

# This is Your Life

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Date: 27 April 2008

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[ 0 : 00 ] You might want to, if you've got a Bible, open it up to Isaiah chapter 28. I have the RSV as opposed to the new RSV.

In the regular straightforward RSV it's on page 622, at least the passage I'm going to be looking at here. Isaiah 28, and we're just going to look at a few verses 23 until the end of the chapter.

Isaiah 28, verses 23 to 29, the end of the chapter. Let me just begin by saying a word of prayer.

Lord, we confess that your word is in front of us and that it is glorious and wonderful.

That it is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom. Help us to be worthy readers of such a gift. Open our hearts and minds to hear your word and may it accomplish in us, as your prophet says, may it accomplish in us that for which you have sent it.

[ 1 : 28 ] We pray in the name of Jesus, the living word. Amen. I used to work for the Reuters news agency.

I had a boss who was a Cambridge man. And when Bill talked to me this morning, I had a flashback to sitting in, forgive me for confessing this, sitting in a pub with him one day.

And for some reason he just said, always have a speech with you. He must have been asked on many occasions, you know. So he was a well-traveled guy.

He must have been asked, say a few words, you know. So I thought of him. The other night I was at a social gathering and I met a fellow from the cathedral.

An older gentleman, distinguished father, grandfather. And he was very interested to find out that I was a St. John's person.

[ 2 : 35 ] And so we inevitably got talking. Classic thing, you know, at a party, the really interesting conversations happen in the kitchen. There we were in the kitchen. And I don't want to, it's so easy to be unfair when you report on something that you're not sympathetic with, with a physician, especially that you're not sympathetic with.

So with that in mind, I'll try to be fair when I report that he was saying things like, I'm trying to remember his exact words and not do a character of his tone, but he was convinced that, say, at St. John's, we believe in Paul, but not in Jesus.

That was his body. Now, he said that in a very ironic, peaceful tone, nice, friendly way. He might have been trying to get my goat. He was trying to see how I respond to that.

But at St. John's, you believe in Paul, but not Jesus. So I, then he's, and then there were, we got into conversations about, you know, things in the Old Testament, about what you do with, you know, what, how you, how you boil or don't boil a goat in its, whatever, its mother's milk.

You know, those obscure, what seems to us obscure things in the Old Testament. He said, you at St. John's, I guess you have to obey all that. You're still in a pain. So I took him at his word, and I, again, our tone was provincially friendly.

[ 4 : 00 ] And I said, you know, there's a book in the, in the New Testament, there's a book called Hebrews. And it really reflects the turning from one dispensation to another. And Israel, as defined by law, temple, land, kingship, had a definite purpose in the story of salvation.

And God kept Israel separate from influences around her, it, Israel. And then with Jesus, Christians believe that all that mystery of temple, kingship, law is fulfilled, brought into its fulfillment.

And in the New Dispensation, he actually doesn't get on all this kind of talk. A lot of that is, is, is peaceful, very gently, if you will, but it's just set aside.

Right? Because in the New Dispensation of salvation, there is no set-apart land or temple. It's now, it's, in Israel, her fulfillment becomes a universal message.

So I think, I, I'm not sure if that reached him. Then he'd say, you talk about the Bible as if it's a book, or, you know, as if it's a person. So, with that in mind, I started to work on next week's talk.

[ 5 : 11 ] So, I'll have a, that conversations in the back of my mind as I, as I think about this, as you, as you look at the Bible.

You know, it seems, it seems so simple, doesn't it, to, to just have words in front of you and to read them. But, in fact, we bring to it a whole, a whole life experience.

What we know, what we don't know. I found out what a man knows, or what he doesn't know in a kitchen at a social gathering the other day. When he reads the Bible, he brings that whole experience, his whole person, to his hearing of words.

And so we all do that. We're all kind of in a, we're all situated somewhere as we begin to read. The church attempts to be, for us, doesn't it, a very defined and definable situated place for reading, you might call the church.

A situated place for reading, where you learn to read correctly. Where you read to learn in obedience.

[ 6 : 20 ] A good American theologian, I find this very helpful, says that when you, when you read poorly, you bear false witness. Because you're misrepresenting what an author intends you to hear and know.

You must not bear false witness. In other words, you must be a humble, obedient, listening, attentive reader. Willing to hear what an other says to you.

Otherwise, you will bear false witness. And the word of God, if you believe the Bible is the word of God, you don't want to bear false witness about what we believe God is saying.

So, there you go. So, reading, again, seems simple, but it's, in fact, different. We bring different, I'm trying to think of the language made famous by one philosopher.

All language has, is involved in certain tasks. I think it was Wittgenstein who said that, the great philosopher. That every, there's, every life situation has its own language tasks.

[ 7 : 26 ] And they work a certain way. And you get to know how language works by tending to their, their situatedness. So, the prophet says at verse 23, Give ear, hear my voice, hearken, hear my speech.

Does he who plows for sowing plow continually? Does he who, does he continually open and harrow his ground? When he has leveled its surface, does he not scatter gills? So cumin, put wheat in rows, barley in its proper place, spelt as the border.

For he is instructed to write. His God teaches him. Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is a cartwheel rode over cumin.

