

# Today - You Shall Be With in Paradise

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 06 October 2024

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Welcome to our service this morning as we join together in worship of God we pray for his blessing upon our time under his word and that it may be blessed to our souls.

We can begin our service singing verses from Psalm 103. Psalm 103 at verse 8.

At verse 8. The Lord of God is merciful and he is gracious. Long-suffering and slow to wrath in mercy plentiful. He will not jide continually nor keep his anger still.

With us he dealt not as we sinned, not in requite our will. For as the heaven in its height, the earth surmounteth far. So great to those that do him fear his tender mercy's heart.

As far as east is distant from the west, so far has he from us removed. In his love all held iniquity. We can sing these verses.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] Psalm 103 from verse 8 to 12. The Lord our God is merciful and he is gracious. The Lord our God is merciful and he is gracious.

He will not jide God dead.

Nor keep his anger still. Nor keep his anger still.

With us he dealt not as we sinned.

Nor keep his anger still. Nor keep his anger still.

[ 2 : 4 0 ] For as the heaven in its height, the earth surmounteth far. The answer might be found So get to those that do him feel It's in the mercy's heart As far as he's risen from The west of the God he From his revenge

In his love All out iniquity Let us join together in prayer Lord our God as we gather in your name We pray that your name would be Something that speaks to us Of a God that is almighty All powerful The God who has an eye that takes in The whole of our world The created universe Even that which may lie beyond Beyond the bounds that we have set

Or that others have set for us We know that such an understanding Is one that is One that we cannot attain to Without the assistance of The God who is our creator We find the greatness That you possess To be something that is challenged By your puny reason What you are able to do And what you have done And what you are doing Is something that Were it not By grace We would not Believe it To be so And there are many things That we can think of

That are contained within this world In which we have All of our experiences From our birth to our death We may read of other experiences That are not ours But are the experiences of others And we derive from them Some measure of understanding Of the world in which we live Functions Nevertheless We are constrained By the limits That our human reason Places upon us And we need more than Mere human resources To believe The truth concerning God And yet you endow us With such ability Even the things That we might struggle to To appreciate

For their For their depth of meaning And for their awesome wonder That they create in us  
You endow us with The wherewithal By which to Take these things on board And to act  
upon them In your worship There are those Who might be strangers To the activities Of  
the Church of Christ Here in this world All they have is What they have seen From afar  
They have not engaged in it And more and more Are in that very category today Within  
our society They know that there is Buildings Called churches They know that there are  
People who bear the name Christian They know something Of what goes on here But  
their limited

[ 7 : 49 ] Understanding is One that deprives them Of a true appreciation Of what the Church is  
And who the Christ That we serve Is We Are In your hands So that we go on In the life  
That we possess As you have Endowed us with it Not allowing ourselves To be Influenced  
By the darkness That Pervades The thinking Of many Who have not Experienced What  
we have Experienced Who have not Seen what we have Seen Who have not Heard what  
we have Heard Who have not Been given Resources Like we have Been given That  
would allow Us to know That there is A God And that there is A Saviour And that there is A  
need of salvation And that the gospel Must needs Be preached And those who

Hear it preached Must believe That it is God's truth To us We bless you And thank you  
That what we have Is worth having And That we should not Be swayed By those who  
have Who have barely Tasted Of what it means To live a life Of faith Who have Thoughts  
But these thoughts Are tainted By the By the perceptions That this world Creates Many of  
them Which are swayed By Their own Inability And their own Darkness Of Spirit So as we  
pray We pray for An outpouring of Your spirit Upon our Gathering We pray for it Selfishly  
Knowing that Without you We can do Nothing We pray for it Knowing that There is an  
Essential need For quickening For awakening

For rekindling For encouraging In the face of Adversity We pray for We pray for our  
Community We pray for our Congregation We pray for our Homes and Families Our  
children Our children's Children We pray for the Blessing of the Most High God To be  
imparted To us And that we Might have an Appreciation of it And that we Would sense a  
Great grief And sorrow If we If we Even Thought for a Moment that These things Would be  
taken From us And we have No right to Believe that we Would continue As we are Even  
as we Are We pray Lord for Your For your Mercy For your Grace For your Help in Time of  
Need Remembering Our congregation Here In its Grief Praying for

