

"John 3:16 Backwards" (Back To Church Sunday)

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Date: 24 August 2025

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[0 : 00] Good morning and a very, very warm welcome to our service today. It's so good to see you here as we welcome you in the name of our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you so much for coming along this morning. Today is our Back to Church Sunday and I just want to thank you all so very, very much for coming along. It's great to see so many folk here today.

If there's anyone I've not met before, I'm Thomas. I'm actually the minister in Carloway, but I'm looking after the congregation here as well, whilst the congregation looks for a new minister of its own, which we hope we'll get in the coming months.

A couple of things just to add to the notices. You've been given a little bulletin. There's a couple of things that I forgot to put on it that I just want to mention. The main one is that after the service tonight, there'll be a fellowship in the hall. So Ian Thompson, the minister in Garibalds, is going to be preaching this evening.

And he's agreed to stay behind after the evening service. There'll be tea, baking, food, and a chance to hear a little bit about Ian's life. So everybody's invited to that. It'd be wonderful that you're able to come. And my apologies that I didn't put on the notices, but it is there on tonight and you're very welcome to attend.

Also, one other thing I just want to highlight. Over the last few weeks, last couple of months, we've been highlighting the fact that the elders are very keen to start a creche, junior morning services, so that families who've got children younger than school age will be able to come along.

[1 : 27] And I'm so grateful for those of you who have volunteered. We just need a couple more volunteers for the creche so that we'll have enough people for the voter. It would involve just being on once a month and you'll be there just in pairs looking after the children during the morning service while the older ones are at Sunday school.

So I'm just going to lay on the heavy guilt trip that if anybody can volunteer, we just need two more volunteers. And if we did, it would be so, so good because, well, as it stands, if we don't have a creche, if someone's got young children under school age, they can't come to church.

And we want people to be able to come and we want kids from the youngest years to be coming along. So please, if you are able, thank you to everybody who has volunteered. And if anybody is feeling guilty enough yet, then you can speak to me or to Boyan afterwards.

And we'd appreciate that very, very much indeed. I think that's all the notices that I want to highlight. You'll see the other information there. You've got another wee leaf about Sunday school as well. Please just take a note of that.

The last thing I want to say is a massive thank you to everybody who helped with the barbecue last night. It was so, so good to see so many people come along. The food was amazing. It was a great night.

[2 : 45] And the wind was strong enough for no midges. So in every way, it was a big success. So just a big, big thank you to everybody who contributed to that. The most important thing of all, though, is that we're here to worship God together.

And so we're going to begin our worship singing together in Gaelic from Psalm 23. Now you've got a little yellow booklet that's got the Gaelic Psalms in it. So that little yellow booklet will have Psalm 23.

I think it's maybe on the first page or the second page. And we're going to sing the first two verses. So just where it says verses 1 and 2. And these are the great words of Psalm 23 that describe the Lord as our shepherd.

Beautiful imagery that we can understand, speaking to us of God's care, his protection, his provision. So we're going to sing it in Gaelic. Gaelic psalm singing is a wee bit different to English psalm singing.

So if anyone's not done it before, the first two lines we sing all together. Where it says, We'll sing all of that together.

[3 : 48] And then from the third line onwards, where it says, The presenter will sing that line on his own. And then the congregation will sing that line back to him. So from the third line, every line gets sung twice.

So if you're not sure how to pronounce anything, just listen to the presenter and you'll be able to say it. If you're not sure how to pronounce the words in Gaelic, just throw in a few sounds and you'll probably be okay.

So Gaelic psalm singing is a beautiful and precious part of our heritage. And we're so thankful that we can have the opportunities to do this together.

So we're going to sing Psalm 23. And we're going to sing a little bit different.

Psalm 23.

[5 : 23] Psalm 23.

Psalm 23.

Psalm 23.

Psalm 23.

Psalm 23.

[7 : 53] Let's stand to pray together. Let's stand to pray together. Let's stand to pray together. Let's stand to pray together.

Let's put in prayer. in the name of your Son, our risen Saviour Jesus. We thank you that we can start this week with joy and with hope and with thanksgiving because of everything that you've done for us through your Son. And we pray that as we come together and as millions of people gather together all across the world in your name, we pray that we would be drawn closer to you. We want to give you our worship and our thanksgiving and we also long to hear your voice speaking to us through your word. We want to bow down before you acknowledging that you alone are God. You are so good and so wise, so powerful, so glorious. We are so privileged to know you and we're so blessed that we have this opportunity to come together and we pray that you would meet with all of us and speak to us and build us up in our faith that we would know you and love you and serve you in the week ahead and for the rest of our lives. Thank you so much for everybody who has come here today. It's such a joy to see so many here. We pray that for every single one of us here, this will be a time of encouragement and help and blessing to us. As we come before you, you know all about us and some of us may have had a really good week. Some of us have maybe had a really hard week. For all of us, Lord, you know our circumstances, our needs, our joys, our sorrows, our hopes and our fears and we pray that you would just meet with each one of us, speak to us and guide us and build us up so that we would know you and love you and that the amazing, transforming power of the gospel, that it would reach into every part of our lives and make us into the people that you want us to be and that you would lead us and guide us.

