

Judge And Vindicate Us

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[0 : 00] May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be found acceptable in our sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen. Well now, I'd like you all to turn to Psalm 27 and your few Bibles.

And it's found, you can find it as well in your prayer book, but I want to work mostly from the Revised Standard Version text, and so I'd like to have you turn in your few Bibles to page 485. Psalm 26, page 485 in your few Bibles. These are important times for us as a parish, and I'd like you somehow to share in the importance of it.

Christine's baptism this morning in preparation for confirmation next Sunday, and somewhere between 30 and 40 members in our congregation are being confirmed, and I want you to be very much remembering them, that they may become effective disciples of Jesus Christ within this congregation.

And a lot of people are confused about what discipleship means these days, and so that it's an important thing that we surround them with our prayer.

[1 : 39] And then last Sunday night, just as we were about to start the evening service here, there was news of the death of Bill Broomhall.

And what a sort of sad moment that is in the ongoing life of this parent. The first person I phoned when I arrived in Vancouver was Bill, and he didn't know where the key to the rectory was, but he thought it must be somewhere, and he'd do something about finding it, and in due course he found it, and so that was my sort of first official contact was through Bill Broomhall.

And I'm sure that while that was true for me, it's probably been true for many of you as you started to the church and found him who was described as the pear-shaped man in the velvet gown, and that he was the man that met you at the door and made you welcome and saw that you had a prayer book or a hymn book and looked after you while you were here when you lost your glasses or lost your hat or lost your purse, or one thing or another like that.

It was Bill whose special ministry was to look after all of us. And not only that, but he in his own personal life and having worked out for him what discipleship to Jesus Christ meant, he was a great asset to the parish, and we're going to very much miss him, but at the same time he had thanks for every memory of his goodness and graciousness and love and the way he personally reflected the person of our Lord Jesus.

He buried as well an old member of the parish in the person of Mrs. Foster, who for a number of years has not been able to be here at church, but is known and loved by many of you, I know.

[3 : 32] Well, all that's going on while the dollar is sinking in value. Interest rates are going up. The possibility of getting housing in Vancouver decreases, and the cost of it, if you do get it, is so prohibitive as to make you wonder whether you really belong here or whether it wouldn't be nice if you could find an easy way to heaven right now.

But these tensions surround us. The value of the dollar, the interest rates, the stock market, the inflation, the Iranian crisis, the Quebec referendum, all these things are going on, and everybody has an impending sense of judgment as though any moment now somebody's going to blow the whistle and the whole fabric and structure of our society is going to collapse.

I even heard of the man who has a boat with a year's supply of food, so as soon as it happens he's going to take off. Well, good luck. I don't know where he's going to go in it, but I guess that's his preparation for the future.

Well, I'm not sure that there's any place he can go, but all of us would like in some way to come to the place where we can handle our world.

And whether it's by contributing in some way to the relief of hunger in Cambodia or the boat people fleeing from Vietnam, or whether we ourselves may have suddenly been caught up in a personal tragedy which afflicts us very much in our lives, in illness, or whether we, you know, in the midst of it all, purchase this super fighting plane for Canada which, by the mercy of God, will never be used except for air shows.

[5 : 25] But in all this, there really is a certain amount of confusion, and people, I think, are reaching out desperately for something that they can take hold of.

And that may be the perfect holiday, which you will find advertised on most pages in your newspapers. It may be that plan for taking off the 50 extra pounds that you're tired of carrying around, and you think with that gone, a new person will emerge and a new capacity to cope with the tensions of our world.

It may be a radical change in diet so that you feel differently because you're eating differently, and that's presumably going to help. But all those things we're seeking after in order to try and come to terms with the reality of our own existence in a world where all the landmarks have lost any stability, and we don't know who we are or what our future is or where we're going.

And what is the bedrock that we have to come to? Well, last week we rehearsed again in all its glory the resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

And what I want to do in looking at three psalms is to try and get you to take hold of them with both hands in order that you might have the kind of anchorage and the kind of solidarity, the kind of rock in your life that you can depend on and on which you can take your stand.

[7 : 03] And so these three psalms are Psalms 26 and 27 and 28. And central to these three psalms are the temple of the Lord, the tabernacle, the place where God meets with his people.

And in this first psalm, Psalm 26, the thing that you have to look at is your own heart, the condition of your own life as you come before God.

