

God is Truly Disturbing

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn to our Bibles now and read together in the first book of Samuel, 1 Samuel chapter 5 and beginning at verse 6.

If you have one of the church visitor's Bibles, I think that's page 229. If not, it's quite near the beginning of the Bible. Keep going after Joshua, Judges, you come to quite quickly to 1 Samuel. And we've been looking at this little section beginning at chapter 4. And we pick up the story in chapter 5 verse 6 after the great defeat of the Israelite army and the calamitous loss of the Ark of the Covenant of God to the hands of the Philistines.

And remember last time we read of the extraordinary humiliation of the Philistine god Dagon who kept falling flat on his face in front of the Ark of the Covenant in the temple when they took him in. So at chapter 5 verse 6 we read this. The hand of the Lord was heavy against the people of Ashdod. He terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. When the men of Ashdod saw how the things were, they said, The Ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our God.

[1 : 3 0] So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, What shall we do with the Ark of the God of Israel? They answered, Let the Ark of the God of Israel be brought round to Gath.

So he brought the Ark of the God of Israel there. But after they brought it around, the hand of the Lord was against the city, causing a very great panic. And he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out upon them.

So they sent the Ark of the God to Ekron. But as soon as the Ark of the God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, They brought around to us the Ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.

They sent, therefore, and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, Send away the Ark of the God of Israel and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.

For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. The men who did not die were struck with tumors. And the cry of the city went up to heaven.

[2 : 3 7] The Ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, What shall we do with the Ark of the Lord?

Tell us with what we shall send it to its place. They said, If you send away the Ark of the God of Israel, do not send it away empty. But by all means, return him a guilt offering.

Then you'll be healed and it will be known to you why his hand does not turn away from you. They said, What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?

They answered, Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines. For the same plague was on all of you and on your lords.

So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land.

[3 : 3 8] Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away and they departed? Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows, on which there has never come a yoke.

And yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home away from them. And take the Ark of the Lord and place it on the cart. Put in a box at its side of the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering.

Then send it off, let it go its way and watch. If it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth Shemesh, then it is he who has done this great harm.

But if not, then we shall know that it's not his hand that has struck us. It happened to us by coincidence. The men did so, and took two milk cows and yoked them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home.

And they put the Ark of the Lord on the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors. The cows went straight in the direction of Beth Shemesh, along one highway, lowing as they went.

[4 : 50] They turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them, as far as the border of Beth Shemesh.

Amen. Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Well, what the Philistines were learning there was that there is a throne much higher than any throne of any of the gods that they could imagine or make.

And that's the great truth, isn't it, that the Christian gospel teaches us. There is a higher throne. Return with me, if you would, to the passage that we read there from 1 Samuel, beginning at chapter 5, page 229, if you have one of the blue church Bibles.

Here's a passage that teaches us that our God is truly disturbing. It's the third story, our third study in this interesting story, exciting story.

We're calling it Raiders of the Lost Ark. It really is more interesting and exciting than the Steven Spielberg version. But, of course, it's also a true story. And not only a story, of course, a message.

[6 : 03] Not only a pointed message from God himself to his ancient people, his ancient people Israel, but to teach every one of us today, as Christian people, very important lessons about God himself and how human beings must relate to God so that we don't, in fact, bring disaster upon ourselves, as happened in this story.

Now, remember that the Apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 15, and he's writing to a Christian church like us. He says, whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

So he mustn't think that this is the least bit irrelevant for us today. The questions that these stories pose to us are just as pressing, just as pertinent today, as they were then.

And indeed, each story, as we've seen, does hang around a key question asked by people in relation to God. So in chapter 4, we saw the key question was in verse 3 of that chapter.

Why has the Lord defeated us today? Asked Israel, his people. Well, the answer was because, as they learned, they had fearfully underestimated what it meant that their God was truly sovereign.

[7 : 28] that God can't be contained, can't be controlled by any mere mortals, even his own people. And in chapter 5, the question was that implied in verse 5 of chapter 5.

