

Father Forgive Them

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Date: 19 October 2025

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[0 : 00] Basil's Well, good evening to you all and a very warm welcome to our service tonight.

Thank you very much for your very kind invitation to be with you to lead your services tonight. I bring you the greetings from our congregation at Roskeen as well.

It's great to be with you. It's good to gather together around the Word of God. Let's worship God together. I want to read just a few verses as a call to worship for us this evening.

There are words that I go back to on many occasions, I'm sure, they're words that may mean a lot to some of us here tonight as well. It's how God describes himself in the book of Exodus.

God describes his own heart. He says, The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

[1 : 20] That's how God describes himself. That's his heart. The compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. He goes on to say that he maintains love to thousands and forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin.

That's what we're going to be thinking about together this evening, the theme of forgiveness. And we're going to sing to God's praise together. We're going to sing, first of all, in Psalm 32. Psalm 32, singing verses 1 to 5.

And again, bearing in mind our theme of forgiveness here in the psalm, we have a man who sings of the joy of knowing that his sins have been pardoned by the grace of God. Oh, blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned all the transgression he hath done, whose sin is covered.

So let's sing, Psalm 32, verses 1 to 5, to God's praise. O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned, All the transgression he hath done, All the transgression he hath done, Who says this cover is, Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputed, He hurteth not his sin, and in her strength there is no guile nor fraud, it's found

When as I did refrain my speech, chance I learned what's my time My bones then waxed old because I wrote it all day long For upon me both day and night, thine hand did heavy lie So that my moisture turned it in summer's drought thereby

[4 : 25] I then appoint unto thee my sin acknowledges As I quite mine iniquity, I have not covered it I will confess unto the Lord my trespasses said I And of my sin thou freely didst forgive iniquity

Let's join together in prayer Lord how wonderful it is that we can come into your presence tonight reminding ourselves that you are the God who forgives sinners You are the God who forgives our wickedness and rebellion You are the God who restores us You are the God who sets us back upon our feet And you are the God who grants us the joy of salvation We thank you for the psalm that we sang together That testimony of the psalmist who acknowledged his sin to you And then discovered your grace and your mercy in his own experience We pray for each and every one of us in this place tonight All our homes and families that are represented here That we would know for ourselves too Your redeeming love and your redeeming grace

We pray Lord tonight for the gospel in this community We pray for this community We ask that you would bless these surrounding villages That you would prosper and watch over them And that you would bless your cause Here in the islands and around the highlands And around our whole nation We know there are many congregations in our own denomination Looking for ministers at this time And that's true across Skye and Westeros Through our own Presbytery and Cave Nest And Sutherland and Rorshire But we thank you Lord God That ultimately a church is never without a pastor Because you are the great shepherd of the sheep You are the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep You are the one who cares for the sheep You are the one who knows what his sheep need Before he even asks it And you are the chief shepherd Who provides and who guides and who leads So we pray that you would bless and prosper this congregation here

Bless the elders and deacons of the congregation We pray for the internal moderator That you would bless all Give guidance and wisdom And that you would pour out your spirit That we might know God is in this place You are a living God, a speaking God A God who meets us at our point of need And we pray that we might be conscious of that Even together tonight That you are here As you have promised to be That your voice is speaking And that your Holy Spirit is lending power to those words And that we would be changed And be transformed By your life-giving word Present yourself with us tonight, Lord Jesus Present yourself by your spirit And meet with us And do us good And we ask this in Jesus' name Amen We are going to sing again This time from Psalm 51

Psalm 51 Singing verses 1-6 And in this psalm we have got King David's psalm of repentance After he had sinned with Bathsheba I always admire the humility of King David That not only does he confess his sin But he includes this psalm in the nation's songbook That's reminding him of his fallenness But of God's greatness After thy loving kindness, Lord Have mercy upon me For thy compassion's great Blot out all of mine iniquity 1-6 to God's praise God's praise After thy loving kindness, Lord Have mercy upon me For thy compassion's great

