

Night Shifts!

- I've only ever done **one real night shift**
 - **Postie** in Glasgow as a student
 - dreadful experience - sorting parcels - pack everything very well!
 - body clock out of sync, trying to concentrate, keeping food down in the middle of the night...
 - *(and then they didn't need my services any more!!)*
 - I realise that your body probably adapts over time
 - but I have a great deal of respect for anyone who can function in the middle of the night!
- Job of a security guard is an unglamorous one!
 - one of lowest paid, least respected... to be a night watchman
 - but despite that lack of respect, it is still a critical and responsible role
 - to give a warning, to sound the alarm, when someone comes to try and steal or destroy property
 - all of the building site of office block is under the care of that one guard while he or she is on duty

The Responsibility for the Warning

- Ezekiel had a responsibility
 - if he did it, his hands were clean
 - if he didn't, he was guilty as well as those who disobeyed
- We have a similar responsibility to sound the warning:
 - to speak and to act in such a way that sounds the warning
 - and just as Ezekiel was warned that many would not heed his warnings (**Ezekiel 3:5-7**)
 - so that reality will be true for us!
 - doesn't make it pointless to respond to God's call on our lives

The Reason for the Warning

- Or the content of the warning:
 - two particular reasons are rehearsed...
 - the fallacy of the belief that there is no hope, in vs.10-11
 - and the fallacy that you can build up a store of merit in vs.12-16

Fallacy 1: there is no hope for change (vs.10-11)

- this false belief said: I've done bad, I'm doomed, there is no hope!
- in this view, God is a just and a holy God, he is a God of judgement and punishment
- as a consequence, hope disappears, and license may well grow!
- But God isn't like that!!
 - repentance does change things
 - God loves the sinner who turns away from their sin and asks for a new start with God
 - so many of Jesus' stories and teaching.... the priest and the tax-collector at the Temple... who was heard?
- There **is** hope!

Fallacy 2: you can build up a store of merit(vs.12-16)

- Funerals - people always say:
 - he never hurt anyone...
 - she was a good person...
- I'm pretty sure that behind me being told that is a belief that, for that person, **the good out-weighed the bad**, and so **they'll be "OK"** beyond the grave...
 - and probably I'm being told because I'll be happy that here was another "good person", like people at church, even though they never came near!

- Its rarely the context to correct them, but this belief is rubbish!
 - good doesn't outweigh bad in this way!
 - even if we have been good it will all be washed away as soon as we rebel!
 - if we have been bad, then repentance and turning in faith to God - not perfect behaviour - are the route of entry into God's kingdom!
- In this context, sounding a warning is never pointless!
 - for even the best of people need to heed the warning lest they fall, and rely on their own goodness
 - and for with even the most hardened & difficult of sinners there is always hope!

Fallacy 3: there is no judgement!

- perhaps implicit in the above, and particularly relevant for us in the 21st Century, is the danger of believing there is no judgement
- but, that judgement is coming at all is clearly implicit in the necessity for giving or sounding a warning!!
- if no judgement was coming, then no reason to get all het up!

The Reward from the Warning

- To see people turn from their sins, come into the family
 - when in Motherwell we knew two kids who were adopted: privilege of seeing them settling into joy and the fullness of life, to see them eating well... as they experienced the love of a secure family which they had been denied for so long
 - it is implicit here, but our joy, our present reward for being faithful servants is - at times - to see that same process!
 - if I can look back on our time in Motherwell what brought me deepest joy? Seeing some in the YF come to faith, grow in faith, and go on to lead others to faith! One of them was even here on the Holiday Club team at the beginning of the summer...
 - *(and we still look forward to the "well done good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:23))*
- Share our master's happiness:
 - I love the way the Contemporary English Version puts verse 11: "Tell them that as surely as I am the living LORD God, I don't like to see wicked people die. I enjoy seeing them turn from their sins and live."