

We, The Shelter

“It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.” 

Though the words originated in Ireland, they are words I attribute to Jesus. Words like those spoken by Mother Teresa, who said, “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

As humans, we are capable of such atrocities as withholding from a person access to clean drinking water, or refusing education for a young girl, or intentionally infecting a family with insect larva that will eventually kill them. We’ve heard stories of genocide, torture and brutality and assume we’d never intentionally starve a child or let a mother die from a disease for which there is a cure. Or would we?

If we are shelter, as the old Irish words suggest, and we are the hands and the feet of Christ, then why do we spend so much time singing out into the air while looking up at large screens during our time in church? Maybe my celebration of God’s provision should be more appropriately directed at the person singing next to me. Is it my neighbor whom Jesus is working through? As intrusive and uncomfortable as it feels, should I be spending a little more time singing songs to the people in my community and celebrating what Jesus has done through each of them?

The songs we wrote for our latest album, The Shelter, are meant to be sung in community. They are songs intended to implicate us in the stories of others and remind us that if we do nothing, evil does not stay where it is.

Jesus stops children from drinking poison water. He does it through our brutal acts of kindness and small rebellions against a culture constantly seeking to divide and isolate us. And He does this through community. Community is a group of people who truly know one another, who know the darkest parts

of our lives and the greatest desires of our hearts.

Community does not exist to feed itself. It is designed to foster a way of living safely in harm's way. Serving the poor in Africa and serving the spiritually bankrupt in our own homes is hard and dirty work. The statistics about disease and poverty are staggering. And yet the burden is on Jesus—and He, in turn, has spread that burden among His people as He works through them to love and serve His Father's world.

Teresa of Ávila once wrote, "Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on Earth but yours." Perhaps I could paraphrase that: Christ has no shelter now on Earth but mine and yours ... if it is in the shelter of each other that the people live.