Why? Why did Dagon's priests always jump over the threshold to the temple? Well, because the Philistines in Ashdod had also underestimated what it meant that the God of Israel was indeed truly unique.

He couldn't be relativized, just stuck in a temple among other gods. And he certainly couldn't be neutralized, rendered powerless by any enemy. And that's still a very important lesson, isn't it, for people in our modern pluralistic world to understand.

But this week's question is really just as relevant. And it's there twice, actually, in our passage, in chapter 5, verse 8, and again in chapter 6, verse 2. What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?

In other words, how on earth do we get rid of this God? A God who, once again, they truly underestimated.

[8 : 44] He didn't realize that the one true God is indeed a truly disturbing God. And we don't need to look far, do we, to see the relevance for this in our own 21st century world.

The setting back then, as we've seen, was in a time of great confusion in society about God, about the things of God. Not only in the pagan world around, they had only the vaguest understanding of God, but actually, God's own people, God's own church, was woefully ignorant.

The leaders of the church who were there to speak for God were utterly useless. In fact, they were worse than useless. They had deliberately abandoned God's truth, deliberately abandoned his rule. They turned the center of the worship of God into a place of dreadful corruption. If you look back to chapter 2 and verse 12, you'll see Eli's sons. These were the two chief clergy, if you like.

What are we told of them? They were worthless men. Worthless men who didn't even know the Lord. The leading clergy in the nation were actually utterly faithless.

[10:00] And look down to chapter 2, verse 22. Their behavior was appalling. They pleased themselves, sleeping with all the women who served at the place of worship. They totally took advantage of them.

They turned the servants of God into nothing more than pagan shrine prostitutes. Well, there's quite a contemporary ring about that, isn't there?

It's been a terrible shame and embarrassment over recent decades to read in the newspapers of strings of clergy abusing those in their charge very often for their own sexual gratification and so on. And it's brought great scorn on the name of the Lord. That was the society that we're reading about here in these pages. Worthless men at the top of the church bringing scorn on the name of the Lord.

And chapter 2, verse 17 says that no matter what was going on, God saw it. And their sin was very great in God's eyes. Why? Well, because he says they were treating the offering and the sacrifices of the Lord with great contempt.

[11:11] Well, that's part and parcel of a very common pattern, isn't it? All through history. These things always go together. False living, very often, taken up with sexual license, and false teaching from those who don't themselves personally know the Lord.

And scorn of the sacrifices of God. That's all part of the package. when people fail to take sin against a holy God with the seriousness that God himself takes it.

The essence of sin, you see, is self-worship, isn't it? It's self-satisfaction, it's self-assertion. It's putting self at the center of our world and pushing God right to the periphery if he's even there at all. And when you do that, when you downplay the importance of sin, that will always, always lead to a perversion of the truth of God, undermining the authority of God's word, and to contempt for the offering of God, the whole concept of the need for atonement for sin against God.

To put it in our New Testament church language, scorn of the cross of Christ, and scorn for the authority of the scriptures, the word of Christ. And the New Testament, doesn't it, recognize exactly that pattern.

[12:35] Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they'll accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.

He'll turn them from the truth into all kinds of myths. And that's our world today, isn't it? Just as it was the world Paul warned about just as it was the world in Samuel's day.

You want sexual fulfillment any way you want? Well, let's have church leaders like Eli's sons. They're only too happy to bless your lifestyle. In fact, they'll come along and join in themselves. They'll be delighted, of course, to dress up in all kinds of religious garb and so on.

They'll love their ceremonies, love their institutional religion, as long as everybody's allowed to behave exactly as they want. And sadly, friends, that is all too often the mainstream church in our Western world today, isn't it?

In our own nation and in other nations just the same. But you see, when people in the church of God think that, God says, well, you might not care about sin, but I do.

[13:48] verse 17 of chapter 2, it's very great in my sight when you treat my offerings with contempt. And you see, that is because ultimately every offering that is treated with contempt is an offering that points to the great offering.

