





And in your mercy give righteous government with integrity and goodwill and a good heart from you. [10:36] We pray here in England for the matter of Brexit which has been such a great source of division and concern.

And even as we get towards the end of this process although we're distracted from it it's a very important thing. And we pray that you would guide our government and the EU negotiators so that there would be the very best possible outcome in terms of fairness, in terms of the benefit for the citizens of Europe and the citizens of the UK.

We pray for the NHS as we understand there is more strain to be put on the NHS. Please guide and provide for the healthcare professionals, all who work for the NHS.

Please protect them and please give them wisdom and resources and resilience and strength at this difficult time and what promises to be a more difficult time to come. We pray for our nation as we come up to Christmas which is normally a time of celebration and getting together and being sociable.

And we pray that you will have mercy on our nation. We pray that people might be turning to you for help and not just turning to alcohol or rebelliousness or complaining.

[12:03] We pray Lord for the gospel as we usually have opportunities to spread the gospel because we're in contact with people and we're less in contact with people.

But we pray that nevertheless your gospel would still spread. Give your churches creativity and good ideas and the ability to use every opportunity for the spreading of the good news of Jesus who came to earth as we remember at Christmas.

We add a prayer Lord for those who mourn, those who grieve, those who perhaps are in particular stress and difficulty at this moment.

Please uphold each and every one and may you be known to many as the God of comfort who never leaves nor forsakes his people.

So we pray these prayers through our dear Saviour Jesus. Amen. And let's add to that the prayer up on the screen here.

[13:06] Let's say this together. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Well, we've come to the weekend which is popularly known for being the weekend of Halloween.

But I would actually like to say that 31st of October is across Europe, and particularly, I believe, in Germany, Reformation Day, remembering the time of the Reformation, the spiritual revolution which spread across Europe, starting off, well, one epicentre at least, was Martin Luther.

And there's a photograph of him, and I would say, nailing the 95 Theses to the chapel door at Wittenberg, although I'm sure my pronunciation could be corrected.

[14:28] Why is this worth remembering? I'm going to stop and just say it is worth remembering. The 95 Theses started as 95 points of correction of the corrupt understanding and corrupt practices of the Catholic Church, as it then was.

And this caused a stir which went on and on, and eventually resulted in a break of the people who were complaining about these abuses, protesting to found the Protestant churches.

And the basic principles of Protestantism, being the clarity of Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture, that we stand on God's Word, rather than the traditions of the Church, that we look to Christ alone, we're not looking to our works, but to what the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

And in particular, this teaching, justification by faith. Luther's famous for this teaching. Justification by faith. Not something he invented, but something that he rediscovered and re-emphasised.

It was there all the time in the teachings of Jesus, and more explicitly, I think we might say, in the teachings of the Apostle Paul. To be justified, to be justified, to be righteous, to be counted by God as righteous, is the fundamental blessing of New Testament Christianity.

[16:05] To be counted righteous by God. Now, how does that situation come about? And it had come to be thought in Roman Catholicism that you're counted right, because you are right, because you are good.

There's some goodness in you, and that God puts this goodness in you, and sees it, and says, oh, there's a good person. That's infused righteousness, something that God puts into you.

But Martin Luther said, no, that's not what the Bible's actually talking about. The basis of our relationship with God is not that God sees something good within us, but that from the outside, he counts us right, not because of what we've done.

I'll just repeat, not because of what we've done, but because of what Christ has done. And there is this union or interchange with Jesus Christ, who did something outside of us, and because he did that, this comes over and includes us, that we are justified, not because we've done right, but because we've trusted in the sufficient work that Jesus has done.

God makes us right with him by not infused righteousness or imparted righteousness, but imputed righteousness.

[17:26] You could imagine that God just imputes to us. He says, this is how I'd like to think of you. I'd like to think of you as righteous. I'm going to treat you as righteous.

I'm going to reckon you as righteous. And we think, why are you doing that? And he says, well, I've got good reasons, and the good reasons lie in what Jesus has done. It comes to us from the outside and brings us a free and full forgiveness on the sole basis of the righteousness of Jesus, who died on the cross.

And if you'd like a little illustration of it, how something done on the outside of us can change us. Some of us may remember in the dim and distant past, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who always referred to herself as we, when her son had had a child, Mrs Thatcher famously went on television and said, we are a grandmother.

And you see, she'd become a grandmother by nothing that she'd done, but because somebody else had done something and it affected her. And so, if you'll forgive the triviality of the illustration, we become righteous, not because we've done anything, but because Christ has done it for us.