[9 : 48] For thy grace brought out All of mine iniquity We cleanse from sin And truly watch From my iniquity For my transgressions For my transgressions I confess My sin I ever see Only have I spent In the need In the need Only have I spent In thy sight on this hill

That when thou speakst Thou may speak just And hear in judging still Ye, whole lion iniquity Was born the womb within My mother also be conceived In guiltiness and sin Behold thou in the inward heart

With truth delighted art And wisdom thou shalt make me know Within the hidden part Our reading of scripture this evening Is in the gospel according to Luke Chapter 23 Luke chapter 23 And we're going to read from verse 26 Down to verse 49 Luke 23 at verse 26 Let's hear God's word together

And as they led him away That is Jesus of course They laid hold upon one Simon Iseranian Coming out of the country And on him they laid the cross That he might bear it after Jesus And there followed him A great company of people And of women Which also bewailed And lamented him But Jesus turning unto them Said Daughters of Jerusalem Weep not for me But weep for yourselves And for your children For behold the days are coming In which they shall say Blessed are the barren And the wounds that never bear And the paps which never gave suck Then shall they begin to say To the mountains Follow us And to the hills Cover us For if they do these things In a green tree What shall be done In the dry And there were also Two other malefactors Led with him To be put to death And when they were come

To the place Which is called Calvary There they crucified him And the malefactors One on the right hand And the other on the left Then said Jesus Father Forgive them For they know not What they do And they parted his raiment And cast lots And the people stood Beholding And the rulers Also with them Derided him Saying He saved others Let him save himself If he be Christ The chosen of God And the soldiers Also mocked him Coming to him And offering him Vinegar And saying If thou be the king Of the Jews Save thyself And the superscription Also was written Over him In letters Of Greek And Latin And Hebrew This Is the king Of the Jews And one of the malefactors Which were hanged Railed on him Saying

[14 : 51] If thou be Christ Save thyself And us But the other Answering rebuked him Saying Does not thou fear God Seeing thou art In the same condemnation And we indeed justly For we receive The due reward Of our deeds But this man Hath done nothing Amiss And he said unto Jesus Lord Remember me When thou comest Into thy kingdom And Jesus said unto him Verily I say unto thee Today Thou shalt Shalt thou be with me In paradise And it was about The sixth hour That's midday And there was darkness Over all the earth Until the ninth hour Three pm And the sun was darkened And the veil of the temple Was rent in the midst And when Jesus had cried With a loud voice He said Father Into thy hands I commend my spirit And having said thus

He gave up the ghost Now when the centurion Saw what was done He glorified God Saying Certainly this was A righteous man And all the people That came together To that sight Beholding the things Which were done Smote their breasts And returned And all his acquaintance And the women That followed him From Galilee Stood afar off Beholding these things Amen And may God bless His own holy word To us this evening We're now going to sing again This time from Psalm 85 Psalm 85 And we're going to sing Verses 1 to 8 Psalm 85 Verses 1 to 8 And the psalm is a A plea From the people For God to To restore them To forgive their folly And rebellion

And to meet with them again And to renew And revive them O Lord Thou hast been favourable To thy beloved land Jacob's captivity Thou hast recalled With mighty hand Thou pardoned Thy people Hast all their iniquities Thou all their trespasses And sins Hast covered From thine eyes We'll sing Verses 1 to 8 Together To God's praise O Lord O Lord Thou hast been Favourable To thy beloved land Loved land Because captivity Thou hast Recold With mighty hands Thou pardoned

Thy people Thou hast All their Iniquities Thou Woe Their trespasses And sins Hast covered From thine eyes Thou tooks To fall Thine eye And turns From thy Wrath's Feudlessness Turn us God Over Health And calls

Thy wrath Against us To cease Shall Thy Displend To tear The Sinjure Against Us Without End Will Thine Generations All Thine Anger For Extend That In The May Thy People Joy Will Thou Not Just Revive

[19 : 56] Show To Us Thine Lord To Us To Thy Salvation Give I'll Hear What God The Lord Will Will Speak To His Old He Will Speak Peace And To His Name God Let Them Not Return To Foolish God ask that as we come to it now that it would be you who speak. We ask for the help of the

Holy Spirit, the author of this word, that he would give spiritual blessing and insight. Your word tells us that spiritual things are spiritually discerned. And so we need your help. We need your help whether we're here tonight and we don't yet know you. And we need your help as your church as well. We think of those churches that our Lord spoke to in Revelation and to the church that he said, those who have ears to hear, hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. And may we have ears to hear what you are saying to us tonight, Lord.