And so we pray that as we gather here just now that if we're feeling weak, that we'd be strengthened, if we're feeling unsure, if we're doubting or struggling, that we pray that we would be reassured by you. We pray that if we need guidance in our lives, that you'd give us direction. We pray that if we need correction in our lives, that you would help us to turn from foolish ways and instead to follow you.

And for all of us, we pray that we would just be blessed and encouraged and upheld. Thank you so much for everybody who's here. Thank you so much that you are here with us. And we pray that you would speak to us all, bless us, build us up and guide us. And that as we have this time together, that we would know your presence with us and that we would see your power working in our hearts and in our lives. And that you would lead us and guide us in all that we do, that we would love, serve and honour you every single day. So bless us and be with us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Alright boys and girls, I'm going to come out and speak to you. So, how's everyone today? All good? Yeah, back to school, back to routine, all good? Excellent, very good, excellent.

[11 : 10] Very, very nice to see you all. I hope you're all doing well. So, for today's children's talk, I want to give you the latest installment that is the wonderful, exciting drama of my football career. So, I had a very exciting year. About a year ago, I became in Chaplin for Carly Cup Club, which is amazing. I love being Chaplin for Carly Cup Club. And a few times, I've been able to play. And it's been very exciting. Remember what I told you I did last time?

Remember what I did? What did I do? A header. A header? Scored a header. Also, you haven't scored for Carly Cup Club. I just want to highlight that. So, here's the latest installment.

A couple of things to tell you about. So, a few weeks ago, at the Carly Cup Club Club, there was an over 40s football match. I should have told you that match you're over 40. You wouldn't be able to play that. I'm over 40. So, I was playing for the Carly over 40s. We were going to get the next over 40s. One or two other people were playing in that room too. It was a great game. Right? So, we'll tell you all the way to it. So, early on, very early in the game, Carly was doing pretty well. We got a corner. You put yourself in the corner.

This magnificent cross came in. I went charging into the box. Left like a salmon. Connected magnificently. The ball went to save the net. The crowd went wild. Carly over 1-0 up. The best moment of my football team in the year. Wonderful. Okay? I scored another goal. Excellent. Excellent.

Very good. Right? So, that was a good age. Over 40s. Playing against geriatrics is fun. Really good. So, that was all very, very good. Okay? So, actually, you know this?

[13 : 00] My football comeback is going quite well. This is good. They were in the over 40s. The score of goals. They won the game. Excellent. Okay? So, that's the first part of football in Korea update that he can give you. So, now you can give you the second part of the update. So, a couple of weeks later, Carly, senior team this time. Not the over 40s.

Under 40s. We'll come over 40s. We'll play against West Side in the cup. Big game. Okay? Carly. Carly were winning. We'll do very well. And all sorts of terrible things happened.

Lots of injustice went against us in that game. And in the last couple of minutes to go, it's 3-2 to Carly. Right? 3-2 to Carly. And one of Carly's best players, Scott MacArthur.

Scott Tiger. You know Scott? Scott's very good. Very, very, very good. Nearly a few of the nearly has to be with Kenny Wilkins. Okay. Right? And Scott got injured. Right? And there was two subs left on the bench. Right? The first one was Andy Needy, who was once very, very good and is now old. And the second one was me, who was never very good and I'm even older.

Okay? So Andy goes on first. About 90 seconds later, he helped himself. And he had to come off. So Andy's come back to the worst of mine. So two minutes on, he had to come off. He was injured. He'd been hovering off. There was nobody left but me. I went on. Then West Side scored.

[14:30] I was thinking, I'm going to go on. One minute, I can just about handle that. Then West Side scored. It was 3-0. And that meant there was extra time. And that was half an hour of football. And I had to have no subs left. I was there. Well, two weeks ago, in the hour of 40, I played a pretty good game. Against West Side, I was rubbish. Now, I'm not just saying that to be like, oh no, I want everybody to say I was too, I was actually rubbish. Okay? I know enough about football to know what's good and not good. And I wasn't very good. And you know why I wasn't very good? You know why I wasn't very good? Everybody is too fast. So you young people, you're too fast. And it's not fair. Because you start running, and old people like me can't catch you. And people who are in their 20s, they start running, and I can't catch them. So I couldn't get to the first. I couldn't get to the ball. At one point, their player had the ball, and I thought, I can get him. I can get the ball. Right?

I thought, but I'm not even going to get him because I just slide tackle. So I thought, right, I can get the ball. I'm going to just slide tackle. Died in. Magnificent slide tackle. By the time I reached him, the ball was long gone. The only thing left was hit was the player.

And I did. Over he went. And I was thinking, I'm going to get sent off. And I thought, if the minister gets sent off, me love story is going to be over, but it's. Anyway, thankfully the rest didn't send me off.

He just said, you've got to remember, who's actually younger than me? I thought, oh my goodness, I know that now. Anyway, that was that. A long story short, we loved the game. It was a hard thing.