I think that's cumin. But dill is beaten out with a stick and cumin with a rod. Does one crush bread grain? No, he does not thresh it forever. When he drives his cartwheel over it with his horses, he does not crush it.

This also comes from the Lord of hosts. He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom. I love that verse 29.

[ 8 : 33 ] I should memorize that. This comes from the Lord of hosts. He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom. There is, again, I want to take a step back here and just talk some more about what reading is really about.

Is there an author here? Do you believe instinctively as you read this part of a chapter of Isaiah that there is an author here? In modernity, a big fight is over whether or not you really can't believe that there are authors.

There are authors which apply an authority. And if there are authors, do they really deliver a definite real meaning? Many people in our culture, very seriously and very influentially, and it filters through the whole culture.

It gets into people that you might meet at kitchens and parties who go to another church. Maybe there is no real meaning that an author can deliver to you, and therefore there is only text.

That is why the word text is so trendy now. There is only text. And because there is only text, therefore there is only readers. The author disappears, and you as a reader, you are left with a text.

[ 9 : 51 ] And we are just alone here today trying to guess what meaningfulness means. And that is how churches come to believe that, oh, maybe you believe Paul, but we believe in Jesus.

The nonsense that is in the world, I will show my position here, filters through into churches. A lot of people think that way. So how do Christians respond?

Well, I think the way we respond is not as simple as we might think. After all, we call the Bible, don't we, the Word of God. And the Bible is, after all, many books.

It has many authors. It has many genres. There's many different kinds of writings in the Bible. So I think what I want to say today, as, again, preliminary to starting to look at a little moment in Isaiah, which I think is pregnant with meaning, do we believe that the Bible is one book?

One book, the Bible. The Church obviously says yes as it hears the Gospel. The Church says yes. The world, when it's thoughtful about these things, says no, really.

[ 11 : 06 ] The Bible's not really one book, because the world will admit, yes, it's between covers. But that doesn't make a book a book. It's really a set of ancient documents, some more ancient than others.

That's the way the world, when it's thoughtful, looks at the Bible. And there are maybe unthoughtful Christians who think, oh, isn't that what the Bible is? No, the Church says that the Bible is a book.

It's called the canon, or the rule, canon means. And it defines for us God's speech. This book is God's speech.

God, if you will, supervenes over the speech of all of these different authors and says, I count that as my word. One writer has likened it to give a really prosaic analogy, or something like it.

To be a boss in a company who has a very bright secretary, who says, you know what I always say to that guy when I write him, so you write it. And I'll sign it.

[ 12 : 18 ] And that's how trusting the boss is of the secretary. And so when he might, she or she, excuse me, might glance over the letter and say, yeah, that's what I always say, sign it.

That's his or her word. That's a kind of what God has done with his word. Someone named Isaiah, it may have been more than one Isaiah, we don't know, preached, apparently in high circles in Jerusalem, temple circles.

And God has said, I count Isaiah's preaching and the editing work that may have been done by someone on Isaiah's speech. I count that as my word. That is my word.

That's how scripture works, apparently. It has a whole bunch of different authors, but our God counts them all as speaking his word. Isn't that strange, the way God does that?

We call the Bible the word of God, but we can do that just as a formula. Psalm 51 has David repenting of his adultery and his murder.

[ 13 : 28 ] Well, God doesn't repent of his committing adultery and murder. So it's not God speaking there in the first person, it's David speaking. But in some manner, God says, that is my word.

In other words, it's a kind of teaching. God says, I'll use those words of David to teach you about repentance and other things. You learn the proper speech to God, say, in a repentance mode, by attending to his word about repentance, which David in that instance did the repenting.

Isn't that it? The Bible as the word of God is not a simple, straightforward concept. It's not meant to be. It comes in different genres, in different modes, in different tone, doesn't it?

So this is a kind of, the way to, the best, the best way that I've come to have, I hope, a real, a measure of real clarity about this comes from a wonderful fellow at, used to be at, used to be at Edinburgh, now he's at Trinity Divinity School in the States, Kevin Van Hooser.

He calls the Bible, I think this is brilliant, and I think it's faithful to the scriptures and the gospel. He calls the Bible a divine communicative act.

[ 14 : 52 ] That, I think, is very helpful. The Bible is a divine communicative act. God has given his word in a mysterious way.

It's a divine, I wish he had a better word than communicative, but there it is. A divine communicative act, in which God enters into conversation with people authoritatively in this book.

So that's why I, in a kitchen, talking to someone about the Bible, will talk about the Bible as if it's one author speaking. And that's how I'll defend it.

It's a divine communicative act. There are wheels within wheels in this presentation of that idea, divine communicative act, but it's defensible, and I think the Bible warrants it.

The Bible is one book, one author. It's one God speaking. Even in a strange little parable about a farmer planting a seed.

[ 16 : 00 ] So I think, again, that anecdote, that's a kind of preliminary to reading the Bible. A divine communicative act is in front of us, in poetry, proverb, warning, promise, narrative, apocalyptic, prophetic preaching, wisdom literature, apparently four biographies, strange biographies, epistle.

