

Peace, Justice, Hope (Remembrance Day Service)

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Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[0 : 00] Good morning to you all and a very, very warm welcome to our service today. I want to thank you all so very much for being here as we gather as a new week begins and also as we gather to mark Remembrance Sunday. So a warm, warm welcome to you all and thank you for being here.

My name is Thomas Davis. For any of you who have not been here before, I'm not the minister here in Kalanish, I'm the minister in Carloway. The congregation here is currently without a minister, so I am looking after the congregation until a new minister is appointed.

But it's a real pleasure to be with you this morning. Our service will be very, very simple. We will sing together, we'll pray, we'll read from God's word and we'll spend some time looking at God's word in more detail.

And then at about 5 to 11 or so, we'll go outside together at the War Memorial for the laying of the wreaths for the two minute silence and then we will close with a galaic psalm together outside and our hope is that the rain will have eased off.

I would say, you know, I could just keep preaching until the rain stops, but I have to finish by 11 today, so that's a comfort for you all. This is the only year when Thomas Davis finishes our service in less than an hour.

[1 : 19] After we gather at the War Memorial, there will be a cup of tea available in the hall and we'd love for you to stay behind for that if you're able to do so. So a warm, warm welcome to you all and thank you very much for coming. And a final reminder that also there is a service at 12 noon at Tolstach Eilish in the meeting house there.

And again, anyone who would like to come to that is warmly invited and I hope to take that service myself. Most importantly of all though, we're here to worship our Saviour Jesus. So we gather in his name and we gather in the hope of the good news of the Gospel.

And so we're going to sing together to God's praise from Psalm 98 and we're singing from verse 4 to the end. Psalm 98, it'll either be at the back of your Bibles, you'll see the mythical Psalms here at the back of your Bibles, or if you have a Psalm book, just follow the numbers through.

Psalm 98 and we'll sing from verse 4 to the end of the Psalm. It says, Let all the earth unto the Lord send forth a joyful noise. Lift up your voice aloud to him, sing praises and rejoice.

We'll just remain seated as we sing together verses 4 to 9 to God's praise. Let all the earth unto the Lord send forth a joyful noise.

[2 : 50] Lift up your voice aloud to him, sing praises and praise.

Lift up your voice aloud to him, sing praises and rejoice. With harp, with harp and voice of psalms, and teach ye who have seen.

With trumpets, carnage gladly sent before the Lord the King.

Glacies and all their fullness brought the world and dwellers there.

Let floods clap hands and let the hills together joy declare.

[4 : 14] Pray for the Lord because he comes to judge the earth come sea.

He'll judge the world with righteousness. His hope with equity.

Let's stand and pray together. Father, we thank you so much that as a new week begins, we can come before you and gather together to worship you.

And as a new week in our lives begins, we want this to be the first thing that we do. To come before you and to acknowledge that you are our God.

You are our maker. You are the one who has provided everything that's good in our lives. And you are the one in whom we find hope and peace and joy. We thank you that we can gather here today.

[5 : 26] We thank you for everybody who's come together. And we thank you that as we gather here, we also are gathering side by side with people all across the world. Meeting in the name of Jesus.

To bow before you. To worship you. To praise you. And to thank you. And so as we lift up our voices before you today, may those voices join together with a wave of praise running all across the world to the honour of our Saviour Jesus.

We bow before you with thanksgiving, recognising that you have given us everything that's good in our lives. And we're so thankful to you. You provided us with homes, with families, with friends, with this community that we live in.

So many blessings that we enjoy each day. So many privileges that you've brought into our lives. And we thank you for that so much. But more than anything else, we thank you for your Son, our Saviour Jesus.

We thank you that you sent your Son to die and to rise again, so that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life. We thank you for your Son to die and to rise again, so that you've come to bring peace and justice and hope.

[6 : 41] And so we pray that for all of us as we gather here, that we would be still before you and that you would draw us into your presence and that you would speak to us as we spend time together in worship.