And I didn't feel like it was going well. Okay? Right? And so why am I telling you all this? Okay, well, because what happened was, we had Scott Tiger on, who was a brilliant player. Scott can do it. And he's fantastic. But Scott had to come off. And I came on, and I was a substitute, and I just couldn't do it.

[16:23] A substitute that just couldn't do it. I wanted to do it. I loved it. Really enjoyed it. But I actually just couldn't do it. I'm not fasting, not fasting, not fasting, not fasting. I'm too old. That would be it. But I couldn't do it. A substitute, I couldn't do it.

Now, why am I telling you about that? Because that's such an important lesson about the Gospel. Right? Because we are all learning about the Gospel. Learning about our relationship with God. And in terms of our relationship with God, God is so good, and so pure, and so wise, and so perfect, that He is always, always at the perfect standard.

God's purpose, God's purpose, He is so beautiful. And we are not good enough ourselves. Because we sin, we say things we do, all of us do that. All of us sin, we mess up.

And so, we think, you know, can we get to God's standard? We can't do it. None of us can do it. None of us can do it. But in the Gospel, God provides a substitute. He can.

So, in the Gospel, God provides a substitute. He can. In the Gospel, we have a substitute. He can. And that's the whole reason why Jesus came. To be our substitute. To take our place. To die on the cross for our sins. And to be perfect for us.

[17:58] And that's the amazing thing about the Gospel. See if I was halfway through that extra time, right? When we got, from, from, from, from, whatever, behind that level. If I could have looked over to the bench and seen, I don't know, I could have seen Lionel Messi or Mbappe on the bench.

We did the callous tip one. So, that's the one that comes. I'm like, yeah. Because that will be a substitute. That's what we have in the Gospel. We have this perfect substitute.

Jesus is the sacred. We need perfect. And that's why, if we look at the sacred in our lives, when we realize that we've done something wrong, we don't just think, oh, I need to try and fix myself.

We actually go to Jesus and say, Lord, please be my substitute. And trust him. We need perfect for the sacred. So, whenever you see a substitute, we have to follow that. Whether it's a big self or another big self. Whenever you see a substitute, I want you to do that, because the Gospel is called by Jesus in the perfect substitute.

So, whenever you see a substitute, we never have to follow that. Right, we're going to sing again now. And we're singing from Psalm 139. Psalm 139 is a wonderful psalm that speaks all about how God knows us. And he knows us so perfectly.

[19 : 19] So, we're going to sing from the beginning. O Lord, that hath we searched and known, that God is sitting down and rising up, be it all my thoughts are far to the earth. So, for all of you, whenever you feel like you're worrying, whenever anything is wrong, whatever you're going through, this psalm is reminding you that God knows, that God cares, and he's with you.

So, we'll sing 1 to 6, Psalm 139. We'll stay seated to sing these words to God's faith. O Lord, that hath we searched and known, I know, my city's land, And rising up, be it all my thoughts are far to the earth.

How far to thee are known My footsteps and my life in time Thou compasses always That also most entirely art Hath linked with all my ways For in my tongue before I speak Not any word can be That altogether, O Lord

It is well known to thee Behind me forth Thou hast reset And laid on me thine hand Such knowledge is to stage for me To I to understand We're going to read God's word together From the Gospel of John and Chapter 3 John Chapter 3

We'll read verses 1 to 17 This passage records a conversation that Jesus had With a man called Nicodemus He was one of the leading religious experts In the Jewish community During Jesus' lifetime And yet as you can see from As you'll see from the conversation Nicodemus While he's interested about At this point interested in Who Jesus is And what he's come to do He's struggling to understand What Jesus is teaching Now later on we discover There's hints in the Bible That indicate that Nicodemus Came to understand more And to trust in Jesus later on But at this stage He's still trying to figure everything out So let's read 1 to 17 together There was a man of the Pharisees Named Nicodemus A ruler of the Jews The same came to Jesus by night And said unto him Rabbi We know that thou art a teacher Come from God For no man can do these miracles That thou doest Except God be with him Jesus answered And said unto him Verily, verily I say unto thee

[23 : 30] Except a man be born again He cannot see the kingdom of God Nicodemus saith unto him How can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter the second time Into his mother's womb And be born?

Jesus answered Verily, verily I say unto thee Except a man be born of water And of the Spirit He cannot enter into the kingdom of God That which is born of the flesh Is flesh And that which is born of the Spirit Is Spirit Marvel not that I said to thee Ye must be born again The wind bloweth where it listeth And thou hearest the sound thereof But canst not tell whence it cometh And whither it goeth So is every one That's born of the Spirit Nicodemus answered And said to him How can these things be?

Jesus answered And said unto him Art thou a master of Israel And knowest not these things? Verily, verily I say unto thee We speak that we do know And testify that we have seen And ye receive not our witness If I told you about earthly things And you believe not How shall you believe If I tell you of heavenly things?