As we prayed earlier, you are the chief shepherd of this congregation and of all congregations of your people around the world. This church is your church. It is your bride, bought with your blood.

And may we be attentive to your voice and seeking your guidance and your leading. I pray for the help to rightly handle your word of truth. And may the words of my lips and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight this evening, Lord. We pray your promise that your word never comes back to you empty, but it always accomplishes the purposes for which you send it out. So do your work.

Do your work among us, Lord, we ask. For we ask it in the name above every name, Jesus our Lord. Amen. Please turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 23.

[23 : 08] Luke chapter 23 and reading verse 34 again. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. These words came to mind in recent weeks and some of you may have watched yourselves or seen clips of the Charlie Kirk Memorial Service in America a few weeks ago. One of the most impactful moments of the service was when his wife Erica got up to speak. Be in mind the situation.

Her husband has just been gunned down in front of hundreds of spectators and live streamed to the world. Graphic videos of his death circulated in minutes. Now she's left a single mother with two young children under the age of five. What would she say? What would I say in that situation? What would you say?

And this is what she said. My husband Charlie, he wanted to save young men just like the one who took his life. That young man. On the cross our Saviour said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

That man, that young man, I forgive him. I forgive him because it was what Christ did and this is what Charlie would do.

[24 : 35] The answer to hate is not hate. The answer we know from the Gospel is love and always love. Love for our enemies and love for those who persecute us.

It's an amazing response. Some of us are old enough to remember, I think it was in the late 80s, when a bombing, an IRA bombing and a father had lost, I think his son in the bombing.

And on national TV said similar words. Those who committed this atrocity, I forgive them. I forgive them. The Erica Kirk speech was so impactful.

Tim Allen, American actor, most famous, this is my level of culture, most famous is the voice of Buzz Lightyear in Toy Story. He wrote an ex.

That moment deeply affected me. I've struggled for over 60 years to forgive the man who killed my dad. I won't say those words now as I type. I forgive the man who killed my father.

[25 : 40] Peace be with you all. His dad had been killed by a drunk driver in 1964. Forgive. It's impactful, isn't it? It's an amazing response when someone says, I forgive someone who's done such a terrible thing and caused so much pain to me.

And Erica Kirk referenced the words of Jesus on the cross that we're going to be looking at tonight. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they're doing. Jesus came into this world to bring about forgiveness.

He came to save. He came to make forgiveness possible. He came so that we might be forgiven. And I suppose tonight there's two goals in the sermon as we think of this together.

It's to ask if you know, if we know together that forgiveness of God, have we experienced that for ourselves? And also, if we have experienced that forgiveness, almost to call us to pause and to reflect on that for a moment.

And just to remind ourselves of how the Lord has dealt with us and the great forgiveness that we have received from him. As we look at this verse, we're going to look at it under three headings.

[26 : 56] Forgiveness is Jesus' mission. Forgiveness is Jesus' delight. And forgiveness is Jesus' invitation. It's his mission, it's his delight, and it's his invitation.

First of all, forgiveness is Jesus' mission. Jesus' words would be remarkable at any point, but it's even more remarkable when we think about when they were spoken about.

We're told that they took Jesus out to a place called Calvary, and actually, literally, it's not Calvary, it's Golgotha. It's a place that looks like a skull, a hill shaped like a skull outside of Jerusalem.

And there they crucified Jesus. And the malefactors, the criminals, malefactors, not really a word we would use now. I guess you would call these two men crucified with Jesus, we'd probably call them terrorists.

