

What We're Called To Be, The Reason Why & The Means Employed

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Preacher: Rev. Andrew Coghill

[0 : 00] Well good morning to all, welcome to our worship this morning. I believe you have a note of all the information in the sheet you'll receive as you came in this morning. So we're going to go over all those again. It's a pleasure to be with you at this time and we look forward to worshipping the Lord today.

So let us worship God and let's bow for a moment of prayer. Almighty and everlasting God, be amongst us now this day we pray.

Thou who in thy mercy has brought us to the beginning of another month, we thank thee for thy care of us, ever too. And yet although the days gone past have had their shares of tears and sorrows as well as joys, yet we know and can testify as with one of old, who or two have the Lord helped us.

And so we pray thee now grant us thy blessing as we gather together in thy house. Give us of thy spirit, take away from us all distractions and all that might come between us and thee.

That we might focus upon thee now with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength. And that thou wouldst go with us into this time of worship together. Help us we pray and forgive us for all our sin for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[1 : 18] O sing to the Lord's praise in Psalm 96. Psalm 96 of which we'll sing the verse in Mark 1 to 5. 6, a big one. Now 1 to 6 at the first five stanzas.

O sing a new song to the Lord. Sing all the earth to God. To God sing, bless his name. Show still his saving health abroad. Among the heathen nations his glory to declare.

And unto all the people show his works that wondrous are. And so on to the verse 6. Great honor is before his face. And marches the divine. Strangles within his holy place. And there doth beauty shine.

These first five stanzas. Verses 1 to 6 from Psalm 96. To God's praise. O sing a new song to the Lord.

Sing holy earth to God. To God sing, bless his name.

[2 : 22] To God sing, bless his name. Show still his saving health abroad.

And the glory that gave nations his glory to declare.

And unto all the people show his works that wondrous are.

God bless you.

Amen. Amen. Well, let us pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

we can bite our tongue we can control our speech to an extent though as the apostle james tells us it is hard enough to do the tongue is a fire and it is set on fire of hell so often but our thoughts lord we know are so often secret and dark and defiled we know that what we are in the secret places of our minds and hearts is what we are in truth and these oh lord thou seest thou knowest as exactly as we truly are thou oh lord understand this every detail of us and the miracle is that still thou lovest us still lord thou who seest and knowest the end from the beginning who knows all that we are guilty of who knows our struggles and our trials and how lord though often we we long to resist sin but we just feel as if we can't we know what we could we wanted to enough but so often lord in that battle between the spirit and the flesh the flesh just wins out and we are sorry for that we are sorry for the times we have let thee down for the times we have given up poor witness lord for the times that we may have been a stumbling block to others seeking to come to christ because of how poor we are as ambassadors women so we ask forgiveness now we ask the lord to cleanse us in our very heart in our spirit and soul so that that which is in our innermost being would be itself purified that the spring and fountain of our thought and speech and action would itself be purified through the blood of christ and by his spirit and that all that flows from that spring will thereby be purified living water so refresh us with thy spirit now we pray cleanse us through the sacrifice of jesus christ our lord upon the cross we know that there is no other price to be paid for sin and we know there is nothing else that we can do lord that will ever atone for our sins so we thank thee for jesus we thank thee for what he has done for sinners like us and we pray thee lord to help us help us so lord to seek to follow where he has led help us to seek to be imitators of christ but we know that we can't do that without our spirit we need thy spirit we need the holy spirit and we thank thee that it is freely offered lord now this day we also want to thank thee for every ordinary blessing of this earth we thank you for our homes and the shelter and warmth they provide we thank thee for clean water in our taps we thank thee for food and drink in abundance when so many in the world are struggling with with famine and uh and malnutrition lord we're conscious of being blessed and of dwelling in a land that is so good although we don't think of it often that way but it's so good that people literally risk their lives to come here and lord we know that we've got a problem with regard to particularly illegal immigration and asylum and so on but if we stop for a moment to think lord what is it about our land that must be so good that all these people want to come here and here we are