And no man hath ascended up to heaven But he that come down from heaven Even the Son of Man Which is in heaven And as Moses lifted up the serpent In the wilderness Even so the Son of Man Must be lifted up That whosoever believeth in him Should not perish But have eternal life For God so loved the world That he gave his only begotten Son That whoever believeth in him Should not perish But have everlasting life For God sent not his Son into the world To condemn the world But that the world through him Might be saved Amen This is God's word And he blessed to us And we're going to pray together again So you can just stay seated And we'll pray for a moment Dear Father We thank you So that we can come to you this morning And we thank you That we can bring to you Our prayers For one another And for the community around us And indeed for the whole world We want to pray for all those Here today Or those connected to Our community Who are in the midst of difficult times

We want to pray for those who are unwell We pray for those Who are grieving And those who've just had A really hard week Those for whom life is hard at the moment Those who are maybe anxious Or lonely Or who are doubting Or struggling You know Lord All the difficulties That we face And we just want to pray for All those who are in need And both those here today Those connected to the church And those more widely in the community We just pray that each one Would know your health And strength And what we pray for Our community We pray for those further away Across the island Across our nation And indeed To the ends of the earth We want to pray for peace Where there is war We especially pray for The situation in Gaza And for the situation in Ukraine And other places of conflict And we just long to see These conflicts end And we see such desperate suffering And we just pray Father For all those For the families For the children For the elderly

[26 : 36] For all those just Who are just In the middle of a nightmare At the moment Please May there be peace And please May those who have power To make decisions Make decisions That are wise And so we just pray for them Pray for every effort That's made To help those in need And we pray that our own nation Would be generous And helpful In every way possible Towards those who are In difficulty Throughout the world And any other struggling We just want to pray For them We pray for For the children Here today It's so so good To see so many kids here We pray for them As they go to Sunday school And pray that Just even in these Earliest years of their lives That you would be Their rock Their hope Their joy Their strength That they would know How much you love them That you would fill Their hearts with peace And that you guide them Through all the different Faces of life That we go through And for those of us For whom childhood Is now behind us Those in the midst of life

With work With families With responsibilities With all the busyness of life We pray that each one of us Would just anchor our lives In you And that you would be The rock that we stand on And that we would Seek you first Remembering your great promise That if we seek first The kingdom of God Then all other things Shall be added to us And we pray too For those who are elderly And again those Here today It's so good to have Those here with us But also those unable to come We pray for them We pray that they would be Encouraged and built up And we thank you for them For their experience For their knowledge For their contribution To this community And to this church We pray that they would be Blessed and built up And encouraged As they continue on The journey that you have them on And we pray that Every single one of us Whatever stage of life we're at Whatever is going on In our lives just now We pray that every single one of us Would just be looking to you And trusting you And whether that is Continuing on Continuing to trust you

Having followed you for many years Or maybe just taking that first step today To pray for every single one of us That we would leave this place Trusting in you Leaning on you And looking to you As we turn to your word In a wee moment Lord we just pray for your help We're so conscious Father that We're totally dependent on you And so by your spirit May you be at work among us May your word speak to us And may we just find The amazing hope And joy and peace That can come Through knowing you So bless us We pray In Jesus name Amen So before we come back to John We're going to sing again From Psalm 116 And we're singing The first six verses That's the first four Stanzas Psalm 116 I love the Lord Because my voice And prayers He did hear While I live Will call on him Who bowed to me His ear These are wonderful words That in many ways The Psalms often do this

They'll often talk about Actually the struggles The difficulties That we experience in life They're very very honest The Psalms never ever pretend That life is easy And these words Touch on that The struggles that we face And yet they're reminding us That every single time We call out to the Lord He hears us So we'll sing One to six That four stanzas We'll stay seated I love the Lord Because my voice I love the Lord Because my voice And they are seated here I, while I live Will call on him Who bowed to me His ear Yet the courts

And sorrows Stay About me Come last round The pins of hell To hold on me I dream And trouble Found Upon the name Of God The Lord And then Till I fall And sing Deliver Thou My soul O Lord I do Thee Humbly Pray

[31 : 46] God God miracle Und righteousness Gave Jesus Is Her God Is Thee Thy Was Broader Lord, he did the help afford.

Well, for just a wee while, I'd like us to turn back to John chapter 3. And we're going to look together, especially at the words of John 3, 16, where it says, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

This is probably the most famous verse in the whole Bible, and it's a verse that's so, so important for understanding the Christian faith. And it's a verse that speaks so powerfully about everything that church and the gospel is all about.

It's a verse that has been said to capture the whole of the gospel in one sentence. And today, as I said, is our Back to Church Sunday.

It's been really encouraging to see people come along. And one of the things that I want us to do as we look at John 3, 16 is just to think about how this verse actually helps us to get back to the things that really matter in the gospel.

[33 : 35] And that's so important because it's incredibly easy. Whether you are not really sure where you stand at all in terms of faith, or whether you are a committed follower of Jesus, for all of us, whatever stage we're at on that journey, it's so easy for us to lose sight of the things that really matter.

It's so easy for us to sometimes be distracted or disproportionate in terms of the emphasis that we place on things.

It's incredibly easy to lose sight of the things that matter most to God. And this verse captures the stuff that matters most.

And that's why it's an incredibly important verse for us to understand. You never have to worry if you don't understand the whole Bible. There's loads in the Bible that I don't know and understand. You never have to worry if you don't understand it all.

