

Christ on the Emmaus Road

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Date: 31 December 2020

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship by a reading from the Psalm Mark 84.

These words will be sung in Gaelic. I'm going to read from verse 4. Blessed are they in thy house that dwell, they ever give thee praise.

Lest is the man whose strength of art, in whose art are thy ways. Who passing thoroughbaker's veil, therein do dig up wells. Also the rain that falleth down the pools with water fills.

So they from strength and wearied go, still forward unto strength, until in Zion they appear before the Lord at length. Lord God of hosts, my prayer hear.

O Jacob's God give ear, see God of shield. Look on the face of thine anointed deer, for in thy courts one day excels a thousand.

[1 : 06] Rather in my God's house will I keep a door than dwell in tents of sin. And so on. Sperrne ich cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■. G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■. G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

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G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

[2 : 26] G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

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[3 : 53] G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■. G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

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[5 : 25] G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■. G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

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G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■. G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

[6 : 57] G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■. G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■. G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■. G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

G■rni cendr■e mung honi ta, ad aros növ h■j■.

raise our voices in our homes, in places that we are by ourselves, without fear of harming anyone or being heard by anyone but the God who is the worthy recipient of our praises.

[8 : 24] And so it is with our prayers. Our prayers can be offered in private, in secret, as well as in public and within the hearing of others. We give thanks that above all that these prayers are addressed to the God who is sitting before us on the throne of the universe. At whichever time we choose to offer prayer unto our God, you are there before us and we give thanks for that. For every occasion that we are sensitive to your presence, we are sensible of it and we are aware that our cries and our pleas are not going unheard. They are never unsolicited. For you invite us to come and you encourage us to come boldly into a throne of grace, there to receive mercy and grace to help in time of need. We give thanks that you have opened a living and a new way for us and that Christ Jesus, the alone Saviour of sinners, as said before us in the Scriptures as the breaker up of the way, the one who has allowed us to come into the presence of our heavenly Father and who encourages us to believe that that is what he is, that he is one who has made this preparation for us in the passion of Jesus Christ, that he has in him broken down the walls that were there from the fall that prevented access. But then through his coming and through his embracing the path of obedience we know that he is there for us as our righteousness, as our justification.

We know that your servant the apostle said that we are justified by faith and we have peace with you through him and that we have peace with you through him and that we have peace with you through him and that we have access, that most precious access that your people avail themselves of, access into his grace, even this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We give thanks that all who have come to our knowledge of him can come with that certainty and that they come knowing that whatever they desire that they can make known to yourself.

And they are conscious that their desires may not be in accordance with your will but they desire that your will be their will and that they would delight in it as he did. And that as scripture says of him that it was to do thy will that he came and that he too delight in doing it even to the point of death. We give thanks for the record that is infallible that tells us of how how he embraced death and that he entered into it willingly as one who was a ransom for many and that he gave up his soul and yet at the same time by virtue of the fact that he is the God-man that spirit that was his that flesh that was his were united in the passion and that was something that needs to be understood.

And we bless you for the way the mystery of the Godhood of the passion of Christ is said before us in the scripture to enable us to put our trust wholeheartedly in him that we will never find ourselves however limited our understanding is in a place where we will be let down by some some part of what he has done being found wanting that there is some flaw in the work that he did that there is some failing that there is something that he has left undone he has left nothing to us to do save only to believe in him to the saving of our soul so we pray this evening for the blessing of the most high to be upon our service even this last service of the year we give thanks for your goodness and grace towards us far more than we are entitled to to believe as something that we deserve for every one of us sins daily thought word and deed that is true of us our sins are many they are gross they are vexatious they are tiresome even to ourselves let alone to a holy god so we pray lord for mercy thankful that it is to be found at thy hand so here are prayers on behalf of your people in all their different needs we pray for those who are unwell at the present pray for those who have succumbed to the covid virus that is rampant in our generation we pray for your people amongst them thankful that no matter what it is that enters into the experience of your people that you are able to use it to the good of their never dying soul that you can sanctify them through the trials that they must engage with so we pray that you would encourage them in their trials to look unto jesus the author and finisher of faith continue to watch over your people everywhere those who are unwell with other illnesses in their own midst and elsewhere to the far corners of the earth we give thanks for you one church one head many members and all with different gifts and graces but all flowing from the one root and one source so we pray that you would remind us even anew as we continue before you into this end of year that you would be with us even unto the end not only of the year but into the gears that beckon whether we live to see them or not the time comes that this world will have run its course the time will be at an end in its experience in this world whatever that means the rising of the sun to the setting down these things may run their course the world will evolve or dissolve and we know that these things are promised the day will come when the promises of god that are amen in christ will come to fruition till he comes in his glory and brings his own to be with him and the graves will open and dead will rise ever to be with the lord he will declare them as his own he will disclose who are not lord we pray we pray that we would be numbered amongst them that are your jewels precious in your sight to be brought with you to be disclosed to the father to the glory of your great name hear all with all our petitions on behalf of that number remember the grieving the sorrowful