freeborn citizens of it how much more ought we to be thankful than we have if we do citizenship in heaven where we are truly free so we thank thee lord for all thy many blessings we thank thee for this house of prayer we pray thee lord to bless this people at this time of vacancy and that thou would supply to them in the fullness of time the man of thy choosing anointed by thee and set apart to them and them to him so guide us now by thy spirit and grant us thy blessing and forgive our sin for jesus sake amen now i know you're a wee bit far away from me so you can't necessarily see where i'm going here but i'm sure you know what this is um they all used to be burgundy but now they're starting to be dark blue a bit my wife's one is now dark blue she's got a more modern one than i have and of course they used to long ago all be dark blue i remember my mother's passport was it was sort of far more kind of hard more than this and it wasn't as as bendy as this it was it was dark blue and had a black and white photo in it but this has got photograph inside it no you won't be able to see it from that distance it's got some details and i know there's a lot of information in our passports that that perhaps it tells quite a bit about this a couple of years ago when the governments were looking at introducing identity cards and then they decided not to in the end they probably didn't need to because they just started requiring your passport for everything and that tells you quite a bit about you i mean this if you were to open this it would tell you my name it would tell you what nationality i am it would tell you the date i was born it would tell you where i was born um it would tell you when my passport expires uh it wouldn't tell you the most important thing about me because the most important thing about me is not where i was born or what my name is or or what kind of how old i am or what countries i've been to the most important thing about me is that i seek to serve the lord jesus christ not because i'm a minister but because i'm a christian minister is kind of like one sense the job i do it's more than just a job of course but that's not so much my identity as who it is that i am i believe called from all eternity to serve born to serve my identity is not so much bound up in a passport my identity is bound up in christ in the savior who has redeemed me by his precious blood and it wouldn't matter to the extent what color my passport was it it wouldn't matter what country my passport represented wouldn't matter when i was born or how old or young i was what matters in the scheme of eternity is whether or not i belong to christ that is my identity more than any other nationality or flag or country or language or heritage or anything like that that is who i am and that is the identity the ultimate identity of all those who belong to christ it's why whether we are black or brown or white or yellow skins or whatever languages we speak we know that we are one in christ and we when we get to heaven if we are believers in christ we will have brothers and sisters there that we have never met in this world and yet we'll know them we'll know them and we'll be able to converse with them and they all still look like they did down here only they'll be perfected just as we will be and it will be one family as it is one family in christ albeit or all different and yet we all have that identity which is not defined by a passport but which is defined by the blood of christ and by what he has done for us that's who i am more than anything else and if you're in

Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them. Even them that contended with thee, they that war against thee, shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught.

For I, the Lord thy God, will hold down my hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee. Fear not thou warned, Jacob, and ye men of Israel.

[22 : 34] I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new, sharp, freshing instrument, and in teeth. Thou shalt fresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shalt tie them away, and the whirlwind shalt scatter them. Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a prune of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shetha tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree.

I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together, that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

[23 : 42] Amen. And the Lord add his blessing to this reading of his own most holy word. Let us again pray. Our loving and gracious God, we acknowledge thee to be the one who alone is the help of thy people.

And we pray this day that thou wouldst remember those who stand in need of thy help. O Lord, thou knowest this people and congregation and community.

Thou knowest, O Lord, by name individually. And we pray this day for those who may be laid aside, housebound, or sick at home or in hospital.

We pray to be with them, and for those who care for them. For thou knowest, O Lord, that however debilitating it is to be ill, to be laid aside, to be confined, it is draining also and can be exhausting for those who care for them, and who have the responsibility of looking after them, and keeping all things on an even keel.

So we thank thee for the labours of those who serve, perhaps quietly and out of sight. O Lord, encourage and uphold them, and enable them to know that their labours are valued and not in vain.

[25 : 05] Lord, we pray also for those who as yet know thee not in our communities and in our island. We pray that these souls, O Lord, so many of whom perhaps we see in the public notices, in the funeral notices, Lord, online, and we see how many nowadays aren't even being buried from a church service.

We see those who are gathering for whatsoever form their funerals may take, in secular places and of secular intent.