Families That have Been affected By sorrow And sadness In recent Days We ask Lord  
that You would Sanctify The visitation Of death To us That we May Think on These things  
And that You may Enable Others To reflect On The seriousness Of What death Implies  
We remember To you The congregations Of our Denomination And pray For the  
Proclamation Of truth That it May have Free course Amongst it That those Who seek To  
promote Christ And him Crucified Would be Encouraged In their Labour That all The  
congregations Of our Island And beyond Would be Fearlessly And faithfully Proclaiming  
Christ Jesus The A lone Saviour Of sinners Remember All our Congregations Remember  
The ministries That go on

There Remember The vacant Congregations We pray Lord for A day Of power A day Of  
salvation Remembering Remembering Remembering Remembering The nation To which  
We belong And the Sad state Of affairs That pertains When there Are so many Ignorant  
Blissfully Ignorant Of their Plight Under God For without God We can Do Nothing And  
Before God We will Stand And answer For what We have Done Or failed To do We pray  
For our Community Here The island To which We belong As we Are once Again Aware Of  
The Assault That there Is On Spiritual Matter Even As it Applies To The Day That Beers  
Your Name The Sanctity Of That Day Is Something That Is Not Man Made You

[ 12 : 52 ] Have Made Us For Yourself You Created Us In Your Image And You Made Provision For Us On The Seventh Day You Rested And You Hallowed It Not Because You Were Tired Not Because You Needed Physical Recreation But Because You Understood The Creature That You Created In Your Image Required Not Only To Have Physical Rest But Spiritual Nourishment Also In The World For All Its Changes Has Not Changed In This Respect And We See So Many Complaining Of Being Burnt Out Exhausted Feeling The Days Are Too Many For Them Because They Cannot Sustain The Industry That They Made Themselves Engage With Because Of The Pressing Need That They Imagine That Is Their So It Excludes

The Needs Of Their Soul Mercy Mercy To Merchiefly Entertain For Us And Deprive The Arm Of The Enemy Of Our Soul Of Its Strength So That We Would Not Be Pay To His Machinations Here In This Place And In Their Homes Remember Remember All The Homes Of The Community Remember Those Who Govern Us Locally And Nationally

Remember The Royal Family Lord You Are The One Who Is Able To Turn Us In The Path That We Are On To Convert Us To Make Us Enjoy The Sorrows And The Sadness And The Tears That Are Bitter Of True Penitence You Are The One Who Makes These Things Blessed To Us That It Contradicts The Human Experience So Greatly That Anything That Is Bitter Anything That Causes Grief Anything That Makes Our Eyes Run With Tears Can Be Good For Us And Yet We Need To Experience The True Penitent Spirit From The Lord And We Pray For It Remember The Truth That Is Your Truth

That It May Have Free Course Be Be Merciful To A World That Is On The Brink Of War Always On The Brink Of War Nations Are Arrayed Against One Another And That Is Liable To Concertina And So That One Conflict Becomes A Greater One And A Greater One Extends Beyond The Boundaries That We Imagine Would Exist For The Wickedness That Dwells In Man's Heart Does Not Allow For Any Other Option But That The Hands Of The Wicked Will Join Together To Do Wicked Things But We Give You The Glory That Your Arm Is All Powerful And You Are Able To Thwart The Energy That

Is There And Bring It Under Submission To Your Own Power So To That End We Pray That You Would Remember The Nations At War That You Remember The Peoples Affected By It The Families That Are Rent Asunder The Families That Have Known Grief From The Time They Were Born One Day Following Another And Always Facing The Horrible Reality So What Brings Hear Us O Lord On Their Beh Bring Healing Whether Is Hurts Bring Sustenance Where There Is Starvation We Pray For Your Mercy Be Near To Us And Watch Over Us Each One For Giving Sin In Jesus Name Amen Amen Well boys And Girls Before You Go To Sunday School I Believe Today Your Trostation Is Going To Be The

