

Prayer of the Week:

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of this world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, Fifth Sunday In Lent)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Shelter From The Storm
Matthew 7:24-27 (NRSV)
March 29, 2020

The Messianic Age

According to the prophet Isaiah, the Messianic age would bring shelter to the oppressed and vulnerable and be a safe haven from the weary world.

-Isaiah 4:2-6 - The age of the Messiah shall be a shelter from the storm

-Isaiah 25:1-5 - God's care for the poor is a shelter from the storm

-Isaiah 32:1-2 - A king will rule with justice and righteousness whose kingdom will be a shelter from the storm.

At the end of the sermon on the mount, Jesus closes his famous sermon by picking up this metaphor and applying it to "anyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them."

The Sermon In Context

Imagine a people under occupation by a violent empire, seeking rescue and liberation, who began to hear that the One rumored to be the Messiah will be giving a speech on a hill near Lake Gennesaret. They gather in droves to hear his called to arms and begin the revolution to win back their freedom!

Now, imagine their surprise when this Messiah announced that in his kingdom, they are to practice enemy-love, forgive those who have wronged them, and store up treasures in heaven. This was certainly shocking - and disappointing - to a crowd ready for violent revolution.

800 years after Isaiah had envisioned what the Messianic age would look like, Jesus picks up the metaphor because he envisions that the kingdom he is building would be the shelter from the storm that Isaiah talked about eight centuries before.

The Church is to be a shelter from the storm of weary, fearful, modern life.

How Do We Become The Shelter

But, the question remains, how do we become that kind of shelter.

The sermon on the mount begins with what are commonly known as the beatitudes. In this teaching, Jesus says things like "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" and "blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God."

The beatitudes are not instructions on how to live. Rather, they are an announcement of the kind of people that will be blessed by the arrival of the kingdom of God!

Since the Church is to be kingdom people, then it also means that the Church should be good news to the poor in spirit, the merciful, the peacemakers. It means that the Church should be a shelter from the storm where people can find rest, peace, hope, and love.

What if the Church - our church - began to live in such Christlike ways that the announcement of the Good News was not just good news for the well-to-do or self-sufficient, but for those who mourn, the persecuted, merciful, and peacemakers?

May this beautiful metaphor stir our imaginations.