And we mourn and weep for such, because we know what eternity shall hold. And we pray, O Lord, that thou wouldst awaken the souls and the consciences, Lord, of those who not by foolish reasoning will think that mere entry within the building of a church will save their souls or do good, but who will seek rather a relationship with thee, whilst yet there is time.

It is for this good news, Lord, that we pray to be spread into the homes and communities of our island. We pray for an awakening, Lord.

We pray for an outpouring of thy grace. For thou knowest, Lord, the great need of men and women, and is not merely for material benefit, as thou didst teach thyself in the seminary month.

[26 : 35] After all these things do the Gentiles seek. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. It is for Christ that men and women have their greatest need.

It is for Christ that there is the most urgent need of the soul and the life. This life which seems so long and stretches ahead of us when we are young.

But as the years and decades pass, we realise that they have done so in but the blink of an eye. And so, Lord, given that the time is short and the days are few, we pray that thou wouldst awaken those who as yet have no thought of thee.

Awaken them from the sleep of death and help us, O Lord, with charity and kindness and humility and winsomeness to witness a reason for the hope that is in us.

That we may be ready, O Lord, to support and to help those who may be taking their first tentative steps. Seeking thee, Lord, after perhaps a lifetime of pushing thee away.

[27 : 47] So we ask thee, Lord, help us and use us in the service of thy kingdom. And remember, Lord, also the multitudes throughout the world who are struggling with famine and drought.

Or perhaps, ironically, with harmful floods which don't benefit the soil but just build up piles of rubbish in the waves and the wall of water that sweeps through landscapes and communities and destroys homes and leaves no good behind it, only dirt and destruction.

O Lord, we pray for those like in Ethiopia who, having had so many years of drought and famine, have now had fearful flooding which harms the soil and washes away all the good of it.

We pray, Lord, that thou wouldst enable their recovery, that thou wouldst help them, O Lord, and that thou wouldst send a gentle rain in its season, that there may be crops and harvests and an opportunity, Lord, for physical food, just as we pray that the need for spiritual food may be met.

We remember those who are persecuted for the gospel's sake. We think of those in North Korea and in China and in Eritrea and so many other places, Lord, where thy people are routinely locked up or imprisoned or worse.

[29 : 10] We thank thee for the faithfulness of those who continue in Christ in the midst of so much hardship and suffering. And we know, Lord, that even in our own land, the discrimination against the gospel continues of this.

All other religions are tolerated and approved and encouraged. The absence of religion is affected as a veritable virtue, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is discriminated against and legislated almost out of existence.

We thank thee, Lord, for the faithfulness of those who hold fast. And we pray now at this time that thou wouldst remember this people and community and congregation. We pray, Lord, for the interim moderator, Dr. Davis, be with him, O Lord, in his own congregation in Carraway.

And grant, Lord, that thou wouldst be helping this people as they have their congregational meetings, as they appoint their vacancy committee, that thou, Lord, would strengthen their hand and guide them, O Lord, with all the filling of the forms for the subcontentation fund schedules and all that has to be done as we're seeing there in the notices.

And we do pray, Lord, that even now, perhaps unbeknownst to him, thou wouldst be preparing a man of thy choosing whom thou wouldst anoint as the pastor of this flock.

[30 : 35] And that thou wouldst enable him, O Lord, to be brought here by thy grace and spirit. And that thou wouldst join him to the people and the people to them. And that thou wouldst continue the work of his faithful predecessors from the past.

We thank thee for their labours, those who have gone before. And now, Lord, as we look to the future, we know that it is for those years ahead that thou needest must appoint a new servant.

So we pray thee, Lord, help with that process. Help these people here. Help thy people throughout the world. Help those who lead our mission that they may be guided by thy spirit.

We ask thee to help and bless our first minister in Holyrood and his deputy. O Lord, be with her who has endured so much breakbats and attacks for her faith in thee.

We pray, Lord, for our parliament there and for our MSPs. We pray for our prime minister in London and for his government in Westminster. We pray, O Lord, that thou wouldst cause there yet to be a turning back of this tide of voting for killing which has taken place there.