It pictures and prophesies ultimately the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's why the leaders of God's people above all need to hear these kind of warnings if they're to learn from the judgment that came on Eli's sons.

And judgment did come upon them. And friends, as we read a story like this, it's easy to say, well, that's the Old Testament, it's different then. But listen, listen to what the apostle in the New Testament says so very clearly.

How much worse punishment, he says, do you think, will be deserved by one who has spurned the Son of God, who has profaned the blood of the covenant, who has outraged the Spirit of grace? It's a fearful thing, he says, to fall into the land, into the hands of the living God. That's the New Testament speaking to us. Well, that is what this story is actually all about right here in the Old Testament.

[15:08] And the New Testament writers tell us it's written for us. So that's the situation at the beginning of 1 Samuel. It's dire. Dire moral confusion in the nation and dire religious corruption.

Just like today in so much of the Western world and so much of the Western church. But God is at work here in this story just as God is at work in the world today to preserve his true church in the midst of all the corruption and all the apostasy.

And as we've seen, Samuel himself is part of the answer. God's raised up a man to speak his true words. Chapter 3, verse 21 tells us that the Lord appeared again at Shiloh.

He spoke into the silence that there had been through the prophet Samuel. So God will not abandon his people even in the midst of grave and terrible sin.

But at the same time, God will never allow people to think that he is a God of cheap grace. And that's why the answer in these stories here is not just some kind of quick fix.

[16:25] God doesn't just say, oh well let's suddenly get all seeker friendly here. Things are going really badly in Israel so let's go softly, softly. Not frighten the horses. Try and woo people back to a form of Israelite faith that they can perhaps stomach in this new modern world.

Let's go God-light to attract people back. People are miles away from the old days of godliness. They're ignorant so we're going to have to adapt ourselves to this sort of post-Moses world.

I know it's quite the opposite, isn't it? As we've said in chapter 4, his own people learned a very tough lesson about God's true sovereignty. You can't contain him and control him.

Never. Thinking you can do that will lead to disaster. In chapter 5, he taught the pagan Philistines exactly the same thing. You can't misunderstand.

God is truly unique. You can't just put him in a temple alongside your other idols, bring him in and relativize him. Nor can you ever think just because you capture the ark that God's power has been neutralized.

[17:32] No, no, no. Now here in this story in the rest of chapter 5 and first half of chapter 6, the poor Philistines here learn another very tough lesson.

But this God, the true God, is truly disturbing when he comes among you. When the world discovers the real truth about the real God, then they discover that he's far too hot to handle.

And they find themselves saying, what shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? How do we get rid of this God? And the message in this chapter is very, very clear for us today.

Each one of us is individuals, all of us together as a church. Don't ever think that powerful encounters with this God are ever going to be something that we'll find easy.

Look at chapter 5, verse 6. The hand of the Lord was heavy against the people of Ashdod. He terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. When the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, the ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon, our God.

[18:45] So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, what shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? How do we get rid of this disturbing God?

It would be a comical story, wouldn't it, reading these verses? It wasn't quite so serious. Here's Israel, God's people, utterly sidelined, defeated, redundant.

Their glory has departed, like a bod. They're utterly scorned by the pagan world who think that they've overcome them and their God. And it is a little bit like that in our world today, isn't it?

And yet, the Lord himself is actually out on the rampage, all on his own. He's storming the citadel of his enemies, breaking down the idols in the temple of Dagon and running riot all around Philistine territory.

And again, it's rather like what's going on in our world today. Our western world, the so-called Christian West, is in great chaos and confusion as far as the church is concerned in so many places.

[19:55] People love to say that God is dead, the church is dying, it will disappear. You know those graphs that say by 2040 or whatever, there'll be not one church left in the whole world, all that sort of nonsense.

But what is actually happening? Well, all over the south of this globe, all over the east, all over Africa and Asia and South America, God is doing extraordinary things.

Don't we keep hearing amazing stories of the growth of the gospel in lands where missionaries have been shut out, in places where it seems utterly impossible for God to be at work. But all by himself, our God is managing to do extraordinary things.