[ 17 : 55 ] Man Who Met Jesus In The Way A Man Called Safiyah He Was A Tax Collector Somebody Who Made His Living From Collecting Money From Others And He Became Rich In His Own Right Taking Such Money And He Was Not The Person That You Would Expect To Come And To Seek The Lord Jesus Christ But The Bible Tells Us That He Went Out Of His Way To Look For Jesus That's A Lesson There For Us It Doesn't Matter Who We Are Or What We Are Or How We Have Behaved In The Past We Can Always Take Comfort From Reading The Bible And Finding In The Bible All Kinds Of Strange Characters All Kinds Of Odd People All

Kinds Of People You Think Would Never Ever Be Concerned About Their Soul And Yet They Desire To Meet Jesus And Saphir Was One Such Passion I Don't Know If He Was A Jew Some People Think He Wasn't That He Was A Non-Jew Because They Wouldn't Think That People Who Who Who Who Who Were Jews Who Were Of That Race Would Gather Taxes For The Roman Authorities And They Can't Imagine Somebody Doing That Who Was Jewish George do very strange things. People become greedy and they're never happy with what they have and they want more and that's why Saghiris, the tax collector was probably somebody who was greedy and he was greedy in the sense that he chiefted others. He took other people's money for himself. He was never happy with what he had.

And even though that was true of him, the strange thing is he heard about Jesus and he went and he wanted to see Jesus for himself. And I think if anything else that's in the story, the story is interesting in many ways I'm sure you boys and girls would love to climb a tree. Would you like to climb a tree?

I'm sure your mums and dads and grandpas would say, don't climb a tree because you'll fall. If you climb the tree, you're going to fall. It's definite.

You're going to fall if you go up to a height like that. But I wonder if you said to them I'm going to climb a tree to see Jesus. Do you think they would allow you to do that?

[ 20 : 59 ] If they knew that Jesus was passing by and that you said, I want to climb this tree in order to see Jesus. Do you think that would be a good reason?

Well, I'm always sure that whatever it is that lies behind our desire to see Jesus sometimes it might be a wrong desire.

But if at the end of it we get to see Jesus if we get to see him as he is then it's a wonderful, wonderful experience.

Maybe Zacchaeus was just curious maybe he was selfish and wanted to find out for himself how can I advance myself?

How can I make more money for myself by being involved in all that interests? You know, obviously there was people wanting to follow Jesus and Zacchaeus would probably count the pennies and say, how can I how can I get something for myself through that interest that others have?

[ 22 : 14 ] Maybe it was as basic as that as simple as that he just said to himself how can I make this interest in this man something that I benefit from?

Could even be as selfish as that but the thing is that Jesus looked up and he saw this man in the tree and he spoke to him and said to him come down no, I'm sorry he didn't just say come down he said make haste and come down come down right away don't don't delay come down and see me because I'm going to spend time with you today in your home now I wonder I wonder if we can learn something from this person that the Bible tells us all about when Jesus says come it's important for us to come now to make haste to come now when he says come and he's saying come to us today to you who are children to you who are parents to you who are grandparents he's saying to you to come to make haste and it's never ever too early and never ever too late

I hope you'll bear that thought in mind when in the gospel of Jesus Christ he speaks to you and says to you come we're going to sing now as you go out to Sunday school from Psalm 116 Psalm 116 when we sing from the beginning to verse 8 I love the Lord because my voice and prayer he did hear my while I live will call on him who bowed to me his ear of death the cords and sorrows did about me camp as round the pains of hell took hold on me I grieved and trouble found upon the name of God the Lord then did I call and say deliver thou my soul O Lord I do thee humbly pray we're going to sing to the received I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear

I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear will call on Him alires will call  
wys Why for him The wars and sorrows fit, A perfect me cup of wine.

The things of hell take hold from me, I grieve and trouble.

[ 26 : 00 ] The wars and sorrows fit, I do thee humbly pray.