But John 3, 16 is a verse that we've all got to understand. Because this is the stuff that really matters. So it's taking us back to what's really important.

[34 : 43] And so that's what I want us to think about today. And in order to think about it, we're actually going to go through the verse backwards. So we're going to start at the end and we'll end at the start. And we'll take it bit by bit and hopefully we'll see four massive things that we need to make sure we know about the Gospel.

So I want you to start at the end. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And it's that last wee bit I want to start with. Should not perish but have everlasting life. This is pointing us to I think one of the biggest and easiest misconceptions that we can have about Christianity.

It's so easy to think that faith and the Gospel and the Bible and church, it's so easy to think that it's just like a wee part of life. And sometimes Christians make it look like that.

Sometimes, you know, we can make it look as though our faith is just a thing we do on Sunday and it doesn't have a huge impact in other parts of my life.

[35 : 55] I remember once, I almost don't want to tell this story but I'm going to tell it anyway. Because I remember when I went in for the ministry, I'd applied for the ministry and people had heard that I was going to leave my job engineering.

And one person who knew me said, oh, I didn't know you were religious. And I was like, oh man. Because I would have said that was the most important thing in my life and yet he'd see me a lot and he didn't think, oh man, he didn't seem to see that.

And so I was probably maybe guilty of making that impression. It's an easy mistake to make that our faith is kind of like a small part of our lives. And another thing we can sometimes do is we can make, you know, sometimes we can maybe make our faith something that we maybe depend on like in difficult times.

You know, so maybe something difficult happens in our lives, yeah, that's when we'll maybe run to the Lord. But then when we feel better and everything's fine, we kind of put it, put our faith back in its own wee corner and there it stays.

All of that's a complete misconception. And I think this is why I wanted to start at the end of John 3, 16. Because that little phrase at the end, should not perish but have everlasting life.

[37 : 07] It is pointing us to the fact that the gospel is all about forever. It's all about forever.

It's all about the massive questions of life. And I think it's so important for us to actually take time to stop and think about these things.

In all of our lives, there are actually things that we maybe don't think about very often. But they are absolutely, massively important. We could call them, you know, there's certain things that we need in our lives from time to time.

But there's certain things that we need in our lives that we need all the time. We could call them ultimates, like with a small U. Like, ultimates with a small U. My heart needs to keep beating for every second of my life.

Every single second, my heart needs to beat. I need access to oxygen every second of my life. And my cells need to keep dividing.

[38 : 12] And if they stop dividing, or if that cell division gets out of control, I'm in serious trouble. These are ultimates that we cannot exist without. And there's so many more, you can think of more examples.

They're ultimates with a small U. The gospel is about ultimates with a capital U. The ultimate questions of reality, and truth, and life, and death, and time, and eternity.

The gospel wants to give us an explanation of ultimate reality. And that's why the Bible speaks a lot about our origins, where we've come from.

It speaks about our destiny, where we're going. It gets us to think about the whole questions of what are we? What are we as people? What is the world? What is the universe? What is reality?

Where does it come from? What's it all part of? Where's it all going? What are the ultimate questions? Because the minute you see that word everlasting, you're talking about ultimates. Not temporaries.

[39 : 19] Ultimates. That is the level that the gospel operates at. That's what the gospel is interested in. We are not remotely interested in being some weird club that meets and talks about stuff or anything.

We are interested in ultimates. The gospel is interested in ultimates. God cares about ultimates. And so it's giving us a framework for ultimate reality.

Now, a couple of really important things to think about there. One is, if the gospel is not your explanation for ultimate reality, something else is. There has to be an explanation for ultimate reality.

There cannot be a, maybe, there cannot be a, oh well, it could be a few different things. There cannot be a, oh well, each person can just decide for themselves. You can't do that. Like, that's intellectually irrational.

Logically impossible. If reality is a thing, which I think it is, then ultimate reality is a thing.

[40 : 31] And we've got to have an explanation for it. And so if the Bible is not an explanation for ultimate reality, something else is.

What's yours? And that's a massive thing to think about. And actually, it's an unsettling thing to think about. The Bible teaches us many things about ultimate reality.

There's two things that John 3.16 is capturing that are so important for us to recognize. The one thing that is, the first thing that is capturing in this last section is that evil is real and evil matters.

And that's such an important part of the biblical framework. Sometimes, you know, we find it very difficult, especially in the kind of Western secular world, where it's very difficult to think about heaven and hell.

You know, you've got the word perishing. You've got condemning in the next verse. You've got this kind of polarization where there's, you know, just ultimate good and then evil.

[41 : 41] And you think, you know, I don't like those categories. But actually, if we stop and think about it, one of the key consequences of those categories that the Bible presents for us, heaven and hell, is telling us that evil matters.

Evil matters. Evil matters. And the Bible's teaching about sin and judgment, at the root of that is the fact that injustice does not go unnoticed by God.

Injustice does not go unnoticed by God. And something that is wrong is forever wrong. And again, this is where our worldview and our ultimate reality is so important.