And the Philistines here, just like the Israelites, had totally underestimated God. They thought he was powerless, they thought he was captured, or perhaps they thought they'd converted him and

shaped him so that he'd become one of them and be powerful for them.

What a monumental mistake. And they discover instead that he's far too hot to handle. And they just can't cope with the deeply disturbing presence of the living God as he really is, not as how they thought he might be.

[21 : 09] What's the constant refrain? What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? Again, that's something that we see so often when people today begin to really encounter the God of the Bible.

When they begin to really see what he is actually like. Not just what they imagined him to be like. When they come to hear about him from the Bible. When they come to Christianity Explored. When they read with somebody one of the Gospels.

And having been interested, they very quickly begin to find often that God is too hot to handle. Just like the Philistines.

Verse 7 of chapter 5. We can't have him in Ashdod. Send him off to Gath. Then the Gath people say, verse 10, no, we can't have him here. Send him off to Ekron. No sooner is he in Ekron than they say, no, no, no.

Let's send him far away. Far away. Back to where he came from. Because the real God of the Bible isn't actually acceptable anywhere. Isn't that why there are so many attempts to sanitize God today?

[22 : 18] In evangelism, for example. Try and make God more acceptable to people in our modern world, our post-modern world. People don't want a God like that, so let's try and put a different complexion on what God is really like.

Let's talk down sin. Let's not talk too much about things like holiness, about God's wrath. Certainly, let's not talk about the need for atonement for sin and guilt offerings.

It's because, isn't it, if the real truth be told, the true God of the Bible who takes all these things very seriously is a God that people do not know how to handle.

I don't know if any of you have watched over the years the films that have been made of the Narnia books. I love them. I think they've been generally done very, very well. But there was one tragic omission from the first film, The Lion, The Witch, and the Ward.

It was one of the best lines in the whole books when one of the children say to Mr. Beaver, isn't it, about Aslan, is he a tame lion? And there's a sharp intake of breath and he says, no, never.

[23 : 24] He's not tame, but he is good. And you see, the God of the Bible is not a tame God. He's not a tameable God.

The Philistines found his presence far too disturbing so they banished him and we have this pantomime of the golden tumors and the golden mice. So that somehow was going to please God. This shows that when people are left to their own ideas about religion, how to please God, when people think about that, they're so, so very wide of the mark, aren't they, so often?

Look at verses three and four. They've got a vague idea, haven't they? They seem to understand that God needs a guilt offering. They understand that they've done something wrong. They've got some sense, verse five, they need to glorify the God of Israel.

But my goodness, are they way, way short of what that actually means. Let's send them some golden tumors. Let's send them some golden mice. How would you feel if you were having a dinner party and your guest's all trooped in and somebody gives you flowers, somebody gives you a box of chocolate, somebody else gives you a bag and they say, what's this?

[24 : 30] Oh, well, it's a model of my prostate tumor. Had it out last month. I thought you'd like it for your mantelpiece. It's made of gold. Goodness gracious.

Here you go home and you get a present for your wife. You bring a lovely box and you open it up and say, what, there's a lovely necklace for you. It's a funny looking thing. What's that? Oh, it's a tumor. What, you'd like to wear it. It's rather nice. I mean, it's ludicrous.

You see, the world just doesn't know, does it, how to handle the true God of the Bible.

Once they get rid of him and fob him off with the sort of things, the bizarre things that we think God wants. Let's build him a cathedral. Let's give him some lovely stained glass windows.

That'll get him off my back. Let's give him lovely robes and processions and all sorts of things like that. Nothing changes, does it? People want to put God at a distance because he's far too disturbing.

[25 : 34] Remember the Gadarene people when Jesus went there and healed the demoniac from among the tombs? Did they come and fall down on their feet and say, never leave us. We need you to be with us forever.

No. Go away. We don't want you here. That's what they said to that kind of God. Do you remember in John chapter 6 when Jesus explained the truth about himself and the real cost that there would be for disciples to follow him?