those who are even today burying the dead we pray for them that it may sanctify the action that they have taken may be sanctified to them remember those who have even accomplished that in our community in these last days you take away from us those that we know we take from us the young you take from us the middle age you take from us the elderly there is no mercy with regard to the grave it is its mouth is ever open crying for more but you have triumphed over the grave you have secured the victory and we give thanks that in christ that is assured so remember your word so it goes out blessed we pray bless all who proclaim it and remember it in its declaration that christ jesus alone is the savior of sinners may we trust in him may we look to him may he bless his word and may it fall not on deaf ears but on ears that are that are stretching out to hear the the blessedness of the good news of salvation to sinners so remember all we live in your care our homes our families our communities our congregations remember our presbytery our nation and all the nations of the earth be merciful to us we pray and remember all who govern to all who rule over us remember the royal family we give thanks for the queen we give thanks for the declaration of faith that was contained within her address to the nation pray that that would be a genuine reflection of a relationship that she possesses with her lord we pray lord that you would remember us now continuing with us cleansing from sin in jesus name amen i'm going to read from the scriptures of the new testament and the gospel of luke and the last chapter of that gospel luke chapter 24 and we're going to read from verse 13 reading down to verse 35 luke 24 verse 13 and behold two of them went that same day to a village called emmaus which was from jerusalem about three score furlongs and they talked together of all these things which had happened and it came to pass that while they communed together and reasoned jesus himself drew near and went with them but their eyes were holding that they should not know him and he said unto them what manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk on her side and the one of them whose name was cleopas answering said unto him are thou only a stranger in jerusalem and has not known the things which are come to pass there in these days and he said unto them what things and they said unto him concerning jesus of nazareth which was a prophet mighty indeed and world before god and all the people and how the chief priests and the rulers delivered him to be condemned to death and have crucified him but we trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed israel and beside all this today is the third day since these things were done yea and certain women also of her company made us astonished and which were early at the sepulchre and when they found not his body they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels which said that he was alive and certain of them which were with us

[20 : 39] went to the sepulchre and found it even so as the woman had said but him they saw not then he said unto them all fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ought not christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory and beginning at moyses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself and they drew nigh unto the village further they went and he made as though he would have gone further but this con they constrained him saying abide with us for it is towards evening and the day is far spent and he went in to tarry with them and it came to pass as he sat at meat with them he took bread and blessed and break and gave it to them and their eyes were opened and they knew him and he vanished out of their sight and they said one to another did not our heart burned within us while he talked with us by the way and while he opened to us the scriptures and they rose up the same hour and returned to jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together and them that were with them saying the lord is risen indeed and it appeared to simon and they told what things were done in the way and how he was known of them in breaking of bread and so on may the lord add his blessing to this reading of his word and to his name and let him be the praise

I love the account that Luke gives us of the two walking on the road to Emmaus the description that is given to us of a whole host of different emotions through the scripture you are given permission to walk with him a fourth member of the group a silent observer of all that is being said there is a wonderful dimension to you being there in person which because of the scripture in the hand of the holy spirit conveys to you you know one thing that is present when christ is present in his word is a sense of his presence one thing i miss because of the current ongoing situation with covid is being physically present with my congregation don't get me wrong i am thankful that any person who chooses to do so can hear the preaching of the word of god by whichever preacher they choose to listen to i am sure god blesses that ministry because he has provided it first and foremost but you cannot beat being in the company of god's people as they feed upon the word there is a symbiotic experience that cannot be replicated in any other way but here we have cleopas and his friend and they are joined by the lord jesus and now you have joined them what is the first thing you notice and indeed jesus notices they are deep in conversation as if preoccupied by their topic and their discussion so much so that they barely notice the stranger who joins them on the road they barely give him a side glance which i would imagine is strange in ordinary circumstances just put it to yourself you are on a journey on foot and someone joins the company you would expect an introduction by one or other of the parties but there is none cleopas and his friends are engrossed with the events of the past now as we approach the year's end it may be that we are deeply engrossed with the events of the year that is now coming to an end as we look back on our experiences during this year we see that there are there may be any number of things that are personal to our families unique experiences that others know nothing of but i would be surprised if the one thing that is on the mind of everyone is the coronavirus and its impact on our lives yes even our lives in these islands remote as we are from much of the effects that influence the lives of so many some affected by the illness some who lost loved ones and are affected in this way the many who are whose working lives are dominated by caring for those affected and some who have lost their role in society because their work is no longer able to be carried out as a nation we went from being bombarded by news about brexit and the grief and horror some felt over this to virtual silence as the news was dominated by the virus this was not what we expected in 2020 cleopas and his friend looked back at their own lives and the expectations they possessed which were dashed