And so it begins with, in the prayer book, the word, Judge me, O God. In the Revised Standard Version, you will see it says, Vindicate me, O Lord.

Now, most people wouldn't think that to come as quickly as possible to the place of judgment before God is the place that you would like to come to.

Most of us think it would be a delight to be able to put that off at least for a few years. I remember preaching the gospel in a fraternity at the University of Toronto, and it was a lovely situation when all the members of the fraternity sat around after supper and had a sort of preacher for dessert to whom they could ask questions and hopelessly confuse him.

[8 : 32] But one of the lovely things they did to me was after I finished, one of them raised his bottle of beer and said, That's great. And when I'm 40, I'm going to think about it.

Well, I'd love to know where he is today because he's 40, I'm sure. And I'd like to know if he's thinking about it. But it's trying to come to the place of judgment.

And you see, the significance of the resurrection is that the place of judgment is no longer the place that we should run away from, but it's the place we should make to as quickly as possible in order to find a vindication which God alone can give us.

We are being trained into one of the great generations of naval gazers to look down deep inside yourself to try and find the answer.

To try and find the answer to life within yourself. And I think it's probably a good place to look, but I'm not sure that the promise is going to be fulfilled by looking there.

[9 : 44] And then we have also, in our society, tried all sorts of possibilities escaping from the evil and corruption that we find in society, running away into drugs, running away into alcohol and into patterns of life which are all weird and wonderful and full of promise, but never in a sense making the promise happen.

And it's a kind of make-believe world full of television advertisements where almost anything can satisfy your ultimate need and yet when you try it your ultimate need remains steadfastly and implacably there at the center of your life and you don't know what to do with.

You ask your friends and they say, they pass judgment upon you and that's not very encouraging. You ask your own heart and you pass judgment upon yourself and say, I was born inferior and I've been inadequate all of my life and there's no hope for me.

And if you don't feel that way, whatever way you do feel is probably worse. And this kind of thing means that we are forced and driven to the place that David comes to in this psalm when he says,

vindicate me, oh God, judge me.

I want to come to terms with myself. I don't want, I don't want to deceive people any longer.

[11:19] I don't want to be deceived any longer. I want to come to the place of judgment. And so he asks for that. He says, I don't want to be, to have an inflated value.

I don't want to be deceived. I don't, I want to seek God as my judge, to know where I stand before him. I don't want to boast of things that aren't true or deny things that are.

I want a true inventory of where I am before God. A desire to come to grip with the integrity of one's own heart.

God. And that's what God invites us to do. And that's what David was bold enough to set out to do in this psalm. To stand open before God.

To say, judge me, O God. Vindicate me. And most people are of the feeling, I'm sure, that to stand before God is to be condemned.

[12:30] But not David. In verses 1 to 3 he goes on to say who he is before God. I have walked in my integrity, I have trusted in the Lord without slipping, prove me, O Lord, and try me, test my heart and my mind, for thy steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to thee.

Now this same book, the Bible, tells a lot about David, which doesn't sound like what David thinks about David. There are grounds for all of us to utterly condemn him for lying and cheating and for deception and for all sorts of things.

But there's some way in which David can still come before the Lord and say, I want your judgment. I want you to acknowledge who I am.

I want to know who I am in your sight. And that's the place that David comes to and he talks about himself. Prove me, O Lord, and try me.

Test my heart and my mind because though I have made many mistakes and though I have sinned and though I have been foolish and though I have been cruel and though I have broken so many commandments, I want to come to the place of judgment so I know where I stand.

[14:00] And you see, growing out of that is David's understanding of who the God is whom he seeks will be the judge in his life. Then if you look at verses 4 to 5, David tells you about the people he avoids.

And it'd be interesting to compare whose company you seek and whose company you avoid. And David says, I don't sit with false men nor do I consort with dissemblers.

Those are people who pretend one thing when they know something else is true. I hate the company of evil doers. I will not sit with the wicked.

What friends do you choose? And David opens that up to God. And then he talks about the thing that delights him above everything else in verses 6 to 7.

I wash my hands in innocence and I go about thy altar, O Lord, singing aloud a song of thanksgiving and telling of all thy wondrous deeds.

[15:11] You will know that our choir from time to time does this too. Only they don't have the advantage that they had at the temple where there were great bowls of water and they all washed themselves as they processed into the temple.