So, Reformation Day, we thank God for the truth of justification by faith and that wonderful, powerful truth spilled over into the whole of European culture and we still have many of the benefits of that.

[19:07] So we thank God for Martin Luther and the Reformers, the brave men of those days, whom God used to change a whole society.

And as we think of the wonderful effects of Christ's cross, of what he did on behalf of his people, we're going to sing this song, Beneath the Cross of Jesus.

I find a place to stand. That's where Christians stand in grace that flows from the atoning work, the finished atoning work of Jesus Christ.

So let's sing. Beneath the Cross of Jesus, I find a place to stand.

And wonder at such mercy that cools me as I am. For hands that should discard me, hold wounds which tell me, come beneath the Cross of Jesus.

[20:36] my unworthy soul, his one. Beneath the Cross of Jesus, his family is my own.

One stranger's chasing selfless dreams, now one through grace alone. How could I now dishonor the ones that you have loved?

Beneath the Cross of Jesus, see the children called by God. Beneath the Cross of Jesus, the path before the crown, we follow in his footsteps, where promised hope is found.

How great the joy before us, to me his perfect bride. Beneath the Cross of Jesus, we will gladly live our lives.

We started off singing Psalm 103, and I've referred to it, and now let's read the whole thing together.

[22:20] So we're going to read Psalm 103. Psalm 103, Praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger for ever.

He does not treat us as our sins deserve, or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

[23:39] As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

For he knows how we are formed. He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass. He flourishes like a flower of the field.

The wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting, the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children, with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

The Lord has established his throne in heaven. His kingdom rules over all. Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.

Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works, everywhere in his dominion.

[24:58] Praise the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord, all his holy soul. So we thank God for his word, which we have read. And in a moment, John Woods will read to us from Mark's Gospel and pray and speak to us from Mark's Gospel, chapter 2.

But as a prayer, as a sung prayer, before we come to that, let's sing what is actually praise number 1148. Speak, O Lord, as we come to you.

Speak to us, Lord, and we'll turn this song into a prayer. Speak, O Lord, as we come to you, to receive the food of your holy word.

Take your truth, plant it deep in us, shape and fashion us in your likeness, that the light of Christ might be seen today.

in our acts of love and our deeds of faith. Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us all your purposes for your glory.

[26:44] Teach us, Lord, full obedience, holy reverence through humility.

Test our thoughts and our attitudes in the radiance of your purity.

Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see your majestic love and authority.

words of power that can never fail. Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds.

[27:56] Help us grasp the heights of your plans for us. Truth's unchanged from the dawn of time, that will echo down through eternity.

And by grace we'll stand on your promises. And by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.

Speak, O Lord, till your church is built, and the earth is filled with your glory.

So we've sung and we now hand over to John. Thank you for your welcome. Very pleased to be here today at Calvary Church.

And I'll be with you next Sunday as well, God willing. And the aim is to speak about two passages from Mark's Gospel. I guess that probably Mark's Gospel is my favourite of the Gospels.

[29:09] I like its fast-moving style, its abrupt beginning, its abrupt ending. The way that it has an edgy, fast-moving style, its pen portraits of Jesus' words and actions, vivid retelling of this story.

It begins with the statement that this is the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And the first chapter reminds us that Jesus is the King.

The King who has the authority to call people from their lives into a new life that he is giving them. Jesus speaks with authority, but also acts with authority.

His words with authority proclaim a new life and a new beginning. And his works show that authority by demonstrating the power to deal with people's bondage and brokenness by making them new.

And that's what we see in the story that we're going to be looking at in Mark chapter 2, 1-12. That story is the beginning of a section that goes through to chapter 3, verse 6, where we begin to see a growing opposition to Jesus.

[30:37] Jesus is the great category breaker. He doesn't stay within the neat lines of religious expectation. Either people are attracted by such a fresh approach or they feel threatened by it.

And the authorities in Jesus' time were threatened by this category breaker. And so when we get to verse 6 of chapter 3, we see that the authorities are planning to get rid of Jesus.

The dark shadow of the cross is already beginning to be cast upon Jesus. The events that will lead to his crucifixion are beginning.

So we turn to Mark chapter 2 and our reading in verse 1 through to 12. Before we read, we're going to pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to read your word and pray now that you'll speak to us through it. Pray that you'll lead us to Jesus. Help us to know him, trust him, follow him and praise him.