You know, if we just have, you know, if you just have what we would call a naturalistic worldview, where we just think, well, everything is just mechanisms, there's no God, there's no nothing, ultimately, and the universe has come from nothing and it's heading to nothing, then philosophically, you could stand in Gaza right now and say, this ultimately is an idea here nor there.

Whereas if the Bible's your framework, you can stand in the seats of Gaza and say, this is wrong, it's forever been wrong, and it will forever be wrong. And all of that's teaching us the reality of sin.

[43 : 01] And sin has had a desperate effect on the world. And the desperate effect of sin has had two aspects to it. One, it's desperate in that you see some examples of sin that are just absolutely awful.

So there's like specific, awful examples of sin, and we're seeing that in the world around us just now. So sin is that kind of vertical awfulness, where you see that in different parts of history, different parts of the world.

There's that vertical horrendousness of sin, where certain situations go to a death that is forever awful. There's also a horizontal effect of sin. And what I mean by that is the fact that actually it's affected all of us.

And so nobody here is at the level of the atrocities that we see in other parts of the world. I know that, and I'm so thankful for that. But none of us here are where we need to be.

If God is perfect, which he is, none of us match up. And sin has affected us as well. And so that's, you know, sin is a problem.

[44 : 08] The Bible's worldview is telling us that sin is a problem. But the great message, which we're going to unpack more in a moment, is that Jesus has come to bring hope. And Jesus has come to bring an alternative forever.

And that alternative forever is described here as everlasting life. One of the big things that's been emphasised by that category, everlasting life, everlasting life or eternal life.

Often we think of that in terms of length, very, very long time. And that's true. That's an amazing thing to think about. But behind this phrase in the Greek that the Bible was written in, it's not just quantity in terms of length, it's quality.

And this is so, so unbelievably important. The life, the eternal life that God wants you all to have is amazing. Absolutely amazing.

Right? And please, if you ever think that Christianity is trying to give you something a little bit rubbish, you do not understand what you're rejecting. Eternal life, everlasting life, the life that God wants you to have is a life that is amazing.

[45 : 16] And everything that is good now in your life is a glimpse of that. Everything is a glimpse of that.

And that applies to everything. You think of the joy that you share as a family. You think about the beautiful weather that we've enjoyed recently. You think about the successes that you have in life. Even the incredibly sweet taste of winning a football match.

Victory. Victory. All these things are a glimpse, a glimpse of what God wants for us. Except for him, the victory is so much better because it's victory over death. And the scenery is so much better because it's an eternal new creation that's not fading.

And the family and the friendship and the laughter and the joy is so much better because death will never ever ruin it again. That's what God wants you to have. That's the everlasting life that he's promising.

The gospel is all about forever. And Jesus has come to give us a magnificent, amazing, indescribable forever. That's what God wants us to get back to.

[46 : 27] Get back to thinking about that. That's what he wants us to think about. Let's go backwards one step. It says, Before that, For God's not the world, That whoever, He gave us only to God and Son, That whoever believes in him, Should not perish, But have everlasting life.

That phrase, That whosoever believes in him. Two big misconceptions here. We can easily think that, In terms of being a Christian, What do you got to do? You've got to do stuff. Or, Maybe more likely, You've got to do stuff, And not do stuff.

And so people, So often, And so easily think, That, Christianity is about, Do's and don'ts. And it's about, Making sure that we get ourselves up, To a certain standard.

And I've heard this so many times, Talking to people out of faith, I can't be a Christian. I'm not good enough. And people think, Are thinking in those terms, That there's a standard, That we have to work our way up towards.

And, And so many people, Fall into that trap. The technical term, For that way of thinking, Is legalism. And it's the idea, That there is a set of requirements, That we have to meet, In order to get ourselves, Up to God.

[47 : 42] And it's not, To, That is not the gospel. That is not, The gospel. Because the gospel, Does not rest on works.

It rests on faith. God is looking, For your trust. He's not looking for your CV.

He's not looking for your spiritual level of expertise. He's just looking for you to trust him. To lean on him. To depend on him.

And, It's so easy to get that wrong. It's so easy to think, You know, But, I've just got to kind of, I've got to make sure, I kind of get myself up to the center. And, Christians think the same thing. Because, If you, Christians think like this all the time.

You know, So there's times, When we, Maybe we've had a day, Where we've been to church, And we've been able to concentrate, We haven't been falling asleep, And, We've read our Bible a wee bit, We've prayed, And we've thought, Excellent, Things have been the way I wanted to be.

[48 : 43] And you think, God will be happier with me. And he'll love me more. And then the next day, You go back to work on Monday, And you have a terrible day. You're exhausted. You do everything wrong, And you go to bed thinking, God hates me.

It's so easy to think like that. It's wrong. It's not true. That's not how God works. He's not on this kind of, Constant checklist, Looking for what you've done, Or not done. There's a hundred other religions, In the world that work like that.

The gospel is different. This is actually part of what makes, The gospel unique. The gospel, Is looking for your faith. Jesus is looking for you, To trust him. And, Again, This is where it's, You know, It's so important, You know, To think about, In fact, You know, When we come back to that question of ultimates, If we're not trusting Jesus, We're trusting something else.