Certainly the Romans would. You see, Rome occupied Israel. They didn't like that Roman occupation, and they used violence to try and blast out and attack Roman guards and Roman institutions.

[28 : 05] They would have been regarded as violent terrorists. And Jesus is crucified, and as he's crucified with one criminal on his right and one on his left, he said, Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they do.

You see, crucified men did not speak like this. Well, crucified men spoke, all right. They raged, and they spat, and they swore, and they cursed, and they would have laughed out with every bit of invective they could against those who were crucifying them.

They raged, and they cursed, but never did one speak like Jesus. Father, he said, forgive them. As we said, Jesus has been taken out.

He's had large nails driven through his hands, through his feet, and he's experiencing the fulfilment of what Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 53, when they said that Jesus, though that he be sinless, he would be numbered with the transgressors.

That's what's happening here. And yet from his lips and from the cross comes a word of grace, a word of forgiveness. Father, forgive them. And as Jesus says this, we need to remind ourselves who Jesus is.

[29 : 20] He is God. He's God in the flesh. And what words do we hear from God himself in the flesh, God's son incarnate, as he hangs upon a cross?

It's a word of grace. Father, forgive them. And you know, there's a certain logic to that, isn't there? Why did Jesus go to the cross in the first place?

Why did Jesus have to die? He had to go to the cross to deal with sin. He had to go to the cross to make forgiveness possible.

Sin had to get dealt with so that we sinners could be forgiven and could come back into a right relationship with the Lord who made us. Sin had to be atoned for.

A life had to be laid down. And Jesus went to the cross to be our substitute, to be our saviour. The cross was God's means of both ensuring his justice and holiness were intact.

[30 : 18] Sin will get what it deserves. But also for divine mercy could meet sinners like us. Father, forgive them. That's why Jesus came.

Remember in John 10 he said that, I'm the good shepherd, I lay my life down for the sheep. I lay it down and I have authority to take it back up again. See, the Bible says to us that our sin is our greatest problem.

It creates a barrier between us and God. And it creates barriers on our side and on God's side. It creates a barrier on our side in that it makes us rebels against God.

It makes us desire sin and not want spiritual good. Not want what we should want. There's something in us that's like that, isn't there?

Why is it the food that's so good for you is never the best tasting food? You ever wondered about all the best tasting stuff is the stuff that's no good for you? That's what we want. And what sin has done in our hearts is a bit like that.

[31 : 24] What's truly precious and truly good, we don't want it. And we want what's bad for us. That's what sin has done. It's affected us at the level of desire. Sin corrupts us at the level of desire.

It makes us rebel and not want the living God. But it also creates an issue on God's side. Remember right back in the beginning when Adam and Eve sinned. What was God's response?

It was him who put them out of the garden, wasn't it? He banished them from the garden and he placed a sword that burned, that turned every which way and a cherubim, a kind of angel to block the way in.

In other words, they couldn't come back into the presence of God. God put that barrier there and they could not get back into his presence. But Jesus comes and Jesus comes to deal with all these barriers.

He comes and in a sense you could say the sword that burned, had blocked the way, fell upon Jesus. He took it in his own flesh and in his own soul. He opens up the way back to God and he says to us, I will give you a new heart.

[32 : 31] I will take away your heart of stone and give you new hearts and new affections. He deals with the barriers on our side and he deals with the barriers on God's side and he opens up the way back to God for us.

That's what the symbolism was in verse 45 when it said, The veil of the temple was rent in the midst of it. What that saying is, it takes us back to the Old Testament.

And when God came to live with the people, he lived in this special tent, which later became the temple. And at the very centre of it was this place called the most holy place.

And the easiest way to think of it is, that's God's throne room. That's where God's throne was. And you couldn't go in. There was a big curtain that blocked it off. And on the curtain was woven, amongst other things, Cherubim takes you back to Eden.

It's the same picture. You still can't come in. Your sin is still keeping you outside. Only once a year could the high priest go in with blood from the sacrifice of the day of atonement and offer it on the mercy seat underneath the throne of God in the most holy place.