God merciful and righteous is, He gracious is the Lord.

God saves the meek I was brought low, He did me help my heart.

O thou, my soul, did thou return, Until I black and rest.

For our dear Lord, Lord to thee, His power ye have expressed.

[ 27 : 47 ] For my distressed soul from death, Here ever was by thee.

Thou didst my morning eyes from tears, My feet from falling free.

Thou didst my day. Amen. We're going to read from the New Testament scriptures, of  
Jesus Christ according to Luke and we're going to read from chapter 23.

Chapter 23 and we'll read from verse 27. In this chapter there's an account given to us of  
the judgment of Jesus and the crucifixion that follows it.

And we're taking up the reading where they're making their way to where the cross is  
going to be placed and Christ put on it.

[ 29 : 13 ] Verse 27. 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  
wombs that never bear and the paps that never give suck.

Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on 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 them 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.

[ 30 : 22 ] 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 ye be the Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked  
him, coming to him and offering thine vinegar.

And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a 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, 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.

[ 31 : 32 ] And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.  
And it was about the sixth hour.

And there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 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, Smoked their breasts and returned. And all his acquaintance, And the woman that followed him from Galilee, Stood afar off, Beholding these things.

And behold, there was a man named Joseph, A counselor. And he was a good man and a just. The same had not consented to the counsel And deed of them.

[ 32 : 44 ] He was of Arimathea a city of the Jews, Who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. This man went into Pilate And begged the body of Jesus.

And he took it down, And wrapped it in linen, And laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, Wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, And the Sabbath drew on.

And the woman also which came with him from Galilee Followed after, And beheld the sepulchre, And how his body was laid. And they returned, And prepared spices and ointments, And rested the Sabbath day, According to the commandment.

Amen. And may the Lord be his blessing To a reading of his word. Let's sing now from Psalm 107.

We're going to sing from the beginning to verse 9. Psalm 107 from the beginning Praise God, for he is good, For still his mercy's lasting be, Let God's redeemed say so, Whom he from the enemy's hand did free, And gathered them out of the lands From north, south, east, and west, They strayed in deserts pathless way, No city found to rest, For thirst and hunger in them Faints their soul, When straits them pressed, They cry unto the Lord, And he then frees From their distress.

[ 34 : 28 ] Them also now wait to walk, Not right as he did guide, That they might to a city go, Wherein they might abide. O that men to the Lord Would give praise for his goodness then, And for his works of wonder Done unto the sons of men.

For he the soul that longing is, Doth fully satisfy, With goodness he, The hungry soul, Doth thin abundantly.

Precious 1 to 9 of Psalm 107, Praise God, for he is good, For still his mercy's lasting be. Let God, for he is good, For still his mercy's lasting be.

Let God, for still his mercy fundamentally. Let God, for still his mercy, Let God, for still his mercy be.

From the enemy's enemy's ARA, And gather damage of the lands From north, south, east and west This trade in desert spotless way This trade in desert spotless way No city firm to rest For thirst and hunger in them pains Their soul when straight and pressed

[ 36 : 50 ] They cried unto the Lord and He They cried unto the Lord and He Them priests from their distress Them also in a way to walk The brightest He could guide That they may too ascetic all That they may too ascetic all

Wherein they might abide Oh that men too The Lord would give Peace for His goodness And for His works of wonder done And for His works of wonder done Until the sevens are in For He the soul that longing is

Shall fully satisfy With goodness He The hungry soul With goodness He The hungry soul The Lord The Lord Das if abundantly Boy We're going to turn now to the passage read Gospel of Luke chapter 23 and we're reading again at verse 43 the words that Jesus spoke to the Passion that is normally identified the thief on the cross

Jesus said unto him verily I say unto thee today shalt thou be with me in paradise today shalt thou be with me in paradise when somebody dies God is speaking to us through that person's death when the person that dies is a relative or a friend or a neighbor God is preaching a sermon to us through that person's death it can be a sermon that has many headings as hermons sometimes do these headings can take any number of different forms we ask the question as a result of the sermon being preached or the sermon invites us to ask the sermon ask the question when will I die?