There's so many tones and types of speech in the Bible, it's remarkable. But they're all a divine communicative act in which you enter into conversation with God.

And it's a miracle. It has the marks. The Puritans used to say, the Bible has the marks of divinity about it. I think they stated more than they knew.

The more a communication theory unfolds and linguistics become more sophisticated. And you see the modern struggling with what a text could possibly mean or who's an author or what's a reader.

The mystery of the Bible begins to resonate richly. It's so mysterious, the way it holds together across 66 books and across so much time.

[ 17 : 26 ] And the way it echoes across the center. It echoes itself. I think it's wonderful. The Bible is a divine communicative act. And the reason this chap is working this stuff out is because, oh boy, you're some more with this kind of stuff, but this is what happens when you have three minutes for preparation.

The great, especially since the Reformation, there's been a kind of drama unfolding, if I may use the word drama, about the Bible. And they obviously sort of overlap with one another, but one way to read the Bible, and it's a good way, I take it, some people think it's finally inadequate, but it's still a good way, is to read the Bible and get out of it a whole bunch of propositions.

A whole bunch of propositional truths. Read from Genesis to Revelation, understand it all, and then list a whole bunch of propositions that are realizable from all of that reading.

And my goodness, you could come up with a lot of them, couldn't you? God is love is a proposition. And there's God is merciful, God is wrathful.

There's a thousand propositions. Some people read the Bible almost exclusively that way, and they write what turn out to be, over time at least, usually extremely tedious theological volumes, which are honored in churches, but no one reads.

[ 18 : 50 ] Because the minute you try and read them, you fall asleep. But there's still, there's a richness to them. The Word of God is so powerful and living, that even when people are using bad methods, its power still shines through.

Someone might be very blessed by reading a whole bunch of propositions realized from the Bible. But that method, it gave way to, in fact, another way of reading the Bible, it's called narrative.

Let's forget about propositions for a while. A lot of guys at Yale made a big deal out of this, and they still do. So, we should just read the Bible as story. Story, story, story, story.

Israel out of Egypt, after all, there's a lot of narrative in the Bible. Especially Israel out of Egypt, and Jesus crucified, raised, and ascended, and his ministry is a narrative.

So, we'll read the narrative, and in the story, we'll listen to what God is saying to us. That would seem to be a subtle and wonderful improvement on mere propositionalism.

[ 19 : 47 ] And I think there's a lot of good, there's a lot of good realized, I think, by emphasizing the idea of narrative. The weakness of narrative is that sooner or later, people say, well, but stories have meanings, and meanings will come to expression in propositions.

So, you don't really get too far away from propositionalism when you're reading narrative. But it's a new vocabulary for the scholars to play with, and for a generation or two, it's been great. You know, but there you go.

But a third way that might be about to take off, I hope it is, because I think it's a wonderful improvement over narrative, and it incorporates what's good about narrative, and incorporates what's good about propositionalism, is what Van Hooser calls drama.

He says, no, anybody in the room read Van Hooser? I should be careful. Here's a young gentleman in front row who's read everything. Van Hooser says, no, we should read the Bible, and he, by the way, he's an orthodox chap.

He's a very, he's a believing man. Quotes Jim Packer a couple times in one of his essays. So, and positively, positively on both occasions, so I breathe easier. You know, I think, oh, he must be okay.

[ 20 : 58 ] Van Hooser is a smart guy, and he says, no, the Bible should be read as a drama. And when you read the Bible as a drama, what happens is something, as a wonderful kind of, as a metaphor, I think, very fruitful.

The Bible is a script. It's not a proposition. It's not a hidden, it's not a hidden, a strange bunch of various discourses from which you have to get all those propositions from.

Let's set that aside, not reject it, but just put it on the back burner for a while. Nor is it merely narrative, because let's face it, folks, says Van Hoover, there's lots in the Bible that's not narrative. The book of Job's not a narrative, really, or Ecclesiastes, or the book of James, it's wisdom literature.

Let's, let's look at it as drama, and capture, which he thinks captures all of the, of the books of the Bible in its net, this metaphor. If it's a drama, the Bible becomes a script.

And we, who would be the director of the, of the, of the play? That is, a script is to be performed. And the, the author, the author might be God, who's the, the director.

[ 22 : 18 ] And we, as Christian believers, we have to learn the script, and I think this is brilliant, because the way it's so, and you, you, Christians know these truths, but it's a different way of looking at it. We, as Christians, have to perform the scriptures.

We have to learn, we have to learn the script so well, that we learn how to perform it. I think that's wonderful. The idea of propositions, you just tack on at the end, usually, oh, by the way, you have to really believe this, and live this way.

Or narrative says, usually, oh, you have to figure out a way to insert yourself into the story. But how do you insert yourself into the, into Ecclesiastes? But if you're an actor, a Christian actor, with this script in front of you, when you read the Bible, you're really learning your lines, and learning how to live out this drama in your life, and in the world.

Do you think that's a good, a good picture of scripture in the Christian life? I think there's much to commend it. Van Hooser has written a book called, The Drama of Doctrine.

And he works all this stuff out in painful detail, as scholarly, theologians do. I like this idea of, and finally, I think this gets me to Isaiah.