It was far too disturbing, wasn't it? And we read, many turned back and many left him. And that's still true because we see that today, don't we, when people learn the real truth of the call of the discipleship, of Jesus' command to follow him, to give everything to him, control of our lives to him, to speak about real holiness, speak about real, radical kingdom living.

we discover that God actually is a God who wants to turn our life completely upside down. And we find ourselves saying, well, no thanks.

I'll have anything but that. Often people do think they want God's power in their lives, but when they get too close and discover what that really means, they're left wanting him to depart.

[27 : 08] Send away the ark of the God of Israel. That's why G.K. Chesterton was right when he said, Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, has been found difficult and left largely untried.

And that was the Philistines. They were happy to have the God of the Bible along with all their own gods until they discover what he's really like. They send him away.

That's true of many, many people in Glasgow today. Maybe it's true of you. When you discover the demands that God actually has for you and for your life, if you'll follow Jesus, you find yourself saying, I don't like that kind of God.

I want him to go away. Over the years, sadly, I have to say, I've seen numbers of people who have in different contexts left, distance themselves from churches where God's truth is clearly taught, where the challenge of real discipleship is given.

Often they give all sorts of pious reasons, they want to go and do this or help that or do the other. But in nearly every case, the truth is that they want to avoid the challenge of the true God made known to us in Jesus Christ.

[28 : 33] Christ. But listen, look at how clearly God reveals himself to these Philistine people. Yes, he reveals himself in judgment. The hand of the Lord was heavy against them.

But also, he revealed himself to them in mercy, did he not? That's the whole point of this business with the cows and the calves and the carts in verses 7 to 12.

See, the Philistines are looking for confirmation, as if it was needed, that this really was God who was operating or whether it was just coincidence. So they put the ark on the cart and they wanted to see where the cows would take it.

Now we're told, verse 7, they were milk cows. They weren't oxen used to pulling a cart. And any normal milk cows would turn around immediately and go straight back to their shed, straight back to their calves.

It would be highly, highly abnormal for these cows to go off in the other direction. But they did, says verse 12, they turned neither to the right nor to the left. They went straight back to the border of Israel.

[29 : 35] God could not have shouted louder. How kind he was being, even to his enemies. He was giving them every chance, wasn't he, to know the truth about him.

Of course it's me, he's saying. It's me. I'm telling you loud and clear, I am the one true God of power. It is me you've been dealing with. This is God's word of grace.

To the Philistines here. This is his gospel to them. How condescending he is. Even towards hard and pagan human beings. Even towards sworn enemies of his people.

People who sometimes set him all sorts of tests. Hoping against hope that they can prove that God isn't really real. And he's shouting at them. Saying, don't turn me away.

God makes it absolutely clear who he is. The one true and sovereign God. But do they respond?

[30 : 35] Do they bow down and worship him? Instead of turning to their mumbo jumbo and all the rest of it, do they turn and embrace the truth that has been revealed to them from heaven about the God of Israel?

No, they'd rather go back to their temple of Dagon with their God put together with superglue. They'd rather turn back deliberately from the truth that's been revealed.

They'd rather turn back and collude in their godless paganism. Winston Churchill once said, men occasionally stumble upon the truth, but most of them pick themselves up as if nothing had ever happened. That's so true, isn't it? We human beings have got such an infinite capacity for self delusion.

It's quite staggering. And of colluding in our delusion so we can send the truth of God away. God has made absolutely clear the consequences of rejecting his truth.

[31 : 43] He's revealed his truth plainly in his words. he's told what will happen if human beings collude in self delusion. And yet we do prefer to stick our heads in the sand and turn away.

We see it all around the world today. God says, no adultery. And we say, no, no, no, we want sexual freedom. Has it brought us the freedom, the joy, the love, the peace that we want?

It's about the reverse, hasn't it? God says, no murder. We say, no, no, no, no sanctity of life. So we live in a society increasingly where life is cheap, where abortion and euthanasia and murder is all around us.