[33 : 36] And when Jesus died, that curtain was torn from top to bottom. The symbolism is important too. It's from top to bottom. God tore it. And you see what the message is. The message is now, the message is not stay out.

The message is come in. The message is not you sinful people stay out. The message is now you sinners. Come in. Come and find grace. Come and find forgiveness. Come and find your way back to God.

He's flung the door open and he said, all you have to do is come. All the barriers, all the obstacles, I have taken them away. You just need to come in. God, the wounded party, the offended party comes to us in Jesus to make reconciliation possible.

Have you ever had that feeling? You don't have to put your hand up or say, admit this, but you're following out with someone and these thoughts go through our mind, don't they? They go, well, I'm not going to them. If they come calling to me and apologise, then maybe we can think about sort of things, but I'm not going after what they've done to me.

But God doesn't react like that. He's the offended party. He's the wounded party. And yet he comes to make forgiveness and reconciliation possible.

[34 : 51] It was Jesus' mission. Do you remember that story we're told when the friends brought the paralysed man to Jesus and there was no room in the house, so they've lowered him through the ceiling and he comes down in front of Jesus.

Do you remember the words Jesus speaks to him? Son, your sins are forgiven. And of course it offended people at the time. It offended some of the religious authorities who heard it.

They thought, only God can forgive sin. How dare this man say that? Of course Jesus could say that because he had authority to forgive sins. And he proved it by healing the man and restoring his legs.

Jesus has authority to forgive sin. Jesus came to make forgiveness possible for us. The curtain of the temple is torn in two. The door is open. And so he says to us, what's keeping you back?

What's keeping you out? Come. Somehow this impression has gone abroad that Jesus has come to take life away. That while Christianity might be true, it sounds dull.

[36 : 02] That's one of the devil's favourite tricks. Jesus said the opposite. He said, I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. I've come that you might have life to the full.

Before Jesus died, he prayed in the high priestly prayer that his joy might be in us and that our joy might be complete. I always find it an amazing thing to think.

I always find it an amazing thing to think. On the eve of his death, Jesus is concerned for your joy and my joy. He wants us to know joy and life. And he says, come.

Come and find forgiveness. Come and find that grace. And he's made it possible through his death on the cross. We're offered this forgiveness freely.

And he says, all you have to do is come. But though it's free, it's not cheap. You've probably heard this before. When someone once said to me, and it's true, he said, nothing in life is free.

[36 : 59] It's only free because somebody else has paid for it. That's true, isn't it? When you're offered something for free, it's only free because someone else has paid the price. It's the same with Jesus. He's paid the price.

And he's paid it all. And he says, all we have to do is come. He is a saviour who's come to save sinners. Forgiveness was his mission. But secondly, forgiveness is Jesus' delight.

You know, it's more than just his mission to forgive sin. Because we can have a job to do and do it, but not really delight in it. I won't ask the husbands to nod or make any acknowledgement here.

But sometimes husbands, if your wife gives you a list of things to do. Maybe your girlfriend's giving you some things to do. Young men, maybe your girlfriend's giving you things to do and you're going, well, I've done it, but maybe I've done it grudgingly.

Or we've not taken any great joy in it. Or maybe you've got a job to do at work that you do, but you've certainly not enjoyed doing. You've accomplished the job. But it's not something you would say you delighted in.

[38 : 11] You see, Jesus is not like that. Jesus doesn't just accomplish his mission. Jesus actively delights to save. He actively delights to forgive.

It brings joy to his heart. It tells us this in the Old Testament, a prophet called Micah. Micah chapter 7. This is how he describes the Lord.

He says, I love that.

You don't stay angry forever, but you delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us. You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

He delights. He delights. It's a great wee book. It's called Gentle and Lowly by Dane Otland.

[39 : 14] I thoroughly recommend it. If you've not read it, it's well worth a read. It's essentially a kind of modern paraphrasing of a lot of kind of Puritan works. But it tells us about the heart of Jesus. And this is one of the themes it brings out.