[ 23 : 37 ] The Bible, in a certain sense, as readers, we must read this as, we are actors, who must perform, somehow, what we've just read.

So with that question in mind, last past week, I've been reading this, this Isaiah passage, over and over again. You know, again, it's, give ear, and hear my voice, hearken, and hear my speech.

It's, just standing alone there, I'm not sure if that's Isaiah the prophet, or the God of Israel speaking. But when you have this idea of, the Bible is divine, communicative act, God supervening, over human speech, and saying, that's my word, it doesn't matter anymore.

This may be Isaiah speaking, it doesn't matter. Or it may be specifically, literally understood, if you will, the God of Israel speaking. But we believe it's the word of God, and on, for today, it's a script.

And we are the actors, who have to learn these lines, and perform them in our lives. Give ear, and hear my voice, hearken, and hear my speech.

[ 24 : 59 ] Let's just look at this, and go through it for a while. Does he who plows for sowing, plow continually? Presumably, the answer is no. Does he continually open, and harrow his ground?

Well, no. The farmer doesn't, just do one thing. He does that, but he has to do more. When he has leveled, its surface, does he not scatter dill, so cumin, and put in, wheat in rows, and barley in its proper place, and spelt, as the border?

Just on the surface, you notice that, I do, Dill and cumin, two of those things, that the Pharisees would, would, what did they do with them? They tithe them, that's right, this must be crops well known, in that part of the world, I guess.

This, here's just a picture, of a farmer, who goes out, to do some work. Notice it's, it's placed about, I don't know, this is almost halfway, into Isaiah, getting there.

Isaiah starts with, amazing things, note, Isaiah, speaking on behalf of God, judges Israel, she's not living up to the covenant, judgment is going to fall, Israel is just, not what God wants her to be, and, and then there's thundering, thundering, presaging, judgment words.

[ 26 : 25 ] Then, then the prophet, gets involved in politics, and he talks about Israel's, sometimes going to Egypt, and sometimes to other places, and trying to make good deals, foreign policy deals, which God doesn't want her to do, and God says, I'm going to judge you, and I'm going to judge these nations too, because they're doing evil things, all the time.

Book of Isaiah is a bit of a, I say this reverently, a bit of a, almost read casually, a bit of a mishmash. All sorts of things going on. Then, Isaiah has the vision, of God in the temple, one of the highlights, of scripture, I would call it.

So there's so much, going on there. Tyre, I'm going to judge you. Egypt, I'm going to judge you. Kings of Israel, I'm going to judge you. Then, every now and again, there's a, there's a, a break in the action, and there's promises, of coming, beauty for Israel, and fulfillment.

Sort of precursors, of what you get to, when you hit chapter 40, you know, when it takes off, and the, the, the prophecy soars, into some of the most, glorious language, that our language knows. And the conceptions, are the best things, that humanity, has ever thought, about God, breaking into the world, somehow, and bringing Israel, into deep obedience, and her witness, going out, and the nations, coming up to Jerusalem, and the whole cosmos, getting caught up, in a salvation drama.

But right in, so, so, almost in the middle of it, you've got this strange, little, I call it, a strange, little parable. You know, we have this, here's what a farmer does, suddenly the, the prophet says.

[ 28 : 00 ] And then after that, he puts wheat in rows, barley in its proper place, spelt as the border, for he, this farmer, is instructed to write, his God, teaches him.

Not, not to, um, beat around the bush, I take it, that Isaiah the prophet, is saying, um, I, Israel's life, and by implication, the life of every believer, is, precisely, carefully, watched over, in every detail, in ways that we cannot, uh, comprehend, or imagine.

God is, watching over us, as this farmer, watches over his field. I think that's, it's, it's a simple, but profound message. This is, this is your life, you might call it.

The God of Israel says, I have, I am watching over you, like a farmer, watches over his field. Every detail. Um, I, I, I, I, I want to risk silliness.

Um, God knows how old you are. He knows if you're happy or sad. He knows if you're healthy. He knows how your relationships are going. He knows your biography.

[ 29 : 19 ] He knows when you were born. He knows what sad things, that recently happened to you. What happy things have happened to you. He knows everything. Everything.

Our God knows. He knows every proposition imaginable. He knows every proposition that would follow from all the propositions. He knows every story.

He knows every drama. He instructs farmers are right. God teaches. God teaches. I love just the two words at verse 26. God teaches.

The scriptures teach. God teaches. They're not a bunch of haphazard ancient documents. The man in the kitchen was deadly wrong.

Deadly wrong. They don't teach in some churches about the Bible as a canon. As all that human speech is God's speech. One author.

[ 30 : 24 ] God is speaking. That's the faith of the Holy Catholic Church. Put it in highfalutin language. Then you. Dill is not threshed with a. Why does he continue with this?

Because it's important I take. Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge. Nor is a cartwheel rode over cumin. But Dill is beaten up with a stick. And cumin with a rod.

Does one crush bread grain? No. He does not thresh it forever. When he drives his cartwheel over it with his horses. He does not crush it. More of the same.

God's infinite care. Over every little moment. Every. Every part of the drama. Is under this director's care. This also comes from the Lord of hosts.