[31 : 48] We know that the same thing is coming to Holyrood and we do pray, Lord, that thou wouldst enable our representatives to resist this tide. O Lord, we pray for the sanctity of life to be upheld.

We pray for the vulnerable to have the care that they need and not to be led to think that doing away with themselves is the best service they can render to themselves or others.

Thou, Lord, hast given life. Grant that it may be given in all its fullness until natural death that thou wouldst appoint thee out of. So we pray that thou wouldst guide our leaders.

Remember our earthly king and his ministers of state. Remember our councillors, Nicola. All those set in authority over us at different levels. And our prayer, O Lord, is that they would be guided and led by thy spirit.

And that thou, Lord, for the future wouldst raise up godly and God-feeling men and women who would offer themselves for public service, whether in the corridors of power locally or nationally or for the realm-wide, Lord.

[32 : 55] We do pray that thou wouldst help with these things, for there is a need for our land to be led by the influence of the godly. So help us, we pray.

Raise up men and women and boys and girls who will be witnesses for thee in their day and who will be given in our day to testify to what the Lord has done.

So hear us graciously and love us thee. And continue with us now, for Jesus' sake. Amen. We sing the Lord's praise again in Psalm 96.

Once more, Psalm 96. And we'll sing the verses 7 to 11. That is five stanzas. Psalm 96 and verse 7.

Do ye ascribe unto the Lord the people every tribe. Glory do ye unto the Lord and mighty power ascribe. Gave ye the glory to the Lord that to his name is due. Come ye into his courts and bring an offering with you.

[33 : 51] And so on to the verse 11. Let heavens be glad before the Lord and let the earth rejoice. Let seas and all those they end cry out and make a noise. These five stanzas.

Verses 7 to 11 from Psalm 96 to God's praise. To ye ascribe unto the Lord for the Lord Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Righteous See Let Hands be Glad Before The Lord And let This earth Rejoice Let These Adore The Stand

Cry And Make A Noise Let us pray.

[37 : 00] Loving and gracious God, we ask thy blessing now upon thine own holy, inspired, and infallible word that is open before us. Bless it to us because it is thy word, therefore it is holy and pure.

And we pray to feed our souls now upon this the bread of life. For we ask it all in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. In Isaiah chapter 41 we read at verse 8 But thou Israel art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

I would suggest to you today that this particular verse, then search to us three things. First of all it is where we are. In other words, what we're called to be, which is servants of the living God.

And that is identifying thou of Israel art my servant. That's where we are, and what we're called to be. Secondly, it gives us the reason for that position of where we are.

And that is the grace of election. Because it goes on to say, Jacob whom I have chosen. And thirdly, it goes on to give the means employed for doing that.

[38 : 18] And that is the seed of Abraham, my friend. So that's where we are, and what we're called to be, which is servants of the living God. We've got the reason for that position, which is the grace of election, and we've got the means employed, which is our being the seed of Abraham.

So, first of all then, where we are now. We are, each of us, called to serve. You know, Christ himself said that he came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

If it is truly Christ that is in our hearts, then we cannot scorn to be servants, or to consider it somehow beneath us. For it is in truth the highest privilege of mankind, to serve the living and true God.

Man's defense, to glorify God, to enjoy him forever. How do we enjoy him if we're not in his presence? How if we're in his presence can we truly enjoy him as we are serving him?

Such service calls for humility, for obedience to our Lord's wishes and commands, and the submitting of our will under his divine will.

[39 : 34] Yes, in truth it is a dying to self and to our petty desires and ambitions of which we lay down at the mass so speak.

But in thus surrendering our will, our ambitions, our desires, and making them subject to his will and his desires and his commands, we become thereby the functionaries, the hands and feet, the living representatives of the Lord himself, his ambassadors.

Just stop them on and ask yourself, by whom would you be more impressed? A Christian who sought always to reflect and do what Christ said and thought, or a Christian who was okay to do that sometimes, but really when he came to his own opinions or desires, or those came first, which in your mind is a better representation of Christ.

It's the one who submits his will, however strong may be his desires or wishes or ambitions, these are all subsumed under the will, the command, the teaching of Christ.