where will I go? will I be happy where I go? and I suppose simple headings like that the sermon invites us to react to the sermon in that way there is no if I die there is only one way to be ready and there are only two possible places and we only can experience perfect bliss the deepest sorrow and misery the story of the thief on the cross is often told what is overlooked is that there were two thieves on the cross someone put it like this two malefactors were crucified together both were equally near to Christ both heard and saw the same both were notoriously wicked both were suffering acutely both were dying both urgently needed to be forgiven but the story of the thief on the cross that we are most interested in is the one who formed a relationship with Christ the one who appreciated the forgiveness that Christ had for a sinner and the one that Christ said to him today you will be with me in paradise he didn't say that to both today our focus is on this one person we're not really going we don't have much that we can say about this person really because we're not told much about them except that they both ended up being crucified judged rightly or wrongly for their crimes and put to death because of them but the words that we're looking at

[ 43 : 59 ] I want us to think about what that or these words suggest to us first of all for this person that Christ said these words to today shalt thou be with me in paradise death for that person meant paradise and secondly it opens out the possibility of exploring what paradise actually is and it's not really something this is a strange land paradise it's not a place that we've ever been to it's not a place that we've we've actually spoken with anyone who's been there all that we know about paradise is what we taught in the bible but Jesus makes this promise to this person the sermon that death preaches is like many sermons it is a sermon that is preached and a sermon that is heard

I think I've said to you and who I have that someone once said about a good sermon a good sermon is a sermon that goes over my head my shoulder and hits my neighbour on his head a good sermon and the logic of that is this that a good sermon is only good if it leaves me untouched if it doesn't disturb me if it doesn't wound me if it doesn't leave me feeling uncomfortable that's the way some people think about sermons it's got to be entertaining it's got to be interesting it's got to be different it's got to keep them awake and as long as it does all of these things it's reasonable but for for any favour don't let that sermon be directed at me don't let that sermon point the finger at me don't let that sermon disturb my peace don't let that finger identify me as someone who actually needs to do something about their life because

I'm perfectly content with myself the way I am but when the sermon that God preaches through death speaks to us we do well to be disturbed by it we do well to think about what it is saying to us about where we are where we intend to be how we are going to get there and what we anticipate once we do get there it's a good sermon if it does speak to you one thing that we are taught is that when we die what happens at that moment is irreversible a body and a soul that God has created to be in existence in union have been parted by

God himself according to his command the body and the soul are separated the body to return to the dust and the soul to return to the God who gave it yesterday as you know we were conducting a service here to do with the death of one of our brothers in the Lord an elder in the congregation and as I stood at the graveside our close relative said to me with perfect honesty as he saw the sand being entered over the coffin he said all we have here is dust all we have here is dust and he could say that not because he was hard hearted but because he was somebody who had faith somebody who understood exactly what death does you know people today speak about the body because they don't want to think about the dust but the bible thinks about the dust the bible encourages you to think about the dissolution that death brings the bible tells us the wise man in ecclesiastes for example tells us all are of the dust and all turn to dust again and that's what death does the body experiences dissolution but Jesus is here speaking to someone and he is anticipating his death and he is saying to this person that he knows nobody knows like Christ knows what death is nobody understands the reality of death like Christ does people here speculate about eternity people talk about heaven and earth and talk about heaven and hell and they think they know what it's all about but Jesus knows and he knew the person he spoke he was speaking to on the cross beside him would soon be separated body and soul he would soon be severed in that sense the body and the soul driven asunder as death does but he said to him today you are going to be with me in paradise Jesus could have said to me at exactly x amount of minutes or seconds or hours you are going to be in heaven with me he could have said that but there is no lack of definiteness in what he said today he said you will be with me in paradise and not one moment of time will you spend in this world beyond that the soul lives on do you remember Jesus himself told that in Matthew chapter 10 he warned his disciples he encouraged his disciples he told his disciples when they suffered persecution he said to them fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell and that is something to remember God knows