We pray, especially that as we gather today, that our hearts would be still before you, recognising everything that you have done for us, but also recognising everything that has been done for us by those who have served and suffered and who were lost in the great wars of the last century and in other conflicts throughout the ages of history.

We gather here on Remembrance Sunday, so thankful that we live in a time and an area of peace, and we recognise that that peace came at such a great cost.

And as we gather here today to remember, we thank you so much for those who left our shores and left behind, those whom they loved and who never returned, so that we might have peace and freedom and security.

We thank you for that so much, and we remember them before you. We remember their families, we remember those for whom there is a connection with those who were lost.

[8 : 10] And we pray too for those who continue to serve in our armed forces. We thank you for them, and pray your protection over them, and that you would help them and their families.

And we also remember places today where conflict continues. And we pray for peace in Ukraine. We pray for lasting peace and for healing in the Middle East.

We pray for other areas of conflict in Yemen and in many parts of Africa, and for other areas where there is the constant threat of violence and tension.

We pray for peace, and we pray that people would turn from aggression and violence, and instead that there would be healing, that there would be forgiveness, that there would be love for one another, just as you have commanded.

And so we come before you today recognising that we have so many good things in our lives, and yet also recognising that there are many things that are wrong and broken and tragic in our world.

[9 : 17] And we know that so much of that is our own doing. And so often we see people behave towards one another in a way that's driven by hate and cruelty.

And we pray against that, and pray instead that people would turn away from that. But we also recognise that ultimately all of this, all of the violence we see, all the sorrow and suffering we see in the world, finds its root in sin.

And we see the effect of that all around the world, and we see the effect of it in our own communities, and in our own lives, and even in our own hearts. And we confess that sin before you. But we thank you so, so much that the great message of the Gospel is that you've sent your Son so that our sins may be forgiven.

And so as we confess before you, we also stand on your great promise that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin, and calls us to a new path, a path following you, and a path of healing and restoration.

And may we all see and discover more of that today. Thank you for everybody who's here today. We pray that your blessing will be upon us all. We pray you'd bless this community, that you'd bind us closer together, and that for all of us as we gather here to worship you, that we will be encouraged, comforted, strengthened, and guided by your word.

[10 : 38] Thank you for everyone who's here. Bless each one of us, and lead us closer to you. And we pray that everything that we do will be done to the glory of your name. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Boys and girls, I'm going to come down and speak to you a wee bit. I feel like I'm too far away up there, and I can't hear you because I'm getting old and dead.

And getting old is something that's about to happen to me because I have a birthday in a few weeks time. And so I want to ask you a dangerous question.

How old do you think I'm going to be? What do you reckon? How old do you reckon I'm going to be? What do you reckon? Two. Two. Solid guess.

What do you reckon? 49. Pardon? 49. 49. Okay. And two. What do you reckon I'm going to be? 42. 42. Okay. What do you reckon?

[11 : 35] 40. 40. Okay. What do you reckon? Anyone else? I shouldn't get kind of getting a bad. Okay. Any final guesses? 46. 46.

What's that? Third guess for our people? 44. 44. Oh, so close. Right. Well, I'm actually going to be 43. You did very well, so I'm not 50 yet.

That's better though. Once I asked that question when I was 28 years old, and one of the smartest girls in the room said, 44. So that was a humbling experience.

So if you're along, the right lines are going to be 43. So, um, some of the birthdays coming up. Any of you guys got a birthday coming up? You don't have a birthday recently?

What is your birthday? 17th of July. Okay, yeah. Not that long ago. Very good. Yeah. And so some of these might have birthdays coming up. Some of you might have birthdays past. That's good.

[12 : 35] So, my question for you now. Is a birthday, is your birthday a happy day or a sad day? It's a happy day. It's a happy day. We can turn 50 then, it's a sad day. It's a happy day.

Birthday's a happy day. There's other happy days as well. Christmas Day. Happy day? Yes, definitely. And we are looking forward to Christmas. It's a very, very happy day. What other happy days do we get?

Last day of turn at school, when the school holidays start. Is that a happy day? That is a happy day. Especially when it's a summer holiday. That's a great day. A happy day for children.