I always. Why? I don't. I don't know how it is with you in the discussion time. We have lots of it today. These words always move me so much. Do they move you? I just love. He is wonderful in counts.

[ 31 : 23 ] And he is excellent in wisdom. Usually along life's way. I take it. As. As people of faith. We come to know that.

As some people say. As a kirk of God. Others say. You. You understand life backwards. You. As you go through life. The future's there. It's hard to see. Idiots will tell you what's coming.

Politicians. And other people like that. But. As we look back. We sometimes do. Have you. I'm sure you've had the experience. You say. I now see I made that little decision.

And that happened. I never could have organized that. I met that person. Not another person. This happened. Not that. This tragedy came into my life. That it.

It. Put a shadow over my soul. Which has done good work. Somehow. As things. Have. Are back there. There. We might have. A bit of.

[ 32 : 17 ] By God's grace. A bit of clarity. About what it's all meant. About. I planted. I planted a bit of. I scattered a bit of dill. I put a weed in rows.

Was God teaching me? He did it. God, the wondrous providential one who teaches, who is wonderful in counsel, excellent in wisdom.

I think I'm crazy that he put together the scriptures for starters. How did he do that? How did it all come about? That it just worked so beautifully. The way Pentateuch gives way to Israel's drama and then the prophet's warning and then the strange genealogy suddenly is in front of you as literature and it's Matthew's and it tells you that this guy Jesus is Israel's mysterious fulfillment and a church happens and then it goes around the world and we're listening to it today.

How did that happen? It must be a God like a farmer watching over a field and gets it just right. Always gets it just right. Even angry unbelief will say I don't like the way it is in my life or the world's life but the Bible says God knows just what he's doing.

So as I've been reading as I've been reading Isaiah I've been thinking that kind of thing but finally I've been challenged by this metaphor if the Bible's a drama and the gospel's a drama the Bible's a drama and more specifically we have a script in front of us how would you perform this with Mr. Van Hooser would say as a theologian to the church as a member of the body of Christ how do you perform this?

[ 34 : 12 ] All I can think to say and this is I hope in the discussion time I need to hear from you about this I take it you pray a belief in providence into your life you start to thank God for what's happened even for the things that are difficult no one wants to say that casually to themselves or to other Christians but you learn the discipline of saying my God is good that I have no final complaint in my God's presence that will stand and I can faithfully say and truthfully say he is good he is wonderful in counsel he is excellent in wisdom it's good sometimes the psalms say it's good that I was that I was disciplined there it's good that I've had these problems it has been good for me we can affirm the goodness of God's providence unbelief will not do that and the unbelief in me will not do that it will say no I'm against God about this and that but this passage so I perform this passage by by believing that my God is watching over my day yesterday and yesterday

I came to church and I thought I was going to listen to a chap and it turns out I'm listening to me I believe in providence because it wasn't God we just there I have to perform it I don't know I don't know all the ins and outs of performing the doctrine of providence but I want to do it and I think this passage is asking me to enter into that drama my God knows what he's doing I think in other passages in the prophets that he waters he sends the rain just perfectly waters the ridges brings growth God loves this sort of work I'll just I'll leave it there I'll give Van Hooser moves me very deeply he talks about how the doctrine of creation is not always but sometimes bogged down in our midst now here I'm going from memory here but this is the gist of what he says that we can get bogged down and say well

Genesis chapter 1 that happened in 7 days or a trillion years or whatever we have those kind of battles that is to read Genesis chapter 1 as divine information which we're supposed to read correctly that leads to true propositions or we can read it in narrative it's a bit of a strange narrative how over 7 days over 6 days God worked on the 7th he rested but Van Hooser I think is wise to insist that no you can actually we have to learn how to perform Genesis 1 what does the doctrine of creation teach me today it teaches us to be thankful that we're in the place we're supposed to be to be thankful for the beauty of the world to be thankful for the world's challenges to be to remember that I'm a creature to be open to the question why the doctrine of creation is not a bunch of propositions it may yield propositions it's not merely a narrative it's a narrative at all but it's a teaching about who we are as creatures and a whole sensibility will grow up in you as a

Christian if you perform perform on God's stage God's theater the action the action I'd never seen this before I'm not that much of a student of Greek some choruses I passed up to God Paul says God is put somewhere in Corinthians 1 Corinthians 4 later than that God has put we apostles on display in the world as a spectacle for angels and men and that spectacle there kind of thing is the Greek there is theatron God has put as a piece of theater God puts the work of the apostles on display in all their weakness their patheticness they had no standing they preached and they changed the world and they go on changing the world so we are in some measure we're in a theater we're in a drama and we're to perform scriptures so there you go that's where my thinking was kind of going for next week so what's going to happen next week I have no idea maybe the young maybe the chap will show up next week there you go but so let me just leave it there and I'm going to say a closing prayer and then have some feedback please some conversation please