and God has made certain that we know that such a separation will take place but God alone possesses the soul and possesses the body they are in his hands the Westerners' confession of faith tells us what happens to the souls of those who are believers and of course of the souls who are not of those who are not believers but thinking about the soul of this person that Jesus says to today you're going to be with me in paradise he says the word of the confession is the souls of the righteous being then made perfect in holiness are received into the highest heavens where they behold the face of God in light and glory waiting for the full redemption of their bodies I think the wisdom of the divines in constructing these words is there for all to see the saint who goes to heaven goes there as a spiritual being whatever that is Jesus said today but well we need to go to paradise to find out what paradise is like don't we it is a place with Jesus it is occupied by Jesus it is the immediate presence of God his Father and the Holy Spirit and there is upon death not a moment's delay that's even almost impossible thing to realize that when the last breath is drawn or expired that soul is in the immediate presence of God instantly instantly there is not a moment's delay there is no purgatory there is no place in between when death claims the body when God pronounces upon the life that is now extinct the body returns to dust and the soul returns to God scripture emphasizes for us the fact that the soul of the believer is in the immediate presence of God in the epistle to the Hebrews the apostle insists that Christ has gone to heaven for us he has gone to heaven for us and when he is in heaven for us he is fulfilling or being given the experience that God promised to him as the intercessor intermediary of his people the one who took their place on the cross you remember when Jesus was speaking to his Father in the world he prayed prayed for himself but he prayed for his church in particular I will he said Father that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am this is what I want and he was speaking to his heavenly Father that they be with me where I am and in John 14 the verses we are often quoted when we suffered bereavement in my father's house had many mansions if it were not so I would have told you I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive



[ 56 : 06 ] you unto myself that where i am there you may be also jesus has said that not just to the thief on the cross that he is speaking to he said it to his people wherever they are now to say that we understand that is one thing but what do we understand by it is another yes we know what the words are saying but do we really fully comprehend what this paradise of god is like you've got your own vision of glory you've got your own picture in your own mind and there are so many things that the bible says to us about heaven that we have a right to to read and to research and to reflect on and to try and get to grips with the meaning of what is being explained to us but our limited faculties and reasoning power deprives us of a full comprehension of all that is there before us

Wallace Bruce Nicholson a preacher who was in these islands a number of years ago he'd been taught in America a theological degree there and he wrote a few books he was a minister in Scarpia at one point but he wrote the following truth and soberness constrains us to acknowledge that the details of the state and condition of eternal blessedness is above the level of our comprehension I think that's true I think that's true yes we take God's word and we try and understand with the ability that God has given to us all that we think heaven is all about we're thinking about this man Jesus has spoken to him and he says today you will be with me in paradise and you're there and you're hanging on his coattails and you're going into heaven along with him and you're saying what will this man see when he goes into heaven who will he see how will he see he doesn't have a body he doesn't have the eyes of the body to see truth and soberness constrains us to acknowledge that the details of the state and condition of eternal blessedness is above the level of our comprehension but he follows that with these words and that our saviour will be there that his people will be like him that they will share in his glory and

I believe what he now says is perfectly true that there are two extremes two dangers that is that we at one level think that what heaven is like is too like this world in which we live it is too much like it and the other extreme it is not like it at all there is nothing in this world that compares to heaven and there is a dis junction of separation between the reality of what we had in the world with what will exist in heaven and we think well there is nothing at all in this world that compares to it and I believe that but you remember that God created his people to have the capacity for likeness to himself and that was the initial existence they had they were created in his image perfectly able to exist in his presence because sin was not in their life and they had no experience of sin and when

God takes his people to be with himself they will be once again without sin and there will be no hindrance to their existence in his presence or experiencing communion with him in whatever way that was experienced initially there may be several questions for which scripture provides no answer and that I suspect makes us believe that it allows us to speculate what faculties do this does the soul have in heaven in the immediate presence of God at the present the souls of believers who at their death have gone to glory are there without a body and their bodies are still in the dust in the dust until the resurrection because they are united to Christ still and the rest that their bodies enjoy is a rest because of their union with Christ in death perhaps we are not able to delve into the mystery but Christ has said to this person you will be with me in paradise and I think for some if not for many that is more than enough there is always the inquisitive there is always the person who allows unbridled imagination to take wing to take flight and they go this way and that and they think this and that about what heaven will be like but sufficient to test for many to know that they are going to be with Christ and to be with

Christ they are assured that that is far better there is a famous preacher who was a preacher in the 19th century in the highlands he is well known for his sermons and there are not many of them left to us but he is also known for his poetry the man is called Dr.