Before they processed around they all washed themselves so that they would be ceremonially cleansed in order that they might go and worship God.

And the thing that David delights to do is to go about thy altar, O Lord, singing aloud a song of thanksgiving and telling all thy wondrous deeds.

Now you see, when you look at the thoughts in the character of this man, and when you look at the kind of things that he did with his life, he's saying, but look at the thing that I want most to do.

In spite of my failure, in spite of my inadequacy, in spite of my guilt, in spite of my fault, the thing I delight to do is to come into thy altar and with my, at the top of my voice to sing your praises and to give worship and thanksgiving to you.

[16:28] This is the God by whom he wants to be judged, the God whom he worships with all his heart. And that's the thing that David most desired to do.

The place where he most wanted to be was in the presence of the Lord, at the altar of the Lord, as it was in his time.

And then in verses 8 to 10 he says what he feared most and what he loved most. And you wouldn't probably be, you'd find it helpful if working through this psalm on your own, you talked about it, you took some time to write down what you love most and what you fear most.

And David says it quite plainly when he says in verse 8, O Lord, I love the habitation of thy house and the place where thy glory dwells, and I fear most that I will be swept away with sinners. my life will be marked with those blood thirsty men in whose hands are evil devices and whose right hands are full of wrath.

[17 : 51] In spite of the fact that these are the men among whom I live, these are the men who are part of my everyday life, these are the ones who can't be avoided.

Nevertheless, the place I love is the place of thy habitation, and the place where thy glory dwells. He was saying, as we so often say, O our Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come. He was saying that this is the thing that he loved more than anything else, and this was the place that he longed to be, the place to which he longed to come in all its fullness was the habitation, the house of the Lord, the place where his glory dwells.

And I don't know whether you know this or not, but I am absolutely certain that the most deeply satisfied, the most heavenly experience, the most richly rewarding possibility for this life, is not at the end of a \$500 package tour, but it's in the company of God with the people of God, worshiping the transcendent God who has made himself known to us in Jesus Christ.

This is the ultimate of human experience. This is the thing David longed for. And this I'm sure is most important for us, that we will long for that place, to come to the place where we worship him.

[19 : 40] And so in verses 11 and 12, Psalm 26 concludes, David becomes very much aware that having cast himself before God and cried out for judgment, he said, Lord, here I am, and there is no secret about my life hidden from you.

There is no failure not known to you. There is no weakness which you are not fully aware of. David says, as for me, I walk in my integrity, therefore, redeem me, be gracious to me.

He puts himself in the place where he knows that the ultimate vindication of his life for which he speaks is not something he has earned, but something God can give.

and you see, on this Sunday after Easter, we should be clamoring to come to the place of judgment, not to vindicate ourselves, but to be vindicated by our God, who has vindicated us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of his Holy Spirit.

and that's what he means when David says prophetically, I want to come to the place where I walk in my integrity before you, where the whole of my life is knitted together into whole cloths, and God, you redeem me, and God, you be gracious unto me.

[21 : 28] And then he says, what happens? My foot stands on level ground, not as though I'm standing here like this, always at an angle, but I'm standing on level ground in the great congregation I will bless the Lord.

Now that's what I want for us, that we may come to that place. That's the fruit in our lives of what God has done for us in Christ.

That we will come with integrity subject to all the grace that God has shown us in Jesus Christ. Subject to all that God can do to redeem what lies broken and useless in our lives.

Coming to the place where we stand on level ground, coming to the place where in the midst of the great congregation we worship and bless the Lord to whom we have come for vindication and for judgment and who has in his judgment vindicated us, not for our own sake, but because of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Will you take that psalm and make it yours? Can we conclude simply by reading it responsibly? and I want to read it.

[23 : 02] As you will see it's divided into paragraphs in the Bible and I'd like to read it by paragraph and I'll read one paragraph and then you read the next and then we'll conclude.

Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, I have trusted in the Lord without wavering, prove me, O Lord, and try me, test my heart and my mind, for thy steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to thee.

I give you all men, and for our brothers in heaven, I need not to the world that I wash my hands in innocence and go about thy altar, O Lord, singing aloud a song of thanksgiving and telling all thy wondrous deeds.

O God, I have been by and blessed by the Lord, keep you now in heaven, and God, God, God, and heaven, God, who ongoing love, peace.

Peace. Life andiliary done May Soon Bodaf Leslie