[31:50] Open up our ears and our eyes and our hearts to receive from him. That we might know our deepest needs met in him and be equipped to help others to find their needs met in him also.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.

They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralysed man carried by four of them.

Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man, Son, your sins are forgiven. Now some teachers of the law were sitting there thinking to themselves, Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming.

[32:53] Who can forgive sins but God alone? Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this is what they were thinking in their hearts. And he said to them, Why are you thinking these things?

Which is easier to say to this paralysed man, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Get up, take your mat and walk. But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. So he said to the man, I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home. He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them. All.

This amazed everyone. And they praised God saying, We have never seen anything like this. Mark chapter 2 verse 1 says that Jesus came home.

I don't know what you're like when you have to deal with unexpected visitors. Maybe you throw up your hands in panic thinking to yourself, Oh dear.

[33:58] I don't quite know where I'm going to sit them. I don't know how I'm going to stretch the food that I've got today to feed them all. I'm just really panicking about this.

Or maybe you're more relaxed. The more the merrier. We'll find a seat for everyone. And I'm sure that we've got plenty of food to go around.

Other people are a little bit more cynical. Haven't these people got their own homes to go to? What are they doing here? And why are they eating our food?

What does it mean that Jesus had come home?

Chapter 1 verse 29 tells us that when he came to Capernaum, he went to the home of Simon the Peter's mother-in-law. And he went to that home and that was his base there at that time.

[35:03] Maybe that's what it means here. Or maybe it means that Jesus came to his own home. Maybe a home that he'd built himself. Jesus had returned from his mission trip and he'd returned home.

What would it have been like to be a visitor in Jesus' home? What would it be like to see Jesus at home?

Well, this story gives us something of the insight into that. I've always thought that when you see a man in their own home, you see them as they really are. If you want to know into a man's heart, invite them to your table.

That's what a Burundian proverb says. And I think that's probably right. People allow their guard to go down. They are not so defensive when they're in their own home.

You get a picture of what a person is and what they care about when you see them in their own habitat. And that's what we see here. Jesus is at home.

[36:07] And Jesus is not just sitting down on the sofa, flicking through Netflix to try and find a film to watch that evening. We're told that they gathered such a large crowd around him.

There was no room left, not even outside the door. And he preached the word to them. Jesus returned from his mission trip. He returned home. And news traveled fast.

People thronged around his door and they wanted to hear something from Jesus. Every available space was filled in the house.

The doorway was jam packed full. And surrounding the door, there were people trying to catch a sense of what was going on inside.

There's a barrier. Of course, here, some people could not get in. So many people were around the door that four men bringing their friend on his mattress were unable to find access through the door.

[37:15] And they had to think of another way of getting in. Church growth experts say that when a church is 80% full, it begins to put off newcomers.

It's annoying when people come and they can't find a seat to sit down in. They wonder quite where to go. They feel a little bit embarrassed, disorientated.

It's a barrier. And there's a barrier here, an obstacle that's in the way of those who want to get in to the house. And it leads the four friends to what seems like a dramatic way of getting their friend to Jesus.

They gatecrash the sermon. And they gatecrash the sermon by entering into the house in a totally unexpected way. They enter not through the door, but they enter through the roof.

Remember that the houses, the common houses of the time, would have had flat roofs. Flat roofs that would have been used as an additional room where maybe the washing was put to dry, where some cooking happened and where sometimes people would be put to sleep.

[38:28] And here the four men go up the wooden ladder or wooden staircase to the roof. And they quite literally unroof the roof.

They dig through the roof in order that they might gain access to Jesus. The roof would have been slats of wood and compacted earth baked hard by the sun that would have formed a roof.

And they dug through that in order that they were able to dangle their friend down to where Jesus was, that Jesus might notice him and deal with him.

Hmm. I wonder, I wonder who mended the roof after this. Jesus. Do you know a good builder? Do you know a reliable tradesman?

Maybe Jesus had a hand himself in fixing the roof after he fixed this man. Jesus is the great house fixer, but he's also the great human being fixer.

[39:37] Through the roof, that's the name of a Christian charity, charity that is specifically designed to deal with accessibility issues within the church for vulnerable people, people not so physically able to gain access to the church and the buildings.

And they work hard to educate the church, find ways to make sure that people who are vulnerable gain access to the gospel and can discover things about Jesus.

So it's always worth asking as a church, is my church accessible to those who can't walk? Is my church accessible to those who can't see?

Is my church accessible to those who can't read? Or is it a really hard place to penetrate? Do we find it difficult to bring people because there are more obstacles than pathways into finding Jesus and discovering the truth in the gospel?

