



**A sermon for the Cathedral Eucharist at Wells Cathedral, preached on Sunday 17 August 2025 by the Reverend Edward Day, Cathedral Curate.**

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## **Forecast of Silence**

Think. How many times today have you mentioned the weather? This morning alone, how often have you spoken about the weather? I will hold my hands up; I am very guilty of this already. Coming into this Cathedral, I've probably mentioned the weather to almost everyone I've spoken to. Sorry. It is instinctive. We're not helped here in Britain by the fact that our weather is so terribly interesting. It's awfully diverse and dynamic. A heatwave might turn into a storm. A sunny day always has the chance of rain. You may dress for a cold morning and by midday be sweating into your jumper. Exposed to the Gulf Stream from across the Atlantic, rising heat from northern Africa, and descending Arctic cold spells, the weather on this little island of ours keeps us on our toes. Although predominantly mild, there is a lot going on. The effects of climate change add further variability to our daily forecasts. It must be difficult to be a meteorologist in a pub, because there would be no end to your conversations.

The weather is the king of all small talk. It's comfortable. It's universally experienced. It's polite and non-offensive. Faced with an overly chatty man who has sat next to you on an empty bus, you can find safe waters by sticking to the weather. Working opposite a shy and uncooperative colleague, you can inspire a brief conversation with the weather. At the dinner table with a family member who holds intolerable political views, the weather can keep you safely on the fence. If your priest is rattling on, or asking you to donate to a roof appeal, top tip: you can easily distract us with the weather.

We all talk about the weather, but I wonder how often you've had arguments about the weather. I do hope this is much more seldom. Yet, here in our Gospel this morning, it might appear as if we find our Lord having an argument about the weather. It's not just banal chitchat or circular small talk. It is not used simply as a comfortable conversational topic to avoid the elephant in the room. The weather is not being used as a cloud of privilege. It is not a talkative way to keep silent.

At the end of our reading from the Gospel according to St Luke, we hear Jesus Christ address the crowds, saying, 'When you see a cloud rising in the west,

you immediately say, “It is going to rain” and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, “There will be scorching heat” and it happens’. Like us, the gathered crowds have systems to predict and forecast the weather. Interpreting the weather is important, especially in an agrarian society. However, with many words about the weather, Christ challenges the crowds for remaining silent on their interpretation of the world around them. He declares, ‘You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?’

There are times when silence in the face of present injustices is unacceptable. There are times when we are complicit if we interpret horrors in the world around us and yet respond by turning a blind eye. There are times when our faith must inspire us to stand for truth, to stand for justice, to stand for love, even if it might bring division.

Christ calls out the crowd for interpreting the metrological world around them but failing to interpret the present time. Failing to see the eschatological importance of the Incarnation and the impending Resurrection. We, too, must heed this challenge. In the face of injustice, inequality, persecution and suffering, we cannot retreat to the comfort of inoffensive small talk. To be silent in the face of injustice is nothing short of sin.

Let’s not pretend that we are unable to interpret suffering in our world. Our reading from the letter to the Hebrews highlights some of the unpleasant realities of humanity’s propensity to oppress and to hurt. As we read, ‘Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains of imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented’.

We are surrounded by a great cloud of faithful and enduring witnesses; our silence does not go unnoticed. When we see suffering, our silence can never be neutral. Our lively and compassionate faith must compel us to break the silence and to stand for the broken-hearted, to call for the release of the captive, and to condemn all forms of persecution. We may find ourselves silent not because we are immoral or awful people, but because we are human. We could be paralyzed by fear. We could be entirely unaware. We could be indifferent. But regardless of how we find our silence, it is ultimately a sign of our comfort and our positions of privilege.

Our faith and the example of our loving Saviour Jesus Christ, however, calls us to something much more courageous. We are called to set aside our sin of

silence and to follow Christ. To imitate His ministry that was unafraid of division, unprovoked by conflict, and broke down the traditional bounds of shame. A ministry not of comfort and safety, but of truth and justice. Silence in the face of human suffering is not love.

Christ came with fire to purify and cleanse the earth. A fire that is piercing and illuminating. The light of Christ dispels all darkness and therefore reveals the unsavoury and unpleasant realities of our world. Faith in Christ's light illuminates suffering. To respond with silence is to be complicit. Breaking this silence is not and will never be easy. It may bring the division that our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of.

On the 25 July this year, while in Taizé, I had the discomfiting privilege of hearing a man shouting into the void of silence because of his compassion and his faith. Someone who recognises the true danger of silence. I listened to the experience of the French military medic and later humanitarian, Dr Raphaël Pitti. Dr Pitti has several times smuggled himself into Gaza to provide medical care to those most in need. To care for those who are systematically losing their homes; systematically losing their access to food and water; systematically losing their hospitals and schools; deliberately and systematically having their human dignity violated.

Dr Pitti shared his most recent experience of a hospital in Gaza. It was overcrowded with hundreds of children running through the corridors playing, making it nigh-on-impossible to maintain hygiene standards. Supplies running out with more and more wounded arriving. The wounded being left at the doors next to piles of dead bodies. Routine treatments unable to take place. Operating without anesthesia. No blood tests. Because of the desperate circumstances, the system of triaging in these hospitals has been radically turned upon its head. Breaking down into tears, Dr Pitti explained the system. Anyone with a wound to the chest or a wound to the head or with burns of over 30% had no hope and could not be treated. Without medical supplies and without personnel, the most seriously wounded are left to die. To die scared, alone, and without pain relief. There is no way to justify silence in the face of such atrocity.

These people are the destitute, persecuted, and tormented. Dr Pitti knows that he cannot see this suffering and remain silent. And yet he, like other doctors who have spoken out, has received death threats. We know that journalists have been barred. If we do not actively listen, we will eventually stop hearing. We know how to interpret the world around us, even if we don't want to see it. We know that Gaza is not the only place under the tyranny of suffering and abject horror. Yet governments continue to be slow

and cautious in denouncing and enforcing meaningful consequences. Governments across the world fuel the reign of conflict by investing in further military arms. By faith, we must break our silence by raising awareness and being part of a resistance against the global shift towards violence.

The Lord 'delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak [...] and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight' (Psalm 72.12-14).

Dare to hope. Dare to live a life of loving faith. We set our hope on the God who loves us for who we truly are and who promises salvation to all His people. We trust that all people will be saved. We trust that our sins are forgiven. As creatures of compassion, we hope that if we face injustice, the people around us will not be silent. That if we are lost and missing, the people around us will not be silent. That if we are suffering and hurt, the people around us will not be silent.

With the fire of Christ's love in our hearts, let us dispel the forecast of silence. May our eyes recognize the sufferings of our world. May our hearts be moved to love. And may our tongues never be silent to injustice.

Edward Day, Cathedral Curate

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