He delights to forgive. And we need to hear that. Because have you ever felt that experience when you've sinned and maybe you've fallen into the same sin again and again and again.

And that thought lurks in your heart. And you think, how can I go before the Lord with this again? You must be getting really fed up with me and thinking, do you? Again? This? Really?

That's not the heart of God. He delights. He delights when we come. He delights to forgive. He delights to show mercy. He delights to restore. We get a wee hint in this verse about the delight that Jesus takes.

That it's not just his mission. It's his delight. And where do we see that in the verse, Father, forgive them? Well, I think we see it in the fact that it's not a pronouncement. It's a prayer.

[40 : 18] I'll say that again. It's not a pronouncement. It's a prayer. And what I mean by that, you go back to the story we looked at with a paralyzed man. Jesus made a pronouncement, didn't he? Son, your sins are forgiven.

That's a statement. He's saying it happened. Your sins are forgiven. That's not what he says here. What he's doing here is praying to the Father, isn't he? Father, forgive them. For they don't know what they're doing.

So as he is being crucified, in a sense, isn't it the case almost that when we are suffering ourselves, it exposes us in a way. It shows what's in our hearts.

And what shows in the heart of Jesus, this prayer is what comes out of him. Father, forgive them. That's his heart's desire. That's what he's bringing before the Lord, that we might be forgiven, that people, sinners, might be forgiven.

Jesus prays for the very ones crucifying him. And in many ways, that crucifying of Jesus was the greatest act of wickedness the world had ever seen. Our creator stepped into this world, and the human race murdered him.

[41 : 24] God came to us, and we nailed him to our cross. And yet we see in these words a glimpse of what the heart of our God is. The same heart that we read about in our call to worship.

The God who is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Jesus shows compassion.

He's praying for others. Father, forgive them. He shows incredible grace in doing so. It's undeserved. He's slow to anger. Remember that time when James and John came to Jesus, and they said, Lord, shall we call down fire from heaven to destroy them?

Jesus says, no. At the cross, Jesus could have called down a battalion of angels. He could have called down fire from heaven. He does not call down judgment from heaven.

He doesn't call down fire. He calls down forgiveness. He calls down grace. Slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

[42 : 29] These words show us his heart, it a prayer. His heart's desire is that there might be people who come to discover his grace and his forgiveness.

And who is it that he's praying for? Well, it's not his disciples here, is it? He's prayed for his disciples. And he does pray for his disciples.

That's the subject of another sermon. But it's a wonderful thing to think that in the courts of heaven just now, that's what Jesus is doing. He's praying for you. By name. Specifically.

Jesus prays for his people. But it's not his disciples he's praying for here. It's for those who hated him. It's for those who crucified him. It's for those who rejected him.

He prays for them. And I guess the big question, was this prayer answered? Was this prayer of Jesus answered?

[43 : 26] Well, I think it was. And I think we see two examples in the very chapter that we read of that prayer being answered. Not long after he prays that, we read about the thief on the cross.

And remember how he said to him, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Such a simple thing he says, isn't it?

That's all he says. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. It seems a simple thing to say, and yet it says a lot. Remember he says, when you come into your kingdom.

He's saying Jesus is the king, isn't he? Because he's saying he has a kingdom, and he's saying that the kingdom is his. It's your kingdom. When you come into your kingdom, when you sit upon the throne, he's acknowledging Jesus as king.

But he just says, remember me. And Jesus can say to him, Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise. I love that. He's saying to the man beside him, Today, this very day, you're going to close your eyes in death, and you're going to open them in glory.

[44 : 35] You're going to close your eyes upon a cross, and you're going to open them to gaze upon my face in paradise. The thief on the cross was saved. We read about this response from the Roman centurion after Jesus died.

He says he glorified God, saying, certainly this was a righteous man. And then, just a matter of 50 or so days later, we have the day of Pentecost, when 3,000 people are converted and saved and added to the church.

I think this prayer of Jesus found an overwhelming answer. Father, forgive them. And even during his experience on the cross, and immediately after his experience on the cross, people are finding that grace and that forgiveness for themselves.