Lord we thank you for your word and we teach us to think about it reverently and in truth thoroughly and may it may it teach us what you have to teach us because you are we confess that you are excellent in wisdom you are wonderful in counsel may we realize this more and more amen yes obviously I needed to hear you talk this morning so I'm glad you don't for that when you say that thing on this wonderful counsel I tend to always when I think I need counseling of some sort and I get myself all in and nod about something try to find who would be the best person to go to and search through ask friends that they don't have concerns or therapists or this new girl or whatever and never and I know other people pray to God for everything but it's sort of eventually I get there and I never thought of them as about that no matter what he knows what way to take you and he sort of has everything at hand so no matter what he tells you to do even if you don't like it he knows where he's going so I think that was for me that really sort of like that's why you know that's where

[ 41 : 02 ] I'm going first not after I searched everybody out who's free who was by my medical you know I've got a free all expenses paid person God right there to be with me at any time I don't have hours to worry about what they are so I just think it's amazing that a person can get to this point in mind without that doing progress yeah thank you yeah later on and I was I was reading it this morning actually the later on in Isaiah you have his his wonderful rhetoric who is blind but my servant who who who observes but doesn't see you know that theme that in our lives that was true of Israel he's talking about Israel will not stay in the covenant and observe it and see my action becomes blind so I take that as application for the individual we are blind to

God's problems most of the time we don't see that's an encouragement to it isn't I this passage yes Sheila I like coming back to this theme about drama I think it's great and in my scriptures I read a book called The Unfolding Drama of the Bible I can't remember who wrote it but the only thing I really remember about it is that it did kind of say from the beginning to the end there's one plate you're looking at which had actually not occurred to me I'm sorry the Bible was a collection of books some poetry and that you know there it really was one theme that was carried through and I was quite impressed with that although we got enough to remember the guy that wrote it looking specifically at these verses that you gave us which were a mystery to me when we started out there is something here that I think could be applied to the unfolding grandma of the Bible he uses a you know a rural farm type of thing or anybody that's out of garden and people that don't plant know where to place them they know to put the thing that keeps the bugs away next to the fruit that they want to preserve you know this kind of stuff and

I have cumin and dill in my spice coverage so we still use those you can get some milk bread from capers if you want it's pretty coarse it's there aren't stones in it but it kind of looks like there might be but the thing that I get out of this is in a way and you referred to the to Genesis the idea that that God works in a pattern that is very ordered very ordered I mean the you know the water came and then the earth came and you know the light came and so on there is a sequence to it and this is sequential too you don't harvest before you plant you don't harvest everything together you know there is there is order in this there is and and God has an ordered sequential plan in the Bible that goes from you know a perfect a perfect place to live to another perfect place to live yes yes thank you and and these things grow well for you when you use them in your cooking well

I'm not growing them what are you I'm just using them but I don't have a garden I'm a foot flower I see do you well do you tithe them or do I not do you tithe them read my lit Sheila tithe do you tithe them the Pharisees the Pharisees oh there you go there's a libertine where are these verses does it say I'm supposed to yeah okay I'm rather taken maybe I'm overly taken by this idea of performance a performance script I find it very helpful I don't know maybe I'm too easily impressed but the variousness of the Bible especially its different tones always perplexed me a bit because you can't it's hard to put them together but the idea that they shape an actor's understanding of the part suddenly gives me a measure of conceptual clarity about why the genres are so different so that's that I find that helpful yes sir

I have not read all and I appreciate you and it's really helpful and as one who affirms these things my question comes out of somebody who really appreciates the drama metaphor yeah I come from before coming to St.

[ 46 : 35 ] John's I grew up from a Baptist background like many people around here and there was a Bible is a Bible saturated Bible speaking Bible carrying church gotcha and I have come to find that in some aspects performance is the enemy of real Christianity and to to role play something is to actually kill your relationship because you end up acting something out but you're not actually doing like you're not engaging that thing does that make sense I don't know if you can speak to somehow how do we enter into this story as actors even performing but the word performance really hits me the wrong way right because I want to be I want the word of God to like seek out of me and that's something that I am just doing I'm not sure if that's a question no I hear you yes of course the idea of of course he talks that

Hooser talks a lot about the actor in the first century what the word hypocrisy means means an actor but he means it in terms of well just one easy answer that he alludes to wish he'd make more of this Lewis says somewhere that children learn to become adults by pretending to be adults in play so he thinks there's a good analogy there therefore pretend you're a saint today and you'll start to learn the role in that sense there's no hypocrisy at all it's childlikeness pretending to be like my daddy or like my big brother Jesus so but yes I mean it's not it's not it's not the acting of pretending it's the acting of I want to be Hamlet I want to be this person that I'm playing

I gave I gave this I gave the book to Catherine Davenport who's an actor she'll give me some feedback I don't have a good answer for your question but it mean he obviously doesn't mean pretending to be a Christian he means get there by living he wants us to be good at ad-libbing like how do I live out the gospel Paul didn't know about the corporation I work for or the school I go to or the funny church he didn't know about church battles that were happening but how do we perform the scriptures knowing what we do how do we perform them now he thinks that that's a calling of the spirit it's very high on the spirit as your teacher to perform the scriptures but thanks for that question you do have to work out the distinction between pretending in the bad sense and pretending as a child pretends to be something good because they love it so much I want to be like my big sister my big brother so I'll start to mimic them