Even happier day for teachers. But, happy days. So lots of happy days. Birthday's a happy day. Just as happy day. Last day of turn. Happy day. What about today?

Remembrance Day. Now, you're going to answer the question. I just want you to think about it. Is today a happy day or a sad day? Now, you're going to answer that question. I just want you to think about it.

[13 : 32] Because really, the answer is both. Remember to say it's a sad day and a happy day. Why is it sad and happy?

Well, it's a sad day because we are remembering people who lost their lives in the war. And you will know, you'll have learned all about this. That in the last century, many, many people had to leave our villages.

Like Kalanish, Biaswitch, other ATS and Lewis. Many people had to go away to fight in the war. And lots of them lost their lives. And that's why we wear bobbies.

And that's why the whole country meets together on Remembrance Sunday today to remember them. Because what they did was amazing. It was amazing what they did.

That they were going to do that. And the fact that they did that meant that our country can be safe. And that we can continue to enjoy the many, many things that we love.

[14 : 32] The peace and the security and opportunities that we all have. And it all came because of what they did. And so, we remember it with sadness.

Because people lost their lives. But at the same time, at the same time, there's something about that, that we should feel happy about.

And not happy in the sense of maybe like the joy and fun and laughter of a party. But happiness in the sense of great thanksgiving.

And a great sense of pride. And a great sense of appreciation for what they did. Because what they did was a wonderful, beautiful thing.

And the things that we enjoy now because of what they did are things that make us very happy. The fact that we live in a safe place. The fact that we have opportunities to learn and go and have fun together.

[15 : 33] And the fact that we live in a country that accepts all sorts of different people. And that was really one of the big things in the Second World War.

That the people that we have to go and fight against. They were basically saying, well actually, we only want certain people in the world. And other people don't want them. And so there's a lot of intolerance in terms of how they approach things.

And the fact that they lost the war meant that we can live in a country where all sorts of people from all sorts of backgrounds can live together and love around them.

And that's something to be really happy about. Something to be very, very thankful for. So today, remember this day. We remember with sadness. We remember with sadness. But we also recognize the happiness and the blessings that are ever proposed.

All of that is teaching us about Jesus. Because when we think about Jesus, when we think about Jesus dying on the cross, we are thinking of something very sad.

[16 : 42] And something that makes us very happy. Because obviously, Jesus dying on the cross is sad. And for lots of reasons, when we read about Jesus dying on the cross, we see many, many things that were wrong and cruel and harsh.

And Jesus suffered. He suffered a huge enemy. But he did that so that we could be saved. So that all our sins could be forgiven.

And so that the world could be restored from the brokenness that sin had caused. And that is amazing. And that is something that gives us so much joy at hand.

So as we meet together today, we're meeting on a sad and happy day. And it's good that it's sad at hand. And all of us is teaching us about what Jesus came to do.

To die on the cross and rise again. To die in sadness. To rise again. To give us joy. Thank you so much for listening. So well, we're going to read from God's word together.

[17 : 49] And we're going to read from Isaiah chapter 9. So let's return to Isaiah chapter 9 on the way back. So Isaiah chapter 9.

It's just pretty much bang in the middle of the Old Testament. And we're just going to read verses 1 to 7.

It's a short passage. Isaiah was a prophet who lived around 700 BC. And so he's prophesying at a time when the nation was under military threat from foreign oppressors.

And in many ways, the fate of the nation is hanging in the balance. So let's read 1 to 7. Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation.

When at the first, he likely afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. That's regions in the nation of Israel. And afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.

[19 : 04] The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. They that dwell in the land in the shadow of death. Upon them, the light has shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation and not increased the joy.

They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest. And as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood. But this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given.

And the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor. The mighty God. The everlasting Father. The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom. To order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice. From henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

[20 : 09] Amen. May God add his blessing to the reading of his word. We're going to sing again from Psalm 67. Psalm 67. Psalm 67.

Psalm 67. Psalm 67. Psalm 67. Psalm 67. Psalm 67. Psalm 67. We'll sing the first version of that psalm. Lord, bless and pity us.