[ 63 : 13 ] MacDonald of Ferrentosh and he wrote an elegy about a Christian or the Christian which was in three parts and three headings in this elegy the Christian on his way to Jordan the Christian on the banks of Jordan and the Christian across the Jordan it's strange that he didn't say anything about the Christian in the Jordan he didn't say anything about that and there are many people today who write about the experience of being dead they've written about it they've told you that they died and they told you tell you what happened when they were dead it's an amazing thing I don't believe a word of it myself neither did Dr.

MacDonald but it was a poem written in Gaelic but there was a translation of it made of a scholar in the Free Church College called Dr.

John MacLeod Professor Principal John MacLeod and if you know Gaelic and you know English you know that sometimes translations are not very they don't do justice to the original and I think there are times when that is quite true if you're a Gaelic speaker you know that some words that are translated to English don't have the same strength or power but one of the verses and I'm just going to quote it to as it was translated and this is the Christian across the Jordan and remember we're talking about here about paradise and the experience of the believer in paradise and what will be true about that believer not having been there but this is what he says my desire is now accomplished all I wish is fully mine and with holiness made lovely like my saviour

I shine I am satisfied with glory near to God unveiled I move and I'll spend eternal ages in the ocean of his love I am satisfied with glory and that is the thing you see we are limited as to the knowledge that we have we have the scripture and there is ample information provided for us in the scripture that the believer will go to heaven and that there will be things that the believer will enjoy in heaven and who they will enjoy that heaven with but questions are inevitably asked when the death of a friend a relative a neighbour occurs a sermon has been preached and for every sermon that has been preached the question has to be asked what has happened as a result of that sermon you've attended church here faithfully over many years you've heard many sermons preached by many different people for all of these sermons the question has to be asked what has that sermon created in me what mark has that sermon left on my life has any change been brought by God through his word have I actually heard the word of God through the preaching of a preacher whoever that preacher is

I've often thought and felt myself that you know we look so often at large congregations and we're thankful to God that there are large congregations and that there are many people attending but as a preacher I often fear that how much of my preaching has been wasted and how little by way of fruit there is and how many souls will I have to give an answer to God for and I thank God that there are few in that sense God is preaching forget me forget the preacher God has preached a sermon into your life with the death of an elder a neighbour a friend a relative and when that sermon is preached how have you heard what have you listened to have you thought of the words that were spoken to this man who didn't deserve to go to heaven and yet

[ 69 : 20 ] Jesus took him there a man that was deserving of hell and yet Jesus said to him today you will be with me in paradise oh don't let his words fall to the floor without creating in you a desire to be in this place where he is and which is far better than anything you have in this world may God encourage you to think about these things with meaning and purpose let us pray Lord our God take your word and we seek to remind ourselves of the true meaning that there is for your people to know what awaits them received gifts for men or such as did repel even for them that

God the Lord in midst of them might dwell blessed be the Lord who is to us of our salvation God who daily with his benefits us plenteously doth Lord he of salvation is the God who is our God most strong and unto God the Lord from death the issues do belong and sing these verses Psalm 68 from the Lord most glorious ascended up on high the hast o Lord most glorious ascended up all and in triumph victorious led captive captivity the through support in any and blank ing

For them that brought the dark, in midst of them I dwell.

Blessed be the Lord who is to us of our salvation, God.

And till He with His benefits, as pleniously, the Lord.

[ 74 : 09 ] He is the God who is the God.

Most strong and gentle to God, the Lord from death.

And we shall still belong.