The better Christian is the one who reflects the love, the teaching, the commands, the faith on some Jesus, not of himself or herself. His commands, his teaching, his will, we become his hands and his feet.

[41 : 04] We become the living representatives of the Lord himself. We become his ambassadors. Now, we may scorn to be such a servant, referring to be our own masters, but in seeking such an impoverished honour, we truly do ourselves no favours.

Hear what the Queen of Sheba said about the servants of King Solomon. In 1 Kings 10 we read from verse 4, when the Queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cub bearers, and his assent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her.

And she said to the king, it was a true report that I heard in my own land, and the acts of thy action of thy wisdom, how be it I believed not the words until I came, and my eyes had seen it, and behold, the half was not told me, thy wisdom and prosperity exceeded the thing which I heard.

Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom.

hear thy wisdom, and hear thy wisdom.

[42 : 33] Of course, as I know, Jesus said about himself, behold, the greater than Solomon's ear.

If Solomon's servants are blessed as they stand in his presence, and hear with them, how much more the servants of Christ, stand in his presence, and receive his truth, his wisdom.

servant is ever at his master's disposal. He may wait upon his master all the day long, and the master may hardly ever call upon him, or actually require him to perform any task, yet by the very act of quietly waiting upon him, he is doing his servant duty.

He is working. He is servant. If I can use an example from the world, even from television, a very popular television scene sometimes goes, Downton Abbey.

Now, if you think about Downton Abbey, when they're all on a big porch, dining table, and then they're all a bit busy, and you've got the servant trip, they're all standing round, and they're both and so on, and until such time as somebody calls them over, or asks them to put something on their plate, they're just standing there.

[43 : 54] They're standing with their backs against the wall, they're observing the whole time, they're watching, and they're watching until somebody eats something, then they come in, then they ask, but it might be the entire course of the meal, or the entire dinner itself, or they're just standing, they're just standing waiting, they're not doing nothing, they're doing their job, they're working, they are waiting upon those who are with a master or mistress too.

And likewise, the Lord may for a time, not require any specific or immediate of us, but waiting upon him, and being ready at his command and will, is still serving, still working for the Lord.

A servant is ever his master's disposal, and he may wait upon his master all day long, and he hardly ever calls him, yet by the very act of quietly waiting upon him.

Jesus tells parables of this. He says, look, blessed is that servant who's watching for his master, waiting for when he comes home, and he's got his loins girded and his lights burning and ready to open the door whenever the master comes.

And a lot of the time he may think as if he's just twiddling his thumbs, but he's not. He's watching and he's waiting and he's doing what his master requires of him. It may seem very unspectacular, but he's still being his servant.

[45 : 18] He's doing his duty, he's working, he is serving. The Thessalonians, we are told, 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 9, were told, turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

And we'll look at a little more of the Thessalonians this evening, but we are also called to turn from our idols, the things which clutter up our lives and suck the lifeblood of our attentions and our time and our desires.

Our idols are whatsoever we make to be more important than the Lord. Whatever we do first and foremost in our lives ahead of the Lord has become by definition our idol.

If I were to say to you, have you got idols in your life? You say, oh, no, no, I haven't got any idols in my life. I say, well, how long would you say you spend in a day in prayer and reading your Bible? Oh, well, you tell me what the time was that you spent on that.

I say, then how long would you say you spend on your computer screen or on your phone or watching the TV? How long would you say you spend on your particular hobbies?

[46 : 30] How long do you spend on this aspect or that aspect? If you're like, no, of course, we're all working lives. So you have to spend a certain amount of your day doing your job and working. That can't be negotiated.

But the time that you have control over, what do you give your time to, what do you spend your money on? How much of your money is for the Lord and how much is for particular kinds of pleasure or whatever it may be?

And these things are not wrong in or of themselves. But they become wrong if they become more important than the Lord. Anything that we put before God, we have put higher up than him.

That has become, by definition, our God, small g. that has become our idol. And it can be absolutely anything. If it means more to us than the Lord, there's your idol right there.

If we, in fact, give more time, more attention, more delight, more of our resources, more of our life blood to this other thing, that has become our idol, a false god.