Shine on us with thy face. That the earth, thy way, and nations all may know thy saving grace. Again, we'll stay seated. Psalm 67. To God's praise. Lord, bless and pity us.

Shine on us with thy face. That the earth, thy way, and nations all may know thy saving grace.

Let people praise thee, Lord. Let people all thee praise.

[21 : 25] O let the nations be glad. In songs their voices raise.

O justly people, church. Honor, cruel nations all.

Let people praise thee, Lord. Let them praise thee, both great and small.

The earth, thy fruit shall yield. O God shall blessing send.

God shall bless. God shall bless. Amen. Amen. Shall them bear. And to earth's utmost end.

[22 : 38] Well, I'd like us just to turn back together to Isaiah chapter 9. And I'm going to read verses 6 and 7 again.

For unto us a child is born. Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Now, some of you may know this, that it's six and a half weeks until Christmas, which is not long. It seems to be creeping up very, very quickly.

I was in Glasgow earlier in the week and I went through George Square and there's Christmas decorations everywhere. Which kind of surprised me. I thought, oh, it seems too soon for that. But it's not that far away at all.

[23 : 38] You're not allowed to wear a Christmas jumper until December though. It's just a rule that I want to impose on this community. I mention all that because the verses that we've just read are words that we often read at Christmas.

These are words that are speaking about the coming of Jesus. And often at Christmas, the church will look together at passages like Isaiah chapter 9.

In Isaiah, these words are coming as a message of prophecy. Because as we said, Isaiah lived 700 years before Jesus came during a period of huge turmoil and difficulty for the people of Israel.

And in the midst of all that turmoil, God is promising them that a saviour is going to come. And all these promises are finding their fulfilment in the birth of Jesus.

So these verses are very Christmassy in lots of ways. But what I want us to do is I want us to look at them this morning. Because I want us to see that these verses also have a huge amount to say to us on Remembrance Sunday.

[24 : 39] So today we're not gathering with all the joy and excitement of Christmas. Today we are gathering conscious that again and again and again, people's lives have been devastated by war and conflict.

And we see that as we look back at history, but we see it still today. And this year again, you look through the news, you see the war ongoing in Ukraine, you see the awful devastation in the Middle East, and you see conflict in many other places as well.

And what I want us to see, and one of the reasons I want us to think about these verses, is that one of the key things that we need to think about when we talk about the coming of Jesus, and when we talk about the Gospel, is to say that all of that's not a message for a kind of nice, cosy winter holiday that in many ways Christmas has become in our culture.

When we're talking about the message of the coming of Jesus and the message of the Gospel, we are talking about a message that addresses the deepest, the most urgent, and the most serious human needs.

Isaiah did not prophesy from a holiday. Isaiah prophesied from a war zone. And yes, Christmas is so important to the Church, it's so important to Christians, but the message of Christianity is not a Christmas card.

[26 : 15] It's not just that nice, wintry scene, cosy fire, nice presents, good food. It's not really what it's about at all. The message of Christianity is a message of healing, hope, and salvation for a desperately broken world.

And these verses are getting us to think about all of that. They're pointing us to some of the biggest issues that lie at the heart of the Gospel. And I want us to look at them together.

And we're going to do so under the title, Peace, Justice, Hope. And we're going to say three things in particular. We're going to say, Peace is better. Justice matters.

Hope is real. All of these truths lie at the very heart of the Christian faith. So first of all, peace is better.

If you look at verses 6 and 7, you'll see that there's magnificent descriptions of Jesus given in these words. It's all in the language of authority and kingship.

[27 : 20] So you see, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, even the phrase Everlasting Father. In this context, it's generally agreed that that's been used in reference to Jesus and in the context of how a king was to exercise the role of a father.

Leadership, care, protection for his people. And all of that language of kingdom is extremely important in the Gospel.

When you look at Jesus and when you read about him in the Gospels, he talks about the kingdom of God coming. And the big message is to recognise that Jesus himself is the king. But that idea of kingdom is actually very easy to misunderstand.