And, It's so important to think that through, Because, What are we trusting in? What are we trusting in for life, And death, And time, And eternity? Is that something reliable? Is that something weak?

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Is the immovable rock, That we can build our lives on, He wants us to trust him, He's done everything that we need, He's not looking for you to impress him, He's looking for you to trust him, It's all about whoever believes in him, And believing doesn't mean knowing everything, It just means, It actually means the opposite, It just means that, Lord, I don't know everything, But I'm trusting you.

[50 : 08] Second misconception, That we can fall into this house, That we can think that, That Christianity is for the elite, So it's for like, The most knowledgeable, The most impressive, The most together, In their lives, And we can have this sort of like, Kind of sort of categories, Where there's a class of people, That can be Christians, And there's another class that can't, And we have this sort of, Elitism, And it's so easy to put ourselves, In the category, We think, I am just, I'm not matching up to that, And John 3, 16 is so amazing, Because it just blows away, All elitism with one word, And can you see the word?

Whosoever. And that is such, A magnificent word, Because God has said, I don't care how much you know, I don't care what mistakes you've made, I don't care what your background is, I don't care, What you think you've done, Or not done, I don't care, How many times, You've maybe had a chance, And you've let it pass by, I don't care about any of those things, All I care about, Is whether you believe in me, And so whoever, Whoever believes in him, Will not perish, But have, Everlasting life, That word, Whosoever, And this is where you see, There's a, There's like, There's two words there, Whosoever believe it, That's capturing two massive, Theological truths, It's, It's capturing, The exclusivity of the gospel, And the gospel, Is exclusive in a sense, And it's exclusive in a sense, That it has to be Jesus, That we're trusting, He is the only way, It has to be him,

But it's, Inclusive in a sense, That, Whoever, Ever, Believes in him, Will be saved, Third thing, Back once more, It says, For God's will of the world, That he gave, His only, Begotten son, And again, This is, Massively important, For understanding Christianity, All that work stuff, That we spoke about, You know, Reaching a certain standard, Being good enough, Elite, Da da da da da, All that, Is, Is the mindset, That thinks, That salvation is earned, That in some way, We have to, Earn, Our place with God, Now, This is where it's, It's easy to fall into this stuff, Because in so many other parts of our lives, We do have to earn stuff, So, In school, If you want to get good grades, Well you have to work together, You've got to earn those grades, If you're at work, In your job, You know, You've got to earn, You've got to earn your way, Into your position, Whether it's through getting qualifications,

Or getting a trade, Working your way up, Setting up your own business, You've got to earn the trust of your customers, There's so much that you've got to earn, And even, The places of responsibility that we hold, In our community, And things like that, All of that, Is stuff, That we have to earn, There's one area in life, Where all of you, That you're all part of, Where, Where you don't have to earn your place, And that's just family, You don't have to earn your place, And family, And all of you guys in here, Who are parents, With all the kids who, Were in here earlier, What do those kids have to do, To earn your love, Nothing, From the minute, They were born, And for the mums, The minute, They were kicking you from the inside, You have loved them, You have given,

Your love to them, And they never stop, That is a picture, Of the gospel, That is a picture, Of how God relates to us, Because everything that we have, In the gospel, Is given, It's not earned, It's given by God, And the big theological word, We use that as the word, Grace, It's a gift, Our salvation is not earned, It is a gift, But what John C. 16 highlights, So powerfully, Is the magnitude, Of that gift, Because God, Gave, His only begotten son, That whoever believes in him, Should not perish, Now, That's taking us back, To what I was trying to explain, To the children, With my, Sub story, Of my football career, Of the, Of the whole concept, Of substitution, Substitution, Substitution is a massively important,

[54 : 59] Theological concept, It's right there, In John 3.16, And the whole of Christianity, Rests on the fact, That Jesus, Dies on the cross, As your substitute, And mine, So that, The guilt of my sin, The reality of my sin, The problem of my sin, No longer, Rests on me, It's placed on Jesus, In my place, A new place, And that's how the gospel works, That Jesus, Died, And in his death, He took our place, And because, He took our place, We can have, Life, So the whole reason, He can promise, Everlasting life, At the end of John 3.16, Is because God, Gave, His only begotten son, Two clauses earlier, He gave his son, To die for us,

And the massive thing, We have to emphasize, Is that, Is that, There is nothing, Greater, That God could give, God's only son, His only begotten son, One of the big truths, Of Christianity, Is that, The ultimate of reality, Is, What we call, The Trinity, The triune God, One God, Father, Son, And Holy Spirit, Lots of big theology there, The big point, I want to highlight, Is the doctrine of the Trinity, Tells us, That ultimate reality, The one from whom, The absolute from whom, Everything else comes, Is Father, Son, And Holy Spirit, That is telling you, That from forever, Until forever, God, The Father, Loves his son, God has spent eternity, Pouring his love, Into his son, And the love,

That we parents have, For our children, Is the tiniest glimpse, Into that, The preciousness, Of our children, The beauty of them, The delight, That we have in them, All of that, Is a glimpse, Of the eternal, Immeasurable, Love, That the Father, Pours into his precious, Beautiful, Beloved, Son, And he handed him over, The Father, Handed him over, To take your place, And that, Precious, Beloved son, Died on the cross, And took our sin, So that we could be God's friend, And this is where, You see such an incredible contrast, In this version, Gave his only begotten son, Describes the most monumental gift,

Ever been given, And I want you to see, The magnitude of what God has done, You know, God, What God has done, For us to be saved, Is just, Massive, And so God has, Given his only son, Which my arms, I'm six foot four, But my arms aren't big enough, To stretch out that, Massive, Massive, Massive, What God does, What do you have to do?