God says, no coveting. And we've said, no, no, no. Greed and exploitation rules. And so we live not in a world of peace and comfort, but in a world of vast inequalities, oppression, sex, slavery, all kinds of dreadful things.

And on and on it goes. It's plain, it's obvious. God says, male and female. And first we said, no, no, no, no, no, there's no difference between the two. And now we're saying again, yes, there is a difference between the two, but you can choose which one you are one day to the next.

[33 : 00] It's almost as mad, isn't it, as making golden tumors and golden mice and thinking that that's the answer to all our problems in society. we're constantly reasserting our discredited man-made religion and philosophy.

Secularism, atheism, whatever it is, folk churchianity. Don't you see, God is saying, it's so, so pathetic.

it's all men just taking their shattered gods and putting them back together again and putting them up on their pedestal like Dagon, stuck together with glue, bowing down before them, and at the same time banishing, sending away the one true and living God who has shown himself powerful and has shown himself gracious.

That's our world today. We haven't learned from the history books, we haven't learned from the Bible because as Christ's apostle Paul puts it in Romans chapter 1, we have exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

Because of that, God has given us over to our sinful desires, to our shameful lusts, to our deprived minds. God gives us what we want, but it hasn't made us glad, has it?

[34 : 28] made us sad, and mad, because we can't handle the real God of the Bible.

He's far too disturbing. He turns your life upside down if you let him, and he turns society upside down, and he really has to be reckoned with.

Let me finish with these two things. First of all, if you're a Christian, if you're engaged, as I hope you are, in sharing the gospel with others, friend, you need to be realistic if you're not going to get despondent.

Don't be surprised if people at first seem very interested and welcome the gospel of Jesus, and then when they really get to grasp with its implications, they start to go right off it, like the Philistines did.

They say, send away the Ark of the Covenant, the gospel of the Lord. The God of the Bible really is disturbing. He turns people's lives upside down, and many find it too disturbing.

[35 : 35] First they're joyful, then as the reality sets in, they sadly turn their faces away. That's what Jesus taught us, isn't it, in the parable of the sower, so we wouldn't be downhearted, so we'd be realistic.

Many people want a bit of God in their life, a bit of his power in the midst, but God won't be used like that. You can't have him without him setting the agenda, without him becoming very disturbing.

So in your sharing of the gospel, don't try and hide the true God. It's only the true God who will ever be able to save anybody. It's only the Jesus who makes God known, the true and the only Christ of scriptures.

Don't hide him. But don't be surprised when sometimes he is rejected as being far too disturbing to people's lives. But second, if you're not a Christian, I have to say this to you, don't think that you can become one without disturbance, without God turning your life upside down and shaking it in almost

every place.

Don't think that you can have an encounter with the true and living God and for it ever to be an easy thing for your life. It can't be. It cannot be anything other than utterly seismic for your life from now on.

[37 : 09] The God of the Bible is not a tame God. And he's not a tameable God. Not by you, not by anyone. But he is good. He is good.

He shows himself, he even offers himself to utter pagans, to Philistines, to his enemies. And he says, you don't have to send me away.

He doesn't want you to send him away. He wants you to stay with him and be his friends. That's why ultimately he sent not just his ark, with his word of salvation in it.

But he sent his own son, the living word, into a world full of his enemies. He sent him to be the true guilt offering for sin.

So that even sworn enemies can bring glory to the God of Israel. And they bow the knee to the one and only God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[38 : 11] He will turn, your life upside down, even if you bow the knee to him. He is a truly disturbing God. But you'll never look back from the day you do.

Don't send him away. Don't send him away. Let's pray. Our Father, help us, we pray, to take you so much more seriously.

and we so easily do. Help us to understand what it means that you are holy and sovereign and good.

And therefore, though you love us and can accept us as we are, you can never, ever leave us as we are. but purpose for us, a future shaped with your glory and shaped into your beauty in the image of your son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Help us not to fear that. Help us to long for it and so to embrace you and your love and never to turn you away.

[39 : 31] we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.