When we talk about God as king, when we talk about God's authority, when we talk about his control, it's very easy to think of all that as just conveying the idea of fate.

And so when we talk about God being sovereign, people will often think, well, if he's sovereign, if he's in control, then he should fix everything.

[28 : 26] And he should stop all conflict. In fact, he should never have allowed conflict to happen in the first place. And often people will use that kind of thinking to reject Christianity. They think, well, if God is sovereign, he should have stopped it all.

And because he hasn't stopped it all, he's not sovereign. And therefore, I'm not going to believe it. But the problem with that kind of thinking is that if we think in terms of fate or anything that would fall under the category of philosophical determinism, it basically means that we're describing humans as puppets.

Puppets in the hands of a bigger power. Everything's controlled by a higher God. Everything's inevitable. And ultimately, we're not responsible. No matter what side we're on and what we're doing, we wouldn't be responsible.

Fate leaves humanity as puppets in the hands of some higher power. The gospel never, ever addresses you as puppets. The gospel addresses us as people.

People who make choices. People who carry responsibility. People who can exercise freedom. And people who can only truly function on the basis of relationship with others.

[29 : 40] And that freedom, capability, responsibility of humanity, it's enabled us to achieve magnificent things. And it's enabled us to make some terrible choices.

And you see that in history. You see it in the world around us. I see it in my own life. And so humanity's created to enjoy the light and beauty of God and his creation.

We've chosen darkness so often. We're created to share the beautiful relationships that we can have with one another. But we chose conflict. We're created to cultivate and steward this amazing world that God's given us.

And yet we choose to live for the moment and squander what we have. We're created, most of all, to know the one living through God. And we chose to push him away.

We chose to sin. And we see all the desperate consequences that that has brought. And all that's teaching us that in the gospel, when Jesus comes as king, he's not coming to control us.

[30 : 51] He's coming to rescue us. And to restore us. To everything that we were created to be. And a key part of that restoration that Jesus comes to bring is that he's come to bring peace.

Peace in the bitter conflicts that exist between humans. Peace in the deepest turmoil that we can feel in our hearts. These verses tell us that Jesus is the prince of peace.

And so in a world that's ravaged by conflict, Jesus has come to bring peace. And at the heart of that mission is the conviction that peace is better. That's the great conviction that lies behind the gospel.

Peace is better. And that might sound so obvious. And you think, well, that's... Of anything that I say today, you think, well, that's the one thing I do agree with you, Thomas. Peace is better.

It's obvious. It's true. It's incredibly important. But we've got to think about it and recognise it. The gospel is grounded on the principle that peace is better than violence. Now, you might be saying to me, well, I've read the Old Testament.

[31 : 56] I've read the book of Isaiah. And I've seen that the Old Testament is full of violence. And that's true. Isaiah saw and lived in the conflict. The context of war.

But that's why it's so important that when we look at the Old Testament, we have to recognise that it functions as a shadow. The relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament is from shadow to reality.

And that's so important to recognise because a shadow is always doing two things. A shadow is pointing forward to the full reality that's coming. And a shadow is also saying that nothing but that full reality will work.

A shadow is always inadequate of itself. And so in the Old Testament, you'll see there's lots of battles. There's lots of conflict. That's a shadow of a bigger conflict.

The conflict between a good God and the powers of sin and darkness.

[32 : 59] But the Old Testament also shows that violence does not work. And that God's king is not going to come and conquer through military victories.

And that's a big difference that you see between the Old Testament and the New Testament. One of the big lessons of the Old Testament is that the violence, the military conflicts, the wars, none of it actually works.

None of it establishes God's kingdom. And it was never meant to work. Instead, it was pointing forward to the coming of God's true king, to Jesus.

And his kingdom is a kingdom of peace. His kingdom is governed according to the great principles of loving God and loving one another. His kingdom is grounded on the principle that peace is better.

Now, every single one of us shares that principle. No one gathers on Remembrance Sunday and says, I wish we had more war. No one says that.