You just have to believe, And so the contrast, Between what God has given up, For you and for me, Compared to what God requires, It's just, It's amazing, He does everything, He's just doing, Just trust me, There's such an astounding contrast, Between what God has done, And then what he requires, Of us, And so in all these bits, As we go backwards through John 16, 3, 16, It's teaching us the fundamentals of the gospel, It's all about forever, It's about ultimate reality, It's about what everything is all about, It's about our origins, Where we've come from, And our destiny, Where we're going, And if you think that you don't need to think about that, Then you're crazy, Because everybody has to think about that, It's about forever, And then it's telling us, That what God requires of us is faith, That's what matters, That we have to believe in him, Not complicated, No, Not about being elite, Or clever, Or smart, Or whatever, Anything else, None of that, Just wants faith, And all of that's because of grace, Because God has given his son,

[59 : 28] To do everything, That's needed, In our place, And then, We're finally at the start, And it's answering, Maybe the biggest question of all, Why is God doing all of that?

Why is God doing this? And you can see the answer, It's doing it because he loves you, In fact, The giving of his son, Is the proof, Of his love, This is the way, That the love of God, Is seen, And shown, This is how much, God loves the world, This is how much, God loves you, Now, A wee tiny thing to explain, That's so important, Is that when John, Uses the word, World, In his gospels, And he wrote a couple, Three letters at the end, When God uses the word, World, He consistently uses that word, In a negative sense, So when he talks about the world, He's talking about the world, He's talking about the, He's not talking about the world, Of holidays, He's talking about the world, Of the news headlines, And the, You know, That they're very different things, A holiday brochure, And the news headlines, Look very very different,

In terms of the world, And so he's speaking about the world, In a realistic sense, A world that's broken, A world that's full of sorrow, And a world that's full of pain, A world that's gone wrong, That's the world, That God loves, That's the world, That God wants to save, And of course, I love, Love the fact, That he chose the world, The word, World, And I love the fact, That he uses the word, World, In that way, Because it's telling, Every single one of us, That you're in this verse, Because when it says, For God sold up the world, You're in that, You're in that sentence, You're in that love, Everything that God has done,

Is because of how much, He loves you, He loves you, And, I think there's, I think there's loads of ways, Over the years, That we as churches, And we as Christians, Have struggled, To represent Jesus, Accurately and fairly, We've all made mistakes, As individuals, Collectively, We've given impressions, That have maybe made it look, Like it's about legalism, Or it's a crutch, That's just a part of our lives, Or that it's earned, And all of that, All of that's because we mess up, And this is why coming back to John 3, 16 is so important, Because it's taking us back, To what the gospel is all about, The fact that, Jesus has come, So that whoever believes in him, Will not perish, But have eternal life,

And all of that's because, How much God loves him, And, You know, We've been going through this verse backwards, It's easy to think, That being a Christian, Is going to take you backwards, If everything in John 3, 16, Is true, Do you think it's going to take you backwards?

[63 : 20] Well, All I can say, Is I can only speak for myself, That the truth contained in John 3, 16, Has given me, The greatest joy, The greatest peace, The greatest hope, That I have ever imagined, And I want every single one of you, To have that too, Amen, Thank you, Father, we thank you so much for these amazing words, that you have so loved the world, that you gave your only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life. Help us all to see and understand more of what this is teaching us. And help us all to put our trust in you. Amen.

We're going to finish off with Psalm 103 and we're going to sing from verse 8. Psalm 103 at verse 8.

The Lord our God is merciful and he is gracious, long-suffering and slow to wrath in mercy plenteous. And then down to verse 11 and 12, just speaking about the greatness of his mercy. And then at 12, as far as east is from the west, so far as he removed from us in his love all our iniquity. So 8 to 12, we'll stay seated. These words to God's praise.

Psalm 103, verse 9. Psalm 103, verse 9. Psalm 103, verse 9. The Lord your God is merciful and he is gracious.

Psalm 103, verse 9. Psalm 103, verse 9. Psalm 103, verse 10. Psalm 103, verse 10. Psalm 103, verse 10. Psalm 103, verse 10. Psalm 103, verse 10. Psalm 103, verse 10. Psalm 103, verse 10. Psalm 103, verse 10.

[65 : 35] Psalm 103, verse 10. He will not chide continually or keep his anger still.

With us he tells not as we sit nor did we quite a realm.

For us the heaven in its height the earth's sermented fan so great to those that do take fear in his tender mercy's heart.

As far as he's distance from the west so far that he promised remitted in his lap all iniquity.

Please stand. As we go into a new week together may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

[67 : 34] Amen.