I mean no one wants to be morally condemning of that I know you don't so did the baptist get you get this straight for you finally or what what a pious answer was there someone I was thinking in a way I suppose I've read this sometimes but in a way the drama is God and it's his story isn't it yes so we have actually walk on fire that's right that's right that's right in a way I was looking at verse 24 and if we shouldn't ever stop at what God's doing now we don't just look at what's happening in the present but since we've got this perspective of fear yes yes yes as much as there's where the the canon do you agree with this is so helpful you might go through a long period of time according to the some genres of thinking that it is meaningless

Job so that's helpful the Bible didactically teaches that God is watching over you but we have a story here about a guy who thought anything he did that wasn't happening for me he thought or some of the Psalms end in despair almost where are you Psalm 88 where are you God so that deepens the role it isn't just oh yeah we Christians God's in control we're happy that is the scriptures rule out that attitude no casualness here there has to be a deep entering into this role of going through shadows of despair and learning the role nothing casual here a lot of our hymnody is bad because I find it casual about the gospel it teaches good doctrine but it's casual its tone is all wrong anyway there was someone behind you Tom and then Tom it let your light shine that was how i learned that and then hearing it again let your light shine before him that they see the word of it the word of soul how it's done yeah and in a role and how it will do this for god so loved the world about the world and so loved this it's just really speaking very much yeah how we are doing we can do that how we're doing yeah yes that's right yeah god's love as a lot of theological as i understand a lot of theological a lot of theological issues turn on god's love understood almost as an invitational love as opposed to a powerful effective and precise love and i think the bible teaches it's powerful and effective and precise he doesn't wait for us he acts precisely in your life there are if I can quote somebody other than Jesus.

[ 53 : 51 ] It says to be ready to always give an answer. I think it's been marvelous what you've done on a moment's basis with teaching something from being ready to give an answer.

I love an answer. Thank you. That was definitely a good idea. This drama thing also speaks to me of the issue of God just isn't.

It would seem to me not just the author or the director, but he was also a participant. And it's not so much a script in the future of the cults.

These people are believing this. These are the last reading background. They say it's not so much a script. It's a good book. The script is a good book. Yeah. It's not so much played out other than the end result.

And it's interplayed with us. Scripture directing is the outline of the place already, but the direction of what he's going is correct.

[ 55 : 03 ] There's some incompletions. My author this morning likes improvisation very much. You learn your part so well, you start acting as the character would act in a new set of circumstances that the author hasn't necessarily written a little moment for in the play.

And in a certain sense, that's obviously what Christians are doing. Yeah. He would say, yeah, he's a Trinitarian. It's the Spirit who's with us. Jesus is...

You don't know why you're smiling. Yeah. Yes. Yes. Thank you so much. I really enjoy the type of talk.

And one of the things I really think of is that we bring ourselves to the subject. We receive this as men, but now that we're about to bring ourselves to the subject.

And the fact that you're in a drama, that you're just thinking that, that altered other people play. Authorjawist, that said, after a judge, he made the way.

[ 56 : 08 ] You know what it's done. Activist they're making ways to put on their ngh■a. But the Bible covers the context, which we actually have probably just. Kendra Wynne, people come from here now is such a heaven to heaven. The Bible just keeps telling us what you've never made. It doesn't do anything out of time. I don't add to that.

You seem to remember what you were thinking. But what I said here is going to do, I would Bundestag please. The Bible comments come from here. Yes! And the Bible has ceased Intelli, so then they're doing that. And what I'm talking about today? Oh, sure, that's easy.

We'll talk to you later. Is that what professors do? That is so complex. I need to... No, it's because... The answer is, I think... I mean, the beginnings of the answer is because...

This is so modern, you know, that we are a community of readers. We're not just a community of readers, but we're never less than a community of readers. So there's your answer in principle, I think.

You are a reader with the Holy Catholic Church. And you enter into a long tradition of reading. After about two centuries of reading, the Apostles' Creed was essentially in place.

[ 57 : 37 ] The ancient church called that the rule of faith. Then, by the fourth century, the reading had delivered up the Nicene Creed. And the whole church has thought, that represents a really good reading of the whole Bible.

So there's where you start. I will be a member of the Holy Catholic Church, and I will read with her. I will not go outside of these... If I do have thoughts that are different, that's okay.

The church will listen. But if over time, the reading gets really weird, the church will either, in a really bad case, expel you for your bad reading, or will heal your bad reading.

But you just have... That's where tradition really is good. The tradition of reading tells us how over the centuries it's been read. So I bet your reading's really good.

You're being modest. Sure, you can ask a lot of different questions. Oh, what does that mean? What does that mean? But you know. You know the drama. Creation, fall, mystery of Israel, Jesus, incarnation.

[ 58 : 44 ] Death, resurrection, the gift of the Spirit. The church goes out into the world, and then there's the promise that this will come. This Passover and the resurrection is going to end up in the resurrecting of the whole cosmos.

If you've got that outline in mind, you're a good reader. You'll stay on the rails. Is that a good answer? I'm trying. And she knows what her roles are, too.