[33 : 59] No one thinks that. Everyone longs for peace. Everyone knows that peace is better than violence. There's two extremely important points that arise from this. The first is that it's crucial to recognize, and this is a big argument that we make from a Christian point of view, we will say that it's only the Bible that gives you a rational philosophical foundation for the conclusion that peace is better.

Say that again. It's only the Bible that gives you a rational philosophical foundation for the conclusion that peace is better. Now, you might be saying, what do you mean? Well, what I mean is this. If you look at the other ancient religions in the world, they would all present a worldview that says the world is a product of violence.

And so you have kind of all the Greek mythology of the gods warring against one another, and in the context of those great conflicts, the earth comes into existence.

Now, you might say, well, we don't believe any of that. We absolutely don't. It's all very mythical, and not many people hold to that sort of conclusion today. But they did have the view that the world is a product of violence.

Now, not many people today believe in Greek mythology, and rightly so. But loads of people today still believe that the world is a product of violence. Because that's what we would call a naturalistic worldview gives you.

[35 : 21] So if we're saying there's no God, and if we're saying that everything that exists now is the result of a long, long, long, long, long chain of processes, whereby the fittest survive, and elements of that will be true, and there's aspects of that that aren't in conflict with the Bible at all.

But if that's your ultimate explanation for reality, to say the whole reason stuff exists today is because we are just sitting here, going back on a long chain where everything that exists, exists because the fittest has survived.

What does that mean? It means that we're a product of violence. That actually the stronger that could crush the weaker has survived.

So you go back to Greek mythology, it says the world's a product of violence. You go back, you look at the mindset of many people in the West today, the world is a product of violence.

The Gospel gives you a magnificent alternative. Because our claim is that over everything that has brought this world into existence stands a good God.

[36 : 41] And that this world is a good creation. And that every human being is not the product of violence. Every human being is the precious handiwork of God.

The modern world is saying that we are ultimately a product of violence, therefore violence is king. The Gospel says peace is better, therefore peace is king.

The Prince of Peace, Jesus, is king. Second important point that comes from this is that in a world of conflict, peace always comes at a cost. Always.

Peace is better, but it actually only comes when somebody is willing to take a wound. And in the face of opposition, our human instinct is so often to take revenge, but that only escalates things.

Peace comes when someone's brave enough to take the hit. And we remember that today. Remembrance today is because of those who went to take the hit that was needed for peace to come. That came at a huge cost.

[37 : 47] And as we said, though, to the kids, that's the truth that lies at the heart of the Gospel. Our sin has left us alienated from God, left us guilty. It's caused so much damage to the world.

But God doesn't come to take revenge against us. He's come to forgive us. And to carry the cost himself.

The Gospel is granted in the fact that peace is better. In the Gospel, Jesus is issuing a magnificent call to peace.

And if we come to him, that's what we find. We find peace. And for those of you today who maybe, you know, outwardly are looking fine and coming across fine.

And inwardly, you're longing for peace. That's what Jesus has come to give you. Peace is better. Secondly, conviction is that justice matters.

[38 : 44] You see that in verse 7. The language of Jesus coming to establish his kingdom with judgment and with justice.

At the heart of the Gospel is the fact that justice matters. This is so, so important to recognize. This is part of what makes war so horrific. It's so unfair. It's so cruel.

And it's maybe even more unfair today. Because if you look back in history, you'll see that when there was a war, what would normally happen would be that the people would hide and the leaders would go out into battle.

So when the Bible describes cities in the ancient Near East, that was the function of the city. It was a walled area. If there's conflict, all the people who live outside it can come into the city. They can hide.

And the king and the army will go out and fight. That was the pattern for warfare 3,000 years ago. Today it's different. The leaders hide. And the everyday people get sent out to fight.

[39 : 48] And it's men and women, boys and girls, trying to live ordinary lives who get caught up in the conflict while the leaders issue commands from their palaces.

War is desperately unfair. Sin is desperately unfair. And we live in a world that's so full of injustice. These words in Isaiah are reminding us that justice matters to God.

And his king comes to establish and uphold justice forever. Now, lots of important points arise from this. I'm going to race through them. Number one, this is crucial for your understanding of God.