The men are carrying a paralyzed man. He's unable to do anything for himself. If he moves anywhere, he's being carried somewhere.

[40:55] He has experienced a life of reduced circumstances. He's restricted. He's paralyzed.

His life is determined by this mattress, this bedroll which he lays on. His world is small.

And they are bringing him to the one who can make his world bigger. And better. And richer. The friends, through faith, tear Jesus' roof off.

It's a remarkable act of faith. They want to get their friend to Jesus. And they go to great measures to do that.

This is the first time that the word faith is used in Mark's Gospel. And it's interesting, it's not used concerning knowing something or feeling something.

[42:02] But it's used about doing something. Faith is demonstrated by an action. So in chapter 2, verse 5, Jesus sees their faith.

And what he sees is action. They have done something to bring this man to him. It's an expression of faith.

A tangible expression of faith. They brought their friend to Jesus on the mat that Jesus might minister to him.

We can bring our friends to Jesus. We can do it by praying for them. We can do it by witnessing to them or bringing them to church. When we do bring our friends to Jesus in these different ways, when we pray for our friends, for example, it's interesting how sometimes Jesus works in ways that we hadn't expected.

We can be surprised. He is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. Sometimes we pray something for a friend. And the way that God actually answers the prayer is quite different to the way that we've expected.

[43:18] We pray for someone's healing and God takes them to himself. It's not the way that we'd expected it. God works in a different way. And Jesus works in a way that possibly was unexpected by these four men as they bring their friend to Jesus.

It seems a surprising thing for Jesus to say. And it perhaps seems like a somewhat insensitive thing for Jesus to say when Jesus says to the man who has been brought before him, Son, your sins are forgiven.

It ought to be patently obvious that what the friends want and what the man needs is a cure, not a sermon. How can Jesus say, Son, your sins are forgiven?

Yet Jesus is not insensitive. Jesus is saying, I can fix you. But I want to fix you in the most important way that you can be fixed.

I know your greatest need. And your greatest need is of forgiveness. A doctor in general practice made the helpful observation that the Greek word for forgiveness comes from the root *parasis*.

[44:43] Patients with *parasis* have lost function or mobility, are paralyzed. And the lot said that he'd found it very helpful to think about this and to think about the needs and effects of forgiveness.

And to think of forgiveness as a healing. It's really obvious to the man, very obvious to the friends that there was a physical disability.

And very obvious that that's what the man needed fixing. What's not so obvious in human beings is their spiritual need. In fact, human beings tend to block out the reality of their spiritual need.

They try to ignore it. They don't want to kind of think about the fact that God is God, that he's their creator, that we're accountable to him, that our thoughts and our words and our deeds can please him or displease him.

And that we need to be forgiven. And we tend to block out that reality. We tend to think of the things that we need to eat, things that we need to earn, places where we need to live.

[45:52] We tend to think of the physical aspects of life. We are very material in that sense. And we don't tend to think much deeper. There is a connection between sin and suffering.

All suffering flows from the original sin of Adam and Eve saying no to God. But not all personal suffering flows from personal sin.

Jesus speaks about this in John chapter 9 verses 2 to 7 where he says, was it the man or was it the man's parents that led to him being born blind?

To neither. It was an opportunity for God to be at work in this man and to demonstrate his glory.

Now, Jesus is not crassly saying, I'm saying, son, your sins are forgiven because you clearly must be a bad man to be in such a bad shape.

No, he is reminding us that forgiveness of sin is the greatest healing. That our sin is our greatest malady, the greatest condition that causes reduction in our lives.

[47:14] And forgiveness is that which makes us free. Sin is the distance that is put between ourselves and God. And forgiveness is the way that that sin is dealt with by God.

Forgiveness deals with the distance. It comes and deals with the distance between God and us. It brings forgiveness, reconciliation, a fresh new start.

There is power in forgiveness to make all things new. I understand your suffering, Jesus says. I understand your need. But the only way that you're going to be truly whole is by being forgiven. I can deal with your atrophied limbs. And you will feel better physically. But there'll still be a deeper and greater need that is left.

I want to go deeper. I want to go deeper in your life. I understand your problems. I've seen your suffering. But I want to get to that eventually. But please realize that your main problem is that you are a sinner.

[48:30] It's not your suffering. It's your sin that keeps you from God. For the paralyzed man to have his body healed was a game changer.

It opened so many doors in life. The man wanted to be free. But Jesus wanted him to be free indeed. Truly free. In the inside and on the outside.