[47 : 38] And we're called to lay these things aside, to lay down at the foot of the cross and give our lives, our time, our attention, our very hearts to serving the living God.

This is to become the most important thing in our lives, the ultimate category of our identification. That yes, I am a Christian. I am a sinner saved by grace.

This new identity surpasses all other identities of language, or nationality, or gender, or employment status. As Paul writes to the Galatians, chapter 3, verses 27 and 28, we read, For as many as you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you're all one in Christ Jesus. for Jacob, this new identity goes hand in hand with his status as a son of the living God.

And that is expressed in his new name, Israel. And we read that in Genesis 32 there, where verse 24, we read, Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

[48 : 56] And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the all of his style, all of Jacob's times, and he wrestled with him, and he said, let me go for the daybreaker. And he said, I will not let me go except thou bless me.

And he said, what is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel. For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

That's what the name is here, the prince with God. Now, only with the servant king, Jesus, could one be at the same time a prince with God and the servant of God.

Having wrestled and prevailed, this is Jacob's reward, a new identity whose rank is to be royal, and whose function is to serve.

It is this new identity, this royal rank and divine service through which the Lord calls sinners of all ages and characters and nationalities.

[50 : 12] This is a free offer of the gospel, and once both invitation and command. commands, this is where we are now, called to be servants of the Lord, it's both invitation and command.

How can it be invitation and command at the same time? We're freely invited or we're commanded. It is both. Think of the parable Jesus told about the supper, where I invited people and they wouldn't come.

Go out into the highways and byways and bring them in. We've done that now. Go out compelled to come in. It is both invitation and command.

And of course, there are those who decline, well, there are those who say, no, actually, we're not going to bother. And when our command is saying, well, that's what you say, but I'm not going to do that. And we can have our disobedience and rebellion against God and think, look how I've won.

And let's just see how you've won when the last breath goes out of your body and you enter eternity. Without him, whom you've kept at arm's length your whole life, it's not a funny business, it's not a laughing matter, it's the most serious thing in your entire life and death and time and eternity.

[51 : 26] The free offer of the gospel is Hodao Israel,! My servant, and you, in the name the Lord has laid upon you, call to be his servant, it is both invitation and command, it is an identity which is royal and whose function is to serve.

This is where we are now with the free offer of the gospel. Secondly, then, we have the reason why Jacob, whom I have chosen, if we are promised to serve the Lord, we are enabled by grace to repent and believe the gospel, to give our lives into his hand, who has caused us, who has done it, what has made it happen?

Why do some, from the privilege of a Christian upbringing, turn their backs upon the Lord, and either drift into indifference and unbelief, or in some cases become violent enemies to the gospel, whilst others, from the same Christian upbringing, go on in the faith of Christ, and still others, with no Christian background, whatever, are converted and saved.

There is no human explanation for this. Why, as experienced that, previous ministry, two elderly brothers, same parentage, same blood, same outward interaction and experience, lived in the house together, they lived very, simply, linoleum on the floor, not carpets or anything, in order to save heat, there is one fireplace in one of the front rooms, a bed on one side, a bed on the other, they both slept in the same room, the individual bed, either side of the room, to conserve heat, no TV, just a radio on the mantelpiece.

It couldn't have been more basic, it couldn't have been more simple, they worked their craft, they did their work and so on, two bachelor brothers, one an elder of the church, and the other, no interest whatsoever, absolutely nothing, and one of them now will be in glory, and the other one is in a lost eternity, and yet they were exposed to exactly the same opportunities and outward for us, but the electing grace of God chooses one and bypasses another, there is no human explanation for this, we can't control that, this is quite simply the free grace of election, and what we learn from this verse is that whilst Israel is described as my servant, in other words it is the new character who serves God under his new name and identity, it is, notice, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the old name and identity, in other words, this choosing, this electing happens long before any change in the character of the individual,

[54 : 34] God does not choose Jacob because he turned to God and so became Israel his faithful servant, but rather God makes choice of Jacob from all eternity, and so in the fruits of time, in response to that electing grace, Jacob turns to serve the living God as Israel the prince would, God.

