so the selection of that company of people, among whom you will approach the pearly gates, is very important. Now you may feel that the friends you have are such good friends that you would rather go to hell with them than to heaven without them.

And the great good news is that they too can go to heaven and they have equal credentials with yourself for getting there.

And that you can share the good news of God's grace with them, that they may share the great benefits of God's heaven with you.

So it was a great experience to be part of that conference and I wish that all of you could be there. It's wisdom after the fact, but there is another conference next February if any of you would like to register soon.

Then I want to tell you about the parish this week and just the kind of waves of trauma that go through the parish, perhaps particularly in the month of February, because the month of February is when everybody goes to see their psychiatrist or their counselor.

[5 : 04] And it fortunately is just over and things will improve. But when you have the occasion for remembered grief and the loss of a loved one in years gone by, the anguish of a young man whose wife has left him, the devastation of addictive behavior, the introspective grief of being told that there is a shadow on your lungs according to the most recent x-ray, when you meet an artist who in all his ability is stressed beyond human endurance and just at the point of breaking, when you meet an artist who in all his ability is stressed beyond human endurance and just at the point of breaking, when you meet an artist who is in full reaction against all that they have tried to do for him, when

you discover that another marriage is shattered to provide freedom to explore a new relationship, that's heavy going. But it's not particularly unusual. It's what takes place in our kind of world.

But let me remind you that what Maureen read for us at the end of Corinthians, the end of Corinthians, the end of Corinthians.

Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your life is not in vain in the Lord.

There is a great triumph in which we share, and the evidence of the goodness and love of God far surpasses the tragedy of this veil of hope.

This veil of tears, which is contemporary life. And we have every reason to be gathered together with full hearts to give praise to God, and to hear the wonderful words of hope that come in the Isaiah passage this morning, or in the Psalm today.

[7 : 34] Now, look at this text, because it's a wonderful text, and it's meant for us, I'm sure. I mean, there's no question in my mind that it is.

The text describes our life in this way. The potential of our life is that we are being blind ourselves, totally dependent on blind guides.

You can elaborate that on the pages of any newspaper. Being unteachable ourselves, we are caught in the arrogance of believing that we know better than our teachers.

Seeing other people as the problem of our world with great clarity. And not being slightly aware of the fact that the real trouble with the world is me.

You can quote those words yourself, I hope. Totally failing to recognize that I am the primary and the worst problem in my world.

[8 : 54] Making the supposition that lying disposes of the problem. You know, that wonderful definition of human beings is that human beings are the only creatures that can lie to themselves and believe it.

And that becomes the pattern of our life. Failing to recognize that our words are not formed on the tip of our tongue, but give expression to the depths of our hearts.

So that you can't dissociate what you say from what's going on in your heart. Well, that's the world that Christ sees us living in.

And he takes that world and he teaches his disciples what they are to do about it. And he says to them in, I think, quite simple and direct terms.

And Jesus taught his disciples who wrote this in the book for us to read and teach one another. So when you hear this, you remember where it's coming from.

[10 : 17] Not from this fatuous fellow in the pulpit. This is coming from the Lord Jesus Christ, who says to us, I want to be your guide and to heal your blind eyes.

I want you to be taught by me. The danger of supposing that you are wiser than your teachers is very great danger indeed.

Jesus says, I want you to be taught by me. He says, I want you to let me address, not the problems of the world as you see them, but the problem of you as you refuse to see them.

on to say, I want the garbage out of your heart and I want your heart fully stored with the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and love and truth. I want this to be the implant in your heart from my word.

I want you to be subject to the instrument of my activity in your life, Jesus says, to heal the break between your ability to hear and your ability to do. That's what happens to us when you get old and gray and full of yourself. And you can go on hearing and hearing and hearing and hearing and hearing, but there isn't a finger lifted in obedience. And so inevitably you stop hearing. And Christ says, I want to heal that so that you won't be able to hear unless you obey. And you certainly can't obey unless you hear. And then Jesus says, this word, which is the instrument of my activity in your life, comes from the heart of God to your heart. So that when you speak, you will speak out of the abundance of God's love and not out of the agony of your private despair. You will, this word from God will accomplish in your life, the will of God. This word from God has the authority to reveal to you the purpose of God. And this word from God is indeed the very source from which you live your life. And Jesus says, I want this to happen to you. I want the word to have that kind of impact on your life.

[13 : 49] As he says, the storm must come for all of us. You know, some of you see nothing but bright blue days full of sunshine. And some of you see an ominous dark cloud on the horizon

moving slowly towards you.

But for all of us, the cloud must come, the storm it brings will rain down upon us. And whether our life has foundations or not will be determined.

And you will discover at that point, whether the world, the life that you have built is a magnificent structure. The envy of all around you, but totally without foundation. And that in, when the storm comes, it will just collapse like a house of cards. Or whether by the word of God, the foundations are deep and that the building that is you is part of that building which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. And when the storm comes, it will be a place of sure shelter and a place in which you can trust. Jesus wants us to have that.

And so he has invited you to this service this morning. And it's almost as though you had come to a restaurant.

And the menu that is put before you will not be unfamiliar to you. The menu is, this is my body which is given for you.

[15 : 45] This is my blood which is shed for you. And you may say, well, isn't there something to spice that up with?

Isn't there something to make that more palatable? Isn't there something that meets my needs a little better than that? I've had that over and over again. And it's all I'm offered. It's not only all you are offered. It's all you need.

It is the most wonderful provision for the deepest hunger of your life. And the longings and desires of your heart will perhaps not be satisfied.

But the deepest needs of your life will be met in that food of which you are invited to partake in this service this morning.

And so as you kneel to receive this, to take part in this communion, and may it be a kind of submission to Jesus our Lord, whose disciples we desire to be.

[17 : 07] As we bow before him, kneel as it were to receive from him the gift of his grace, that we pray that he might give sight to our blind eyes, that we may be given grace to submit to his teaching, that we may be anxious to have him help us deal with not the problems of those near to us, but to deal with our own problems.

It's a bit like doctors in the hospital. They're so good at dealing with other people's problems, but when they're in bed, and their problems are being dealt with, they find it very difficult indeed.

And perhaps many of you are so helpful to others in terms of helping them with their problems. But what Jesus asks you to do is to allow him to help you with yours.

And doctors don't find that easy when they find themselves in hospital. And you may not think it's what you need, but it is. You can pray that Christ might shut your mouth and open your heart.

Our mouths are too often open and our hearts are too often shut. And that needs to be reversed. You need to pray that he will heal so that we may obey, that we may hear and obey.

[18 : 49] We can pray as we receive his grace in the elements of bread and wine, that he will help us to discover the only foundation which will survive the coming storm.

And bring us into that company of people among whom the grace of God, by the word of God, is effecting the purposes of God.

And that's the invitation I leave with you. Amen.

Amen. Amen.