

Sermons at the All Saints Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Preached by Rev Alison Heal on Sunday 17th August 2025

Bible passages: Isaiah 5:1-7 and Luke 12.49-56

PRAY

There's a crisis brewing. The winemaker who's tended his grapes all season has discovered them rotting on the vine.

There's a crisis brewing – can't you see the signs?

About 2800 years ago, Isaiah spoke God's words to his people. God's people, the children of Israel or Jews of Judah, are the cherished vineyard. God established them to be a light, a light to the world. And when he looks at them, he expects to find his light, shining out of their land and into others. That's not what he finds, says Isaiah. He finds injustice and bloodshed.

And Isaiah says that the result of this poisonous harvest will be destruction. The vineyard will be flattened and turned back to wasteland.

There's a crisis brewing – can't you see the signs?

I can't read Isaiah's words, I can't speak the words I've just spoken, without seeing the injustice of our own times. The poisonous harvest of war, fear and violence spreads around the world, and our own congregation experiences it in Ukraine, Russia, Myanmar and Syria. This poisonous harvest of violence spreads around the world, and our friends encounter it in Sudan, Iran, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Haiti and wider. The poisonous harvest of greed and wilful ignorance poisons our earth, God's creation, in the crises of Climate change and pollution.

There's a crisis brewing. Jesus announces he's come to bring fire, and division.

There's a crisis brewing – can't you see the signs?

Remember Jesus says these words at the end of the talk which we've been studying week after week here at All Saints. This is Jesus speaking to the crowd about God's treasure, about God's good gifts to those who seek him. At one point Jesus says to this crowd: 'Do not be afraid, little flock', so let's take that to heart. Do not be afraid. But let's not be complacent.

Jesus isn't saying, 'Do not be afraid, nothing's going to happen'.

He's saying, as the talk to the crowd goes on, 'Crises will happen, look out for them, read the signs of the times'. Jesus' reassurances about God only desiring to give us good things are given *for* crisis times, times where there will be families divided amongst themselves, times when people will be judged, times when people need to be ready.

God's treasure, which we've been focussing on this summer, is only occasionally the warm, fuzzy treasure of a summer holiday break. In general, in this chapter, Jesus is presenting God's treasure as something which is useful. It's not one of those holiday souvenirs that you're given and you wonder what on earth you'll ever do with it. On the contrary, God's treasure is a tool, or a protective device, or even a weapon, to practice during the good times, but for particular use in the crises of life.

The last thing I want to do, with my treasure chest and our yellow threads and our talk of warm and lovely things, is to encourage you to separate God's good gifts from the harsh realities of this world.

Instead, what Geoff and I both want to encourage you to do, is to recognise more and more how God's good gifts are given to you so that you can be a gift to others in our own challenging times. There *are* crises brewing. But with our roots deep in God, his Holy Spirit at work in us, we can be ready. Do not be afraid, little flock.

Jesus switches from talking about God's treasure to a relentless series of messages which insist: be ready! There's a crisis brewing. Be ready! Once you have received God's goodness, once you are attuned to his Holy Spirit at work in you, once you are armoured and reassured by his endless goodwill towards you, be ready! Read the signs of the times. There are crises going on, and how could you possibly reach out in God's love if you aren't receiving his treasure? There are tough decisions to make and tough people to love, and how could you possibly love as Jesus loves, sacrificially, wisely, if you're not tuned into his ongoing gift of love to you?

PAUSE

I've left Jesus' words about fire until last. They sound like another scary thing. A world ablaze sounds like what we're all trying to avoid right now. But think again. At Pentecost, the fire of God came down on Jesus' disciples. The world began to blaze with the good news of Christ, and the world has never been the same since, as God's Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, changes hearts in every generation.

Here is Jesus' treasure which he leaves with us, and we live in a world already ablaze with his love. This is how he can reassure us: 'Do not be afraid, little flock'. We align ourselves with him, in crises of justice, in crises of war, in crises of family, in crises of creation, not in our own strength, but with the indwelling power of his Holy Spirit.

Let's bow our heads and pray:

Loving Father, Jesus our friend and redeemer, fill each of us with your Holy Spirit, because only in your love and power can we give your love to our world in crisis.

Amen