

Calvary United Methodist Church  
December 1, 2019

**GETTING READY**  
Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher

**Children's Message:**

Psalm 25:20-21

I invite our children to come forth this morning. Come on up. We didn't even need snowshoes this morning. Most of our little ones must have stayed home today. Thank you for coming up this morning. I'm sure some of you probably looked forward to a little snow this morning and it's not here, but you might get to see some in the next few weeks.

Today I want to talk about God's protecting us. Do you have a lot of people that protect you? We all do, right? Protection is a great thing. This piece of scripture from Psalm 25 reads:

Protect me and save me. I trust you. Do not let me be disgraced. My hope is in you. So may goodness and honesty guard me.

It is so good to know that someone is looking us. I want to ask you: What is this thing? Do you know what that is? It's an umbrella. How many of you have one? Why do you have them? To keep you safe from...in other words it's like this, right? It's like a portable roof. Who would have ever thought of such a thing, right? It looks so much better than baggies. Right? And is it just from the rain? What about if you are at the beach where some people would probably like to be? It protects us from the sun, right?

Are there other things that protect you? What kind of things? Your family, so folks like this, mothers and fathers protect you. Did you have anything different to say? Your house is exactly right. It's a shelter. And I would like to think that our Father in Heaven says: I'm your protector. There are so many scriptures that remind us He is our protector, He is our rock, He is the One who covers us and looks over us. And God wants us to know that just like that umbrella that protects us from the heat of the sun and from the rain, God says: When you are in trouble, call out to God. And you might say: Now, how can God help me? I've never seen God. I have never seen God, but I have seen God in other people. You know God lives in you? He lives in our hearts. And so, you are having a problem and you cry out to God and someone comes, like your parents or grandparents or friends and says: can I help you? That's God. God is working through other people.

When we cry out: Save me, O Lord, in your kindness. I so many times when I was in school and you pray and you study hard and you say: Lord, help me get through this test today, help me make new friends in a new school, help me be able to get along with the people in my classes. Have you ever prayed things like that? Yeah, because we know God wants us to be successful, God wants us to be happy. God protects us and looks over us for the very best things. That's why he puts people in our lives that we trust.

Do most of you have some grandparents? Some of you have had those parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles who you just trusted and you knew wherever they would be, they would protect you, because you hope in them. And God says: I want you to not only to hope in me. I want you to know that when I am protecting you I am trying to teach you.

Teaching is a lifelong journey and learning is also for all of us, even at my age, there is more to learn than there is to imagine. Really, there is so much more to learn. And so when people around you are teaching you, do your parents teach you? Are you learning how to bake or cook? Learning how to take care of the yard, maybe fix things around the house, maybe clean? They are doing part of those things to protect you because if you don't know how to use a stove correctly you could get burned, right? And if you don't know how to clean up the house you could trip and fall over things. See, teaching, when we teach one another, there are so many of these lessons that God teaches in life: how to be friends and how to love our neighbors and how to care for others.

The teaching that God does is to try to help us and protect us because as you grow in God's knowledge and wisdom, life is just easier. We take it one day at a time, we try to learn more. And I don't know about you, but sometimes when people say one thing and do another, it's hard to learn, but if I say I want to teach you and I show you, do they just tell you to go cook something in the kitchen or do they show you? Show you, right? It's really nice to show other people how. And so we can show how to love others and how God protects.

So, when you see someone in need, what do you think you ought to do? Help them? How about that. Right? If you can and you see someone in need, you become a protector for God. That's a good thing to do, because you can do whatever it is because the scripture tells us our hope should be in God alone.

Sometimes friends and family will disappoint us, not because they want to, but just things happen and they forgot to do something or forgot to get something. But God says: I am here for you.

There is a song we sing here: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less. Of all the people, my family and friends, that I love with my whole heart, I love God the most, because God is always presents. He said we should love him with our whole heart and our whole mind and all that we have because God is our protector. He shapes us and not only is He our protector, He shapes you to go and serve Him. We were built for this reason. The day you were born, the day this little, in a couple of weeks we are going to celebrate the birth of who? Jesus! And the day he was born was the day God said: I am going to show the world what love is all about, because he came to love others. He said: I want you, meaning all of us, to choose love.

When people around us are mean, it's easy to be mean back, but God says: I don't want you

to be mean back. Sometimes you have to distance yourself from people. You don't want bullied and you don't want pushed around like that, but you choose love. You choose to be a nice person all the time. We need to love everyone at all times and understand that if we look good enough we will see the goodness of God all around us. I choose to see that. I hope you...you just had Thanksgiving. Did you think about things you were thankful for on Thanksgiving Day? I hope you took some time. And when we are honest with one another and we are honest with others to say: Look, I belong to God. God is my protector and I'm placing my trust in Him. God says: You are my girl, you are my guy and I'm going to be with you all the days of your life. And some of us up here have clung on to God for a long time because we know God is truly the One who will protect us.

I thank you for coming up today. I pray for a wonderful week for you and you are welcome to grab a fruit snack on your way down today.

**Message:**

Matthew 24:36-44

Getting ready. Are you ready for the season of Christ entering your heart? There are a lot of things we are to prepare for and we take time to make the cookies and take time to get all the food and we take time to get a lot of preparations made, but my guess is a lot of us don't take much time to get ready for the coming of the Savior into our life. We are so busy, some people don't take time in 40, 60, 80 years of life and all of a sudden, we are going to meet our maker. And many people in this day and age seem to think there is no maker, we just live and breathe and die. If that were true, that might be good for them. I tend to believe there indeed is a maker, God Almighty, who looks over us and who tells us that we ought to choose this day who we will serve and that we ought to choose the Savior, Jesus Christ. And to be prepared for that, we are asked all the time: are you ready?