We read thus in Romans 9 from verse 10, and not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by her father Isaac, for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger, as it is written, Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated, that means loved less, not hated in the sense of bitter identity.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid, for he said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

So then it is not of him that will have not of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. God in his mercy chooses to save some.

Truly, we love him only because he first loved us. God is in control, that is the reason why you serve him. And if you are not his servant, not living in obedience to him or not having given over your life to him, then you don't have to discuss it, well, that is because I don't want to be elect.

[56 : 11] How do you know? If you had asked any of those who are now Christians, whether in the days before they were converted they would say, well, actually, yeah, it is okay, because I want to be elect, it is just I haven't got there yet.

Nobody knows whether or not they are amongst God's elect. Nobody knows for heaven, but God by his grace enables his children to respond to him in his mercy.

Clearly we love him only because he first loved us. God is in control, that is the reason you serve him, and this opportunity that we have here, if you are not yet his, you don't have to despair, you don't have to worry, oh, but whether or not these things are way out of your paid rate of mine.

These are in the heart of God for all eternity. Not in your decision or mine. What you and I have to be concerned with is rather not with decisions that belong to God alone, but rather where we are now, which still applies.

We are in a place and time of the free offer of the gospel, to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so to be saved. This is both invitation and command.

[57 : 28] Can you ever envisage a stage or time when having gone to the judgment seat of Christ, and you say, well, I believed everything that you said, Lord, I gave myself to Christ, and I believed and trusted, didn't know if I was elect, but I gave myself completely to you, I believed in you, I was in relationship with you, and the Lord turns out and says, well, actually, sorry, you know, you weren't going to be elect, so tough, off you go to a lost eternity.

God doesn't do that. Men might do that, but God doesn't. What does Jesus say? He says, all that the Father give of me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Jesus never turns anyone away. There's no cause for despair or discouragement to anyone as yet outside of Christ, because where we are now is still in the place of the free offer of the gospel.

It is both invitation and command. Thirdly then, we see the means employed in this verse. So that is, the seed of Abraham might bend.

Now, God chooses, he might think, well, surely that's the means employed, God's choosing. Well, no, a farmer may choose one field or crops and apply it in and bypass another, but still he has to plant it and sow it and these would be the means by which he raises the crop and the field he has chosen.

[58 : 58] So the means God employs are to make his chosen children heirs, seed of faithful Abraham, God's friend. Since Abraham is the friend of God, Abraham's family will likewise have entrance and be welcomed wherever Abraham himself is welcome.

Think about this way. Let's say, for example, you went away to the mainland, you went to college or something like that and there you met a pal and you got to know each other and then you were great friends and you kept in touch a little bit but then you came back the island.

They went off their own way and then maybe 20 years later they said well actually I'm going to visit the island and you would be great if I could meet up with you and you say yeah that's fine and they turn up and they've got with them a wife and a couple of wee kids and you're going to say well you can come in but I don't know who these people are, keep them away, they're coming to my house, I don't know them.

What you're going to say is oh let's see what I've done and your children are lovely to see them, haven't seen you for years, come on in all of you, you do not know these people at all.

What is the strength, the reason why you're welcome to have them in your huts and to sit at your table and make them your friends because they are the flesh and blood or the life bone partner or whatever of your friend and because they are your friend, this is their seed, this is their children, this is their family and where your friend is welcome your friend seed, family, flesh and blood are welcome because Abram the friend of God is welcome, Abram's seed is welcome as well.

[60 : 43] Now of course Abram here is one of those Old Testament patriarchs who prefigures Christ, pointing us forward to the one who was the fulfillment of all the promises to Abram.

Jesus said to the Jews in John chapter 8 verses 56 and 58, your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad. Jesus said unto them verily, verily I say unto you before Abraham was, I am.

If we want a more explicit fulfilling of this prophecy of Abram's seed into that of Christ, we need look no further on what we find again in Galatians 3 verses 7 to 9 where we read, know ye therefore that they which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham and the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed, so then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

And verse 49, and if ye be Christ, then ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. As the seed of Abraham would be welcomed and have entrance wherever Abraham himself would be welcomed, so likewise the seed of Christ enter into the presence of God's glory, not by virtue of any merit or accomplishment on their part, but rather simply because of their relation to Christ.