Someone said that in Mark's Gospel when Jesus heals bodies, he reaches to the heart of the person's spiritual need at the same time. Jesus doesn't simply see people as a healing caseload. He sees them as human beings in need of a new relationship with the living God. Of course, then there is this reaction in verse 7.

Why does this fellow talk like this? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? It's the divine prerogative to forgive.

[49:35] And where does he get his authority from? Who does he think he is? God? Imagine someone sitting in a meeting and someone comes in and says that a thug has just thrown a brick through their car windscreen.

Before we have time to say anything about it, the man says, Don't panic. Don't worry. I have forgiven the thug who threw the brick through the window.

You've forgiven them. It's not your place to forgive them. It's my car that they damaged. It's my windscreen that they've thrown a brick through.

Jesus has authority to forgive sins because he is the one who has sinned against.

He's described here in the section as the son of man. We'll come to that in a moment. And the son of man is a term of authority from the Old Testament from Daniel chapter 7.

[50:47] And Jesus is saying, I have the authority to forgive sin because I am the one who is offended by sin. And I'm the one who will pay the price of sin.

I'm the one who's going to die upon the cross that you might be forgiven. I can forgive sin because I am the offended party. And then, of course, there is a second surprise.

And it is this that Jesus reads their thoughts because the people who are opposing him are not speaking these words out loud. These are thought bubbles that are coming from the head.

And Jesus is able to read their minds. He knows what they are thinking. Jesus sees our thoughts. He understands what's going on inside. How unnerving is that? Jesus knows us and sees us from the inside out.

[51:46] He says to them, verse 9 and 10, which is easier to say, forgive your sins or to say, rise up and walk.

Anyone can claim to forgive sins. It appears to be more difficult to demonstrate that one has the right to forgive sins.

He is the king. He has the right to command from the throne. He's able to silence evil. He's able to bring cleansing to those who have leprous skin.

He's able to bring words of life to those who are dying. He's able to speak words of forgiveness.

And people are forgiven. He sees their thoughts.

He knows what they're thinking and what they're feeling. The man before them has been forgiven.

But I want you to know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

[52:51] So he said to the man, I tell you, get up and take your mat and go home. The man's been brought to Jesus broken, not able to walk.

He leaves Jesus home, able to go to his own home on his own two feet, completely whole on the inside and the outside.

Get up. Take up your bed and go to your home. This man had been lying on his mattress since the day of his paralysis.

Jesus commands him to stand on his feet. And the effect is instant. He can stand. He can bend. He can walk. He no longer needs to be carried from one place to another. He can take himself. This man who had had a reduced, blighted life suddenly has a free and new life.

[54:00] He's able to do things. He experiences potential that he's never experienced before. The reaction of the people when Jesus says, stand up, pick up your mat and go home is astonishing.

No one has ever seen anyone do this before. This is an unprecedented act. It's a remarkable thing to observe and to experience.

And here they were before their very eyes, seeing Jesus speak to this man and indicate that he was physically free.

Jesus has spoken words of forgiveness to him and now he speaks words of physical liberation. This amazed everyone.

And they praise God saying, we have never seen anything like this. Unprecedented.

Unprecedented. Unprecedented. Isn't that, of course, a word that we've seen so many times over the past nine or ten months during the time of COVID-17 and the time of lockdown?

[55:22] Unprecedented. Unprecedented scenes. Unprecedented deaths. And here we see something that is totally unprecedented.

We've never seen anything like this. Someone has said that the theme that runs through the gospel could be summed up in just these terms.

Jesus will not do miracles to prove points or to win arguments. The story of the healing of the paralyzed man does indeed show Jesus, in a sense, performing a miracle to prove a point.

But the point is that the miracle is not the point. The miracle is done so as to divert attention from the healing to the promise of forgiveness. To reinforce the idea that if a miracle is astonishing and difficult, the forgiveness of sins is yet more so.

There were healers. There were miracle workers in the time of Jesus who were able to give people physical relief by their words and actions.

[56:32] That was a hard thing. But a harder thing is to say to someone, you are forgiven. For that's not magic.

It is a remarkable work of grace and mercy. Never before had God become man. Never before had God made his home among us.

Never before had he made himself vulnerable. Never before had the living God come to live among us and to die for us. It's unprecedented.

The healing and the forgiveness are unprecedented because they're wrapped up in an event which is unprecedented.

God has become man and he has lived amongst us and he's died for us upon the cross. He has authority to forgive sins because he is the man who is God.