with the crucifixion of christ they say but we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed israel well we cannot equate the two events it is the same emotions that are stirred our expectations whatever they may be if they are dashed can leave us experience the greatest grief and disappointment which must take someone and which i suppose in a sense which which are difficult to deal with our expectations whatever they are they don't have to be spiritual expectations if we have expectations for life whether it is for our work for our families if these are not realized when that happens there is an assault on our emotions and we do well to to keep them under control even though the two on the road to emmaus were dealing with spiritual expectations they did not know to take them to the touchstone of scripture in order to deal with them properly the longing and the disappointment tells us that what they felt initially was divinely inspired but in some way they were not able to discern the lord's hand in it you may be a believer in christ and have trusted your soul to his keeping but at this moment you are as perplexed as those who like the tune who are to amaze were perplexed by their own circumstances we may be perplexed by the events of our own day what does jesus do when he confronts their apparent despair he challenges them to explain it to him by rehearsing what gave rise to it in the first place he knows they are sad and he wants them to explain to them to read to him the reason for their sadness why are you sad what are these things you speak of how do they respond i suppose in the first instance they respond with surprise that the question should even have to be asked well they respond by describing who christ was what he did and what was done to him and that's strange the thing is this that what they describe has already been recorded within the scripture in the prophecies of the old testament what they fail to do is make the connection and that is what the lord challenges in verse 25 and verse 26 oh fools and slow fart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ought not christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory none of these things should have surprised them because god the lord had already foretold by means of his prophet exactly how it should be and christ is quite severe with them

oh fools he says slow of heart to believe what am i saying with regard to the contemporary situation if anything are there specific prophecies that predict the current pandemic you know and i would not be surprised if someone has not already found scriptures unmerited to the current crisis i do not think that that is necessary what god has said to his people is this that this is a world that is lying in sin and its destruction is imminent god has decreed it but he has not disclosed when it shall be rather demanded that we be ready whenever it shall be jesus speaks of the signs of the ends of the age you remember in the gospel of matthew and chapter 24 it's quite a long section there where jesus describes to the disciples in response to questions asked some of the things that are ahead of them you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars see that you be troubled for all these things must come to pass but the end is not yet for nation shall rise up against nation kingdom against kingdom there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places all these are the beginnings of sorrows then shall it deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you and you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake then shall many be offended shall betray one another and shall hate one another and many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many and because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall walk cold but he that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved now these words have variously been interpreted variously been understood but the truth of the martyr is that that there are many things that have gone on in the world and will go on in the world until the end that have been promised by the lord some of them are difficult to imagine how they will be realized or fulfilled but they we we are not told when the end will come but we are encouraged to live for him until he comes peter the apostle writes the day of the lord will come as a thief in the night and then he says seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved what manner of patience ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness there is no doubting the confusion that dominated the hearts and minds of the two on the road no less many in our day who want to believe in god but are puzzled at what he is doing and they try and fit in their own understanding of what god is doing or what they believe god is doing into their perception of god in words written or spoken in connection with this passage the late john mckeever former minister of carlway wrote the following believers she says sometimes tend to apply bind fleshly expectations

to spiritual hope even though the hope they have is a spiritual hope for example perhaps they make a picture of what the way will be like for them from the time they are converted until they reach glory they think they will have the same great liberty all the way they imagine that it will only get better and will reach heaven without any temptation to troubling this is he says but a fleshly view of spiritual hope one outcome of such a false hope is that it will be dashed and once dashed disappointment many believe with what warrant i am not sure that the current pandemic will see a resurrection of spiritual interests in the things of christ while that may be possible it is equally possible that one result will be for people to make excuses for staying away from public gatherings for spiritual edification and if the spirit is not in it the newfound hunger for god's word through the medium of radio television or or whatever will evaporate we must be realistic in our expectations and allow our expectations to be governed by what god's word teaches us what do we learn from what jesus does he directs them to god's word and interprets it for them he does not allow them to go on in the light of their own understanding he expounds unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself i think this is the key they had to be able to see the true biblical image of christ christ not a pencil drawing that they had made themselves based on their imagination and the more we are led to see of christ in our lives as christians christ as our hope christ as our redeemer the more the effects of circumstances diminish christ showed these men himself in the world and what happened their heart we are told their heart we are told burned within them notice they did not discover their burning heart while their attention was taken up with christ and that's all important we are all in the path of life together where we are at at this moment is both different and the same but one question must be asked is christ with you in the way when the experience of the burning heart was recollected the desire was that it should resume or continue and it wasn't just the burning heart they wanted but the christ who was responsible for it they were clear in their own mind that it was connected to christ's passion they wanted it to go on and therefore they wanted to go on with christ are we the same today as the as we look forward are we as we're on a brink the brink of a new year with perhaps greater challenges still awaiting us would it not be good if as we go on with the lord we would have a sensible grasp of his presence with us and that he felt constrained to continue along with us as a result of that

[38 : 52] the burning heart experience is indeed a desirable one but more desirable still is the presence of the christ who brought that about may we know much of it in the year that lies before us let us pray heavenly father we give thanks for your word give thanks for these marvelous words that describe to us the experience of the two on the road to maize may we find much blessing through a reflection on them we pray now that you would watch over each one of us watch over our homes our families guard keep and protect us in the path of life bless us each one and cleanse from every sin and we pray all with the forgiveness of sin in him now may grace mercy and peace from god father son and holy spirit be with you all now and always amen