You know? Yeah. In different areas, too. Yeah. Which is going on from what you said, too. Yeah. Well, in this drama, even currently, we play different roles in different areas of life.

Absolutely, yeah. Yeah. You know? Yeah. And sort of knowing that and living that out to the whole of the heart of the soul. He quotes Shakespeare, of course, a long life's way, we all play many roles.

And in the church, we all, that's why God has given us, see, I think it's so clarifying, that's why we have the canon. That's why funny little books like Jonah are there, James and Jude, and big books like Romans, Isaiah, you know, but God has given us this panorama of script because it covers, it's like an organ, it plays the piece so brilliantly.

[ 60 : 04 ] So that all is supposed to be there because we need nuance so many times, don't we? So much nuance, and other times we need the big story. We need, so the canon is an important idea.

All this from a blooming, what if I turned into the living room and I nod into the kitchen? Sorry. No, no, Bill, I just saw you.

Isabel, I'm going to ask a question. There is a scripture, Isabel, which, you really want to be a spiritual liar. It says, if you do a small thing well, you've done a big thing.

So, if you read a commentator like, the name is a skip, I've read, it's a really good commentator, and they're talking about passion, there's hundreds of things they're talking about, they get out of that pattern.

But if you just get one good little spiritual spark, and take it seriously well, then it has enormous value, as much as knowing a thousand things.

[ 61 : 20 ] I've found it, I'm a very sinful person, so, there's a lot. But, again, good spiritual truth from scripture, may not seem large, but, you know, to make, you know, to consider it well, it's a big thing in God's eyes.

In God's eyes, it's a big thing. It's good that you're so serious about your reading, because, back to that early point, if I may, for another question down here, that, I have never, that's the first I've ever heard, this idea that, I think it's the ninth commandment.

If you're casual about reading, and reach, and report on it wrongly with the text, you are, God will hold you responsible on the day of judgment, for bearing false witness. I said this, and you said that.

And you could have known that truth, but you weren't obedient in performing my word. And you will be held responsible. You will bear false witness about his word. It means to be taken seriously as an author.

The authors haven't died. That's post-modernity's lunacy. It's insanity. And it's self-contradictory all over the place.

[ 62 : 42 ] There's, he quotes, no, he doesn't quote, somebody else quotes, an American philosopher, Searle, there's somebody Searle, who is critiquing Derrida.

And Derrida, Derrida's one of no authors, no meaning in text. Everything just deconstructs in front of your eyes. It spins off in a thousand different meanings. Maybe you've been affected by Derrida, and you don't know him.

And Derrida wrote an angry response to Searle, who critiqued Derrida, and Derrida said, you have misread me.

Imagine. He thinks that his text has meaning, and it should be honestly read and referred to. He, as the author, wants respect. Contradicts himself.

There are authors, of course, and God's the author of scripture. One more? I think we've got one more. I'll be very brief. Just to confirm, I don't know your name, you still can't read that. That, you know, what you said today was important.

[ 63 : 40 ] My wife and I are feeling a little tentative. I lost, just within the last two weeks. But as you were speaking, you used something, just for both of us, the idea of sort of walking into the future backwards.

You know, what's happened. And when we were sitting, you know, watching the hockey game, and the phone rang, and we've all been through these things, and suddenly we're standing at NSA hospital, and we're like, yeah, they're lost it.

You know, just out of the blue, but to be in the company of a family, talk about, you know, faith, you know, man like brethren, family, the family gathering, and standing by his body with his wife, who had been his wife for 54 years, and at her request, right there, you know, to join hands, and say, thank you God, we know you're in charge.

This is for a reason. This is a plan. We're hurting like crazy right now, but we trust you. We trust the story. And then to listen to that woman speak, and her faith, as she projects back into her life, and she sees the hand of God over and over and over again, walking backwards, and gives her the faith to keep going, going on and through.

Her back is always covered by God, and things come over your shoulder, and catch you by surprise. But the history and the revelation are there to keep you with strength and courage. So, we're really glad you spoke this morning, too.

[ 64 : 55 ] We needed to hear that from you. So, thank you. I think when we're in heaven, we're going to say, excellent in wisdom, wonderful in counseling. That'll be the opening words to our first hymn.

Yeah. It'll last a billion years, excellent in wisdom, wonderful, look what he did. Look at it. Was there not, Bill, shut these people up.

I just want to say that before we came here to me, we were reading the book, we rise, a source, and we're not, we're not, we're not, and I thought of what Lynette said, that we have this walk on part, it's a small part.

I think before I came to St. Johnson, the Bible was about meaning, and we looked for meaning, but picked and choose, but a wonderly is a meaning, what can instead me. In our world, it's a fun story, and looking for God in it, the whole picture, Genesis to my origin, but I realize that, not only one day, I will be remembered no more, but the church, is what it's offering, for God to give.

He's revealing himself today. His witness is through the church, and I'm a part of the church. That's one important thing, to take myself seriously, but the church that we take, not seriously, because God's reflection, is the one.

[ 66 : 15 ] Very good. Thank you very much for that. That's great. Thank you very much for that. That's great. Sinnoh Bohem, it's a wonderful vraag. Yes. Thank you, get lordy.

Great. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.