Jesus, his mission was to save, and he takes delight in saving. And even amidst the awfulness of the cross, we're told that there's joy in the presence of the angels, joy in the heart of God when one sinner repents, and there beside him was a sinner repenting.

One of the sheep for whom he died was right beside him. Joy for the heart of Jesus. Thirdly, and finally, forgiveness is Jesus' invitation.

[45 : 49] What Jesus says to us here is, it's profound, but it's also very personal. You see, there's opposite mistakes that we can make when we think of the forgiveness of Jesus.

We can think of ourselves sometimes as too bad. We can think of ourselves as somehow beyond his grace to forget. You know, somehow the idea has gone out there.

Not just here on the island, but I come across it quite often. On the other side of the country, in East the Ross, people say stuff like, well, I'd like to come to church, but I need to sort myself out first.

I'm not there yet. I need to get myself back on my feet. I need to clean myself up. I need to do this, to tidy myself up, deal with my issues. Then I'll come to church. The answer I always give to them is, would you ever phone your doctor and say, listen, doctor, I really need to see you, but I'm just too sick.

Once I feel better, then I'll come in. The sicker you are, the quicker you need to see the doctor. And it's the same spiritually with Jesus. The sicker we are, the more sinful we are, the greater our need, the more we need to come, not to stay away, but to come.

[47 : 04] And that's what he says to us, come. And I know there's that voice in our head that says to us, oh, you don't understand. You don't know what I've done. I've done terrible things. I think terrible things, unforgivable things.

Jesus says, but I know. I know it all. Nothing surprises me. Nothing shocks me. I know everything about you, and I know every sin you will commit, even before you've committed it.

But still, Jesus says, come. Ah, you say, but how can there be forgiveness when I can't even forgive myself? Well, Jesus says, I can forgive you.

And if I forgive you, you've got no business refusing to forgive yourself. You are forgiven. Ah, but there's things nobody knows, hidden things, that if people knew the real me, if people saw the real me, they'd run so far away.

And Jesus says, I do know the real you. I know you better than you know yourself. I knew you before you were born. I will not turn you away. There is forgiveness.

[48 : 07] Or maybe you say, but I'm not just stuck with past sin. I'm stuck in present sin. I still, I'm still actively stuck in this temptation. I can't break free from it.

Well, I think Jesus would say, you're exactly the kind of person who I've come to help. To carry the burdens that you can't carry. The burdens that are too much to bear, they're not too much for Jesus.

And he says, come. Come and lay your burdens down at his feet. Come as you are. Come in your mess and your confusion.

Come with your questions. Come with your struggles and your temptations. But come and bring them to Jesus. Nobody is beyond the ability of Jesus to forgive.

And he makes a promise that he will keep. He turns nobody away. Nobody. So we can make that mistake and be thinking we're too bad and there's nobody he will turn away.

[49 : 06] Nobody he cannot forgive. But the other mistake we can make is to think that somehow we're above all this talk of forgiveness. It's that great danger when we listen to sermons sometimes that we can think, well, I hope so-and-so is listening to this.

And we can sit under a sermon about forgiveness and think, well, that doesn't apply to me. I'm a good person. Sinners are people out there or over there. What on earth is he on about forgiveness?

That's for the bad people. That surely doesn't apply to me. It's a danger that sometimes the sin that we need to repent of and later defeat of Jesus is our self-righteousness.

It's sometimes not the bad things that we do. It's our self-righteousness that needs repented of. Remember how Jesus spoke to the religious leaders of his day who were so offended at him.

And he said, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. John came to show you the way of righteousness, but you did not believe him. And the tax collectors and the prostitutes did.

[50 : 10] And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him. It's so easy to fool ourselves by comparing ourselves to the wrong standard and think, well, I'm not perfect, but I'm better than Joe Blocks.

I'm better than that person there. We can falsely think we're better than others. And sometimes even we can think we're better because we go to church.