He is acceptable before God the Father, they are his, just like the family of your friends, so by definition they are acceptable. And this is what we read today in Isaiah 53, verses 10 and 11, Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief, when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied, by his knowledge shall my righteous servant, justify many, but he shall bear their iniquities, his seed, his descendants, the travail of his soul, the child birth, if you like, of what once he has brought into being.

[63 : 01] The whole chapter of Isaiah 53 reminds us of the sufferings of Christ, and the sacrifice that he made for sinners like us. When we consider how much our Lord endured and the price that he paid, we begin to see something of how much the Lord surely loves sinners, how much he surely must love this lost and fallen world.

Truly, God so loved the world, that he gave us only the open son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son to the world to condemn the world, but that the world for him might be saved.

He has done everything for us. He has laid down his life willingly in a holy contact with his father's justice, becoming the man slain from the foundation of the world, not just from the days of Pontius Pilate, but from the very beginning.

God has done this so that sinners might be saved. God has chosen from all eternity sinners to be saved and to be transformed in their lives and hearts and identities by the gospel of Christ.

He has given to them the gift of faith. Ephesians tells us, chapter 2, verse 8, for by grace he is saved through faith, and not knowing yourselves it is the gift of God. They might become by faith the seed of Abraham, and he is together with him of the promises.

[64 : 24] And having done all this, he freely invites all men and women and boys and girls, foreigners and natives, black, white, yellow, brown, yellow, red, whatever the skin colour, whatever the language, to repent and believe the gospel, to become servants as he himself came not to be served, but to serve.

In other words, to become like him. 1 John tells us, chapter 3, verse 2, Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, for we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

But thou Israel art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. We have seen a purpose, we have looked at the reason why, we have looked at the means employed by God.

Our greatest privilege and highest calling is to become the servants of the living God, of royal rank and divine service. This is the free offer of the gospel.

It is at once both invitation and command. It is so good that Christ wants none of us to miss out and so orders his disciples to go out into all the world and invite all.

[65 : 46] It is so urgent that God commands all, lest any lose the prize by sloth or time wasting. Wherever we may ultimately be or finally spend eternity, today the free offer of grace is on the table.

This is the good news and this is where we are now. Amen, ministry. Gracious and beloved Lord, we ask thy blessing on thy word that we have received.

We thank thee Lord for the fact that we are called to be servants as the true Israel of God. We thank thee Lord that thy people are elect from all eternity that they have received not merely of Abraham the friend of God but of Christ the son of God.

So help us then in this day to leave the things of eternity in the hand of God but to trust in thee and the free offer thou this make that as we receive and accept what thou do us for us.

So Lord we may render our thanks, our lives, our service into thy hand now and all the days of our life for we ask it all in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

[67 : 01] We close our worship this morning singing God's praise in Psalm number 20, Psalm 20 of which we will sing the verses Mark 1 to 5.

Sorry, I haven't got turned up right. Jehovah hear me in the day when trouble he hath sinned and let the name of Jacob's God be from all ill defend or let him help send from above out in his sanctuary and sign his own holy hill that him give strength to thee that him remember all thy gifts except thy sacrifice grant me thy heart's wish and fulfill thy thoughts and counsel wise in thy salvation we will joy our God's name we will display our banners of the Lord thy prayers all fulfilled psalm 20 verses 1 to 5 the first four stanzas to God's streets heard O let him help sing from above

I've gone this sanctuary From Zion, his own holy hill Let him give strength to thee Let him remember all thy gifts That shed thy sacrifice Can thee thy heart wish to fulfill Thy thoughts and cancer wise

In thy salvation we will joy In our God's name we will His play of matters at the Lord Thy play of love fulfill Now in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The love of God, our Heavenly Father And the communion of God, the Holy Ghost Rest upon you and remain with you each one This day and for evermore Amen Thank you Thank you

Thank you Thank you Thank you Thank you.

[71 : 44] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.