There were times when I was younger and there was a lot of preachers preached brimstone and fire and all those things and they would have people crying and afraid. I'm not here to put that into anyone's heart. That's not the God I really desire to follow at that point. God is the one that says: Jeff, I love you. I made a way for you to come to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is through the gift of my son that you will celebrate in a few weeks. If you choose to live for him, to give your life for him, to try your best, knowing that even in my best I am going to fail, God says: I love you. Do you hear that today? God saying to you: I love you.

The reason we confess to God is to realize that we aren't yet who we ought to be and we never will be until the day we are home with God. We will be imperfect. God only asks us to try our best. What problem that I see happening in the world is we give up trying. We just live our life our way. And God says that won't do. That won't do.

We don't understand the initiation of security in our life, but I bet most of you understand what it is to have a guard, right? Many people nowadays have all kinds of things to prepare their homes. We have cellular things on our phone you can see who is coming in or out of

your house. We can do it from work. We have fenced in yards and we have all kinds of gated communities and we have cameras everywhere watching us all the time. I want to tell you, that kind of security is still not secure when it comes to someone who really wants in.

When Jesus was born into this earth he came as a gift from God to all of us. And we love this part of the story, don't we? It's a little baby. Who can't love a baby? And yet can you imagine the change that that baby brought into this world? There was a new baby born into the life the Woodstone family in this church this week. And as much as they were expecting that baby, I bet they have no idea of how many sleepless nights, how many diapers they will change, how long it takes to feed in the middle of the night. Many of you have been through that experience.

This child came into the world and brought a surprise and the surprise was to be new life and ever changing life. It was a way for us to meet our Savior, Jesus Christ and yet many people choose not to meet Jesus even this day.

There have been very few who have come face to face with God. Moses was one of those through the fiery bush. Even Moses in all of his humility could not have imagined the call of God on his life.

I want you to know that you and I come face to face with God all the time in people around us. I really believe I see Christ in other people. And I hope you will do that as well.

A few years back at one of my days when I was less of who I should have been, there was someone problematic in the community I was living in and always coming for more and more and more and there's an end that even what any church can possibly give for people, especially financially. Spiritually hopefully that will never run out. And someone showed up to my place and the next morning someone who was always calling me to try to be faithful had a book on my step and I opened the book and read it. It was called God on a Harley. If you haven't read that book yet, it's about an hour or less reading from what I remember, it is a very small book, very easy reading book. How we make judgements of where we want to see God and where God can or can't be and I want to tell you, this infant Jesus Christ is in every one of you this morning. God lives and reigns in everyone out there, whether they know it or not. God, our Creator God, is the one who made us and we'll never be right until we come home to God and say: Poppa, Father God. God is with us. And yet we venture.

All through the years there are people like us trying to get through life and enjoying all this temporal thing. 100 years is temporal compared to eternity. And God said be prepared because He said when he comes again it will be like, imagine, a thief in the night. The scripture said even the person at home, they would have been darn ready if they knew what night the thief was coming. But they did not know when. There was a movie when I was a youth called *The Thief in the Night*. It was a scary movie and I didn't like that. I don't need to worry about security cameras. I don't need to worry because if I live every day ready, guess

what? Come on thief.

When Jesus comes, if I have chosen already, and I feel you've already done that, you are ready to meet God. Whether I am called home today and, yes, it is a sad thing when we lose people we love, or tomorrow or when I am 100, when I love for God, I am with God. I am guaranteed that salvation if I have given myself to Jesus Christ and have chosen to live for him.

The disciples were told by Jesus to give their allegiance to God and God alone. And in just a moment we are going to participate in an act of Holy Communion where we receive these gifts, these images, the bread and the cup, to remind us that salvation didn't come freely. It came at a cost. Jesus Christ not only lived, but he died and gave himself that we might have love and life and have it abundantly and know that we are his.

We read and hear these words: Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. And yet we often forget that Christ will come again. And when he comes, he calls us and says: all my family, please come together. And it would be so wonderful if we could do that now in this broken world. No matter where we are politically, no matter where we stand on the great variety of issues out there, God says: You are my children and I love you. Accept one another. Support one another. Encourage one another. Uplift one another. Be there and live for God in all that you do, that others might say: I want what they have. I want to live with that God.

I love this: For me to live in Christ and to die is gain. Paul said that. To live in Christ, all that our desire every day isn't of this world, isn't just more of whatever, but it's how can I live for Jesus Christ today?

St. Patrick said this: If I have any worth, it is to live my life for God. The question as we are preparing for Christ coming again into our life, whether it is Advent or whether it is for eternity: Have you chosen to live consciously for Almighty God that others will know by your speech, by your actions, how you treat other people that you live for God.

We just celebrated one of America's greatest traditions of Thanksgiving and I'm wondering in that Thanksgiving Day if you took any day to realize that all good gifts come from Almighty God and to realize that the blessings we have, including the freedoms we have, not just the stuff, not just the comfort and knowing so, are you willing to fully commit to Jesus Christ? Fully commit...your life, all that you are, all that you could ever be, all that you own, is Christ's.

We live in a day that is very broken and we hear it, we see it on the television and the news, the sadness, the brokenness, it is just really heartbreaking to see it in young people and the brokenness that so many have because they want to know of a brighter future and we have it in Jesus Christ. It is the promise of God's Word.

In this time of Advent, it is the time of preparation for coming again of Christ. I pray, as we begin this day, that he will come not only in your heart and in your lives, but it will be a resolution to live out our lives, that we will give it all to Jesus. We will live with him with our heart and our soul and our mind because he will come again and he will call all of his family together again and I think that will be a very blessed day. Amen.