But if we haven't put our trust in Christ on the day of judgment, we'll be worse off. As Jesus himself says to the people of Capernaum, we saw so many miracles. So if Jesus was living in the town, and yet he said to them, if the towns of Tyre and Sidon had seen what you have seen, they would have repented and sacked off the ashes long ago.

You know, God gives us the Ten Commandments, the law, not as this ladder to climb to show how good we are. They're given primarily to show us that we need a saviour.

But we don't keep them. We've all taken God's name in vain. We've all told lies. We've all lusted, coveted, hated, got angry, not honoured mother and father as we should. And when we measure ourselves against that standard, we all fall short.

[51 : 24] Even the best of us falls short in the language of the Bible. He says there is none righteous, not even one. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

We all need a saviour. If we could be good enough to get to heaven by ourselves, there would have been no need for Jesus. But we needed Jesus. And Jesus has come.

And Jesus has conquered. And Jesus is reigning. And Jesus is coming again. So if he's not yet your saviour, he speaks to you tonight.

He speaks to you and he says, come. Come and find grace. Come and find mercy. Come and find your forgiveness. If he's not yet your saviour tonight, maybe, maybe you're one of the ones for whom he's prayed.

Just as he prayed for those of the cross. Father, forgive them. Maybe you're one that he's prayed for for a long time. And maybe tonight is the night that you finally just need to come and receive what he has to give to you.

[52 : 33] And if he is our saviour, may he impress it on our hearts this evening. What grace that he's shown to us that we should be forgiven.

Jesus said that whoever was forgiven much loves much. And when we realise how much we've been forgiven, the natural response to that is love for Jesus.

Praise for Jesus. Gratitude. Gratitude to Jesus. That he is a God who would not just save sinners from the impersonal sense. I always think the Apostle Paul is such an intellectual.

I sometimes, I find a lot of the writings hard to get my head around and I take great comfort in the fact Peter did too. As Peter wrote, Paul wrote you many things some are very hard to understand. But I think one of the things that he never got past was that outburst he made when he said, the son of God who loved me and gave himself in me.

Just something so simple. I heard a story about the theologian Karl Barth, a man of incredible intellect and wrote these huge tomes and he was asked at a conference, what's your greatest theological insight in all your learning and all your studies, all that you've discovered, what is your greatest insight?

[53 : 59] and he thought for a second and he said, the greatest thing I have ever heard is this. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Something quite profound in that.

If we are the Lord's tonight, may we just reflect on how he has dealt with us. The grace that we have found and the grace that we have found we can extend to others knowing that Jesus will receive them the same way that he has received us.

Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Amen. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your grace towards us and that you are the God who forgives sin.

Thank you for forgiving our sin. And we pray for any who don't yet know that grace that Lord, that you would work in their heart to bring them to see and to know and to love Jesus.

Only you can do it if you're in the business of doing just that. So we pray your blessing on us tonight. Bless your word to our souls and we ask this in Jesus' precious name.

[55 : 14] Amen. Amen. We're going to conclude singing from Psalm 130. Psalm 130.

We're going to sing the whole psalm and again it's a psalm that reminds us of the character and grace of God and I just love the last verse. It doesn't just say that redemption is found with him.

It says plenteous redemption. It's not just that there's mercy but there's so much in it. It's not just that there's redeeming love. It's that it's an overflowing fountain and plenteous redemption is ever found with him.

So Psalm 130, the whole psalm to God's face. Lord, from the depths to Thee I cry My voice, Lord, do Thou hear Unto my supplications' voice Give us not And to me Lord, who shall stand If Thou, O Lord, choose market iniquity But yet with Thee Forgiveness is

That fear Thou mayest be I wait for God My soul does wait My hope is in His word More than Thee That for mourning was My soul is for the Lord I sing for the day That to watch The morning light to see Let Israel

[57 : 52] Hope in the Lord For with Him Mercies be Unplenteous redemption Is ever found With Him And from all His Iniquities He Israel shall shall redeem The Lord bless you and keep you The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you The Lord turn His face towards you and give you peace Amen And from all His

And from all His