[57:37] The one who will be nailed on the cross to pay the cost of our forgiveness. In the gospel, Jesus does not merely offer pardon.

He is offering himself that we might be pardoned. The righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God. In the story, we see a roof torn apart in order that a paralyzed man can have access to Jesus. At the cross, Jesus is torn apart in order to mend a broken world. Unprecedented.

Unprecedented. An unprecedented action. An unprecedented story. What about us?

As we think about what Jesus does in response to the faith of these men. In response to this man who is before him in all his need.

[58:45] What about us? It's been said that faith is first and foremost not knowledge about Jesus, but active trust that Jesus is sufficient for one's deepest and most heartfelt needs.

Are you a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you trust Jesus? Have you exercised faith in Jesus?

Are you actively trusting Jesus? Do you believe that he's sufficient to forgive all the wrong you've ever done? All the wrong you're doing and all the wrong you'll ever do in the future?

Do you believe that because he came to die for you, he can say to you concerning your sins, Gone. Gone.

Gone. Gone. Gone. Yes, your sins are gone. Buried in the deepest sea. Yes, that's good enough for me. Christ shall live eternally.

[59:51] All my sins are gone. Gone. Forgiven. Forgiven. To be forgiven means that Jesus has sent away our sins.

They've been sent away because he has died upon the cross. Can we trust him for that? Can we ask him to be forgiven? What about our needs?

Our physical needs? Our emotional needs? Our spiritual needs? The things that threaten to tear us apart. The things that threaten to tear us apart.

Can we actively trust Jesus to be at work in those? Can we trust that he cares for us?

We might feel when we're praying like the four men confronted by a crowded doorway with no immediate access to Jesus.

[60:50] We might feel that there's no way through. We might feel that we've hit a dead end. But God is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine, says Paul to the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 3.

And is able to do immeasurably more than you can ask or imagine too. Can you believe that for your life? For your family? For your future?

For your church? Can you believe that? Jesus has authority. Jesus has authority. Jesus is love.

Jesus is tender. Jesus wants to be at work in our lives to bring us what is the best.

True freedom. The freedom to know God personally. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the invitation. Thank you for the offer of freedom in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[61:57] Freedom from the sin that binds us. Freedom from the fear that paralyzes us. Father God, we pray that you will not limit us by our lack of imagination.

We pray, Father, that you will not limit us by our unwillingness to come. We pray that you will remove the barriers that are between us.

That you will deal with the distance that our sin creates between us. Lord, that you will come to us. Lord, that you will come to us. Set us free. Lord, make us whole. Lord, help us to have confidence that you do all things well.

That you are sufficient for our deepest and most heartfelt needs. Lord, we are ready to turn our sin. we have in Jesus all our sins and griefs to bear.

What a privilege to carry everything to him in prayer. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

[63:10] And thank you, John, for bringing God's word to us in such a helpful way. And John's requested that we close with this song, To God Be The Glory, Great Things He Has Done.

So we'll sing this. He's requested the Fellingham tune, which we had last week. So we sing now, To God Be The Glory, and then we'll close in prayer.

To God Be The Glory, Great Things He Has Done.

So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, Who yielded His life an atonement for sin, And opened the life gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice.

[64:42] Come to the Father, through Jesus the Son. Give Him the glory, great things He has done.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood, To every believer, the promise of God.

The vilest offender, who truly believes, That moment from Jesus, a pardon receives.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice.

Come to the Father, through Jesus the Son. Give Him the glory, great things He has done.

[66:21] Great things He has taught us, Great things He has done, And great our rejoicing, To Jesus the Son.

But purer and higher, And greater will be, Our wonder, our worship, When Jesus we see.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice.

Come to the Father, through Jesus the Son. Give Him the glory, great things He has done.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice.

[67:50] Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, let the people rejoice. Come to the Lord, praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, praise the

Lord, Let the earth hear His voice.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice. Come to the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice.

The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. To God be the glory, great things He has done. Let's close in prayer.

To Him who is able to keep you from falling, And to present you before His glorious presence, Without fault and with great joy, To the only God our Saviour, Be glory, majesty, power and authority, Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Before all ages, now and forevermore.

Amen. And so, it's goodbye from me. Please note, if you're tuning in in real time, That our meeting this evening will be by Zoom at 7 o'clock, Which is different to usual.

[69:27] So, if you're able to tune in then, Look forward to seeing you.

But otherwise, it's bye bye from me. Bye bye. Thank you.