The Bible is absolutely clear. God is a God of justice. If you think that God is unjust, your understanding of God is wrong. Justice matters to God.

Secondly, we can also make the mistake of thinking that our understanding of justice is perfect. But that's a bit too hasty.

[40 : 50] Because if you think that you have an impeccable understanding of justice, then your understanding of yourself is wrong. So humans have an interesting balance. We have an inescapable sense of justice in our hearts.

Everyone's got that. But we don't have impeccable discernment for what justice actually looks like. And that's because often our sense of justice is shaped by our own interests, by our loyalties, and sometimes even by our own insecurities.

Third thing we need to think about from this is to ask the question, how much does justice actually matter? And this again exposes some of the problems with the kind of modern worldview that people have today, which just kind of really wants to push God to one side.

We see injustice in the world and we're horrified, but we're powerless to do anything about it. And we see in the world there are a lot of people who have caused a huge amount of injustice and they seem to get away with it.

And that's been the case throughout history. The gospel, at the heart of the gospel, lies the truth that justice matters eternally.

[42 : 06] You see that in verse 7 it speaks about justice being established forever. And that's why the Bible speaks about ultimate judgment. Now a lot of people today, when we talk about something like judgment day, and when we talk about ultimate judgment, people today think that's ridiculous.

They think it's a fantasy and the idea of Jesus returning and there being a day of judgment. They think that's ridiculous. Maybe you think it's ridiculous. I don't think it's ridiculous.

I think it's actually an incredibly precious thing because it means that every single injustice is going to be called to a case.

Now I don't know about you, but I long for that. I do not want a world where the rich and the powerful can crush people and face no consequences.

I want a world where every single injustice will be called to account. And so the gospel is meeting that deep need that we have. And of course that judgment about God, we talk about God judging, it's not about God being cruel or harsh or manipulative.

[43 : 19] It's talking about the fact that justice matters. It matters. But the whole question of justice is actually a difficult one. This is the fourth thing we have to notice about it because I find with justice, the more I look at it, the closer it gets to home.

It's a bit like me. I was on the ferry yesterday. The sun is in the summer. We go on the ferry and we kind of feel a sense of frustration at the number of tourists. So we go on the ferry and we're like, oh, it's ridiculous that there's all these people on the ferry going on holiday.

And it's like, they're getting in my way because I want to go on holiday. And I realize, oh, okay, hang on. I'm complaining about tourists because they're getting in the way of me being a tourist.

And then I realize, oh, I'm actually, I'm part of this issue myself. And when it comes to injustice and unfairness, we can see that there's so much wrong in the world.

We can see that there's a problem. But the more we think about it, the more we realize, the more we find ourselves thinking, this is a problem as we look at the world around us. And then we see, actually, hang on, we are the problem because we see injustice and cruelty in our own context.

[44 : 30] And then we think about it even more and we realize I'm the problem. Because I'm, I'm not impeccable at all.

Now, I'm not saying that everybody here is as guilty and as culpable as somebody who's caused a war. That's not true at all. What I'm saying here is that if God operates at the level of perfect justice, none of us can match up.

None of us can match up. And that's why, as we cry for justice, we also desperately need mercy. And do you know the amazing thing about the Gospel?

Is that that's exactly what Jesus has come to give us. Before Jesus, we are morally responsible. We're not puppets, we're morally responsible.

And our imperfections cannot be hidden but in Jesus we find mercy and his mercy is poured towards us. Because on the cross, all the guilt of our sin is poured upon him.

[45 : 39] In the Gospel, justice and mercy meet. And that's really what the cross is all about. And that's why when we see, you know, in a desperately cruel world, we can cry to Jesus and say, bring justice.

And he absolutely will. But at the same time, when we see the failings in our own lives, we fall on our knees and we say, Lord have mercy and he absolutely will. Justice matters.

So peace is better. Justice matters. Hope is real. This is a very briefly, just look at this before we close. As we were saying, Isaiah's prophesying at a time of great difficulty in Old Testament history.

So the nation's divided. Society is full of inequality. Foreign enemies are threatening them. Not long from now, they're going to get crushed. In the midst of all of that, God sends a message of hope.

And these words in 6 and 7 of Isaiah 9, they're a message of hope, a message of salvation. One day God's king is going to come and he's going to bring peace. He's going to bring justice. His kingdom is going to endure forever.

[46 : 38] And in him, there is hope. Now, in the midst of global conflicts, in the midst of national struggles, in the midst of personal heartbreak, the thing that we desperately need is hope.

But that's one of the most pressing questions that we can ask our society or ask our community or every one of us today. Is hope a temporary illusion or is it a permanent reality?

And that's the question that everybody's got to ask themselves. And it kind of exposes where we are as a nation today in terms of the way we think. So, you go to anybody in the streets of Scotland today and you ask them the question, is peace better?

They're going to say yes. If you ask them, does justice matter? They're going to say yes. If you ask them, is hope eternal?

They're going to say, I don't know. I don't know. And if they think consistently, you know, if their worldview's got no space for God in it, they're going to realise it's not eternal.

[47 : 55] It's just a temporary illusion. those hopes of a better world, of a better place, of meeting again. Without God, that hope's not real.

It's an illusion. And this is where the gospel of Jesus Christ is so, so good. And if I tell you anything today, and if you remember anything that I say today, it's this, that in the gospel, hope is real.

hope is permanent. Hope is eternal. That is what the resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not real. Christianity is not real. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is real. Then hope is eternal for all who trust in him.

Now, this is where it's so important to recognise that we don't proclaim the gospel because it's nice. We proclaim the gospel because it's real. Jesus came to die for our sins and rise again.

[49 : 07] That resurrection, our whole faith is going to the fact that that resurrection is a historical fact. And as the risen saviour, Jesus is calling every single one of us to trust in him, to follow him, to have eternal life in him.

And the life that he's calling us to is a life where we love them and we love one another. That's the humanity that Jesus wants to build. That's what a church is meant to look like, a place where we love God and we love one another.

That's the two most important commands. Of Christian discipleship. The kingdom of God is building a new humanity, a beautiful family, a church that's united together as one.

Now, in churches, we've messed that up so many times. So many times, in so many ways. But we have to distinguish between our mistakes and the actual message that Jesus is calling us to listen to.

And he's calling us to trust in him, to come under his rule and care, to come under his protection. And that transforms everything.

[50 : 14] Because if that is real, it means that we can stand out there at that war memorial in a few minutes' time. And we can stand at Almore or at Bosta or at any other cemetery.

But we can stand in front of a terrible diagnosis for ourselves or for people around us. We can stand in the face of all the heartbreak that life can bring and we can say, there is hope.

That's what the gospel message is all about. And all this language of kingship is actually really pressing the question towards all of us.

Who's really king? Is death really king? Is death going to get the last say over all of you? Is death going to get the last say over this world?

Is death going to win? Is death king? Or is Jesus king? And you know what?

[51 : 23] It's just amazing that he is. He actually is king. And he's risen to give all of us hope.

In the gospel, hope is real. And that is so precious. And that's everything that we need. Jesus is calling us all to follow him, to trust in him.

As we follow Jesus, we discover that peace is better, justice matters. Hope is real. Amen. Let's stand and pray together. Amen. Lord Jesus, we thank you so, so much for what you've done for us.

And we see a world that's so broken and full of so much suffering and pain. And we thank you so much that you did not just walk away from us, but instead you came so that we might have hope and peace, so that justice would be established.

And we pray, Lord Jesus, that every single one of us would be able to look to you and find the peace and hope and comfort that comes from knowing you. Bless us all. Be with us. And as we go and gather around the War Memorial now, we pray that you be with us and bless us.

[52 : 42] In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So, we will now just make our way outside to gather at the War Memorial. So, you can make your way out both exits. We'll gather at the War Memorial, we'll lay the wreaths, we'll have the silence, and then we'll sing together to close.

So, please just make your way. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[54 : 51] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[59 : 23] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.