

Repent!

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[0 : 00] Let's share our prayer together. Heavenly Father, we humbly bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit, our teacher, and your great glory, our supreme concern.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Don't you just hate it when some truly awful song gets stuck in your head and it plays over and over again?

That earworm which drives you to despair. I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want, is never to hear another Spice Girls song again.

Have you ever wondered what it is that God wants? What God really, really wants? In Genesis chapter 3, God came into the garden in the cool of the evening to spend time with the humans he had created.

What he wants, what he really, really wants, is to be together with the humans he has created.

[1 : 24] In Genesis 12, God called Abram to leave his home. He sent him on mission so that all the nations of the earth might be blessed in him.

What God wants, what God wants, what God really, really wants, is to bless all of creation with his love and his presence.

In Exodus 25, God tells Moses to go and build a tent for him so that I may dwell in the midst of my people. That's why God wants the tent built.

It's not that God lives in a tent, but the tent was a visual aid, a visual symbol of what God wants, what God really, really wants, which is to live together with you and me.

This is God's big desire. This is the big goal of God's mission. That God would be reconciled to all people.

[2 : 32] That God would renew and restore all creation. There is nothing beyond this. This is what God wants, what God really, really wants.

For you and me to live together with him. These precious words. Reconciliation.

Renewal. Recreation. Are words which suggest that something needs repaired. All those re-words. God has made us to live together with him. What God wants. What God really, really wants is for us to live together with him.

But that intimate and personal relationship has been broken and needs to be renewed. Today we want to give thanks to our God.

[3 : 34] That he doesn't only give us one chance at this. Our Father God is compassionate and gracious. Slow to anger and abounding in love.

He will be reconciled to us. Again and again and again and again and as long as it takes. He gave his one of a kind son Jesus.

And his once for all sacrifice. Reconciles us to God. Hear God's gospel word to you today.

Be reconciled to God. Key word in our reading from Matthew's gospel today is the word repent.

We have in the church successfully diminished the word repent. We have reduced it and its significance for us.

[4 : 36] Until when we hear the word repent. We think we are hearing something like. Well say you're sorry. Say you're sorry.

Confess that you've messed up. Now repentance is not less than that. But it really is much, much more than that.

If you like. Acknowledging that we've messed up is only the first step. Only the first part of repentance. Repentance. We need to repent because we have rebelled against our God.

We have rejected him. God loves us. And has offered us his love. And we've said not today, thank you. And shut the door in his face.

We have turned away from Jesus. We have quenched the Holy Spirit's work within us. And so repentance is actually changing our whole lives.

[5 : 43] It's not about changing your jumper or your car. It is a deep rooted transformation of our whole being.

Of everything that we are. It is a new life being planted within us. Which bears new fruit in our words and our thoughts and our actions.

We need to repent. Because we need to be honest with ourselves. We are unhappy with how we live. And with what our lives are like.

God has graciously taught us what it is to live together with him. And we have willfully gone the other way. We have rejected him.

God has created us with a desire inbuilt. To be together with him. And we have suppressed that desire.

[6 : 48] And exchanged it. For a desire to be absent from God. We need to change everything about our lives. We need a whole root and branch renewal.

We need to repent. Because we long for a better life. We are tired with our gossiping.

We are weary of our selfishness. Of our anger. Of the bitterness that infects our living. In the gospel of his one of a kind son.

God displays before us a better life. A different life. A life which we really, really want. God's desire. What God really, really wants. Is to turn rebels into children. What God really wants. Is to go and find those who are lost. And bring us home.

[7 : 55] What God really wants. Is to bless all people. And all creation. With his presence. And his love. God has said.

He will achieve his desire. God will do all that he wants to do. Through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has shaped.

The tool of repentance. To use it in our lives. To bring us to Jesus. And to bring us home to our Father.

God's work. And to work. Today. Beneath the shadow. Beneath the shadow. Of his precious cross. We need to let him transform us.

We need to submit our lives. To God working within us. His reconciliation. his transformation, his renewal as he remakes us in the likeness of Christ.

[8 : 57] Repent and be reconciled to God your Father. What acts of rebellion then are we to turn away from when our lives are changed?

Well, from the verses we read earlier, what do we learn there about ways in which we have rejected God? Jesus began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done because they did not repent.

God has sent his one-of-a-kind son Jesus to us with this mission to perform mighty works of grace and love among us and through us and for us and for our neighbours, for our city, for our homes and we are not impressed.

We see the mighty works that Jesus is doing and we say, big whoop. We're not interested anymore. Jesus has come to our city, to our home, to our congregation and he has been doing mighty works among us and we shrug our shoulders and carry on unimpressed.

We are rebelling against God by rejecting Jesus and his mighty works.

[10 : 30] Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Chorazin and Bethsaida are being condemned here for rejecting God. What is it they are doing to reject Jesus?

They did not stone Jesus. They did not imprison him. They did not say unkind things to him. They did not crush a crown of thorns on his head or beat him before nailing him to a bit of wood.

They did not recognise him. They saw his mighty works and they refused to believe what the mighty works told them about Jesus and who he was.

They saw the mighty works and they said, well, that's all right over there but it's not going to change my life. They rejected the evidence that God was graciously at work among them.

[11 : 44] They rejected God and his love and his grace. Before sin is expressed in our actions, our gossiping, our selfishness, whatever it is, before all that sin that we do, there is a prior sin.

Martin Luther wrote on the Ten Commandments, he wrote that every time we sin, we break at least two commandments at the same time. If we steal, for example, commandment number eight, we break the eighth commandment but at the same time, we are breaking the first commandment because we are making the object of our theft into God for us.

We are creating a God other than the only God there is and worshipping him. People in Karadzin and Bethsaida were rejecting God and they needed their lives transformed.

Every time we hear the good news of Jesus, we are faced with the call to change our lives. Every time we experience Jesus powerfully at work among us, Jesus is calling us to transform our lives. But we don't do that. We imagine that we are already good people, that God would be pleased to have us on his side, that while others might need to repent and change their lives, this has got nothing to do with us.

[13:31] Rejecting Jesus is rejecting God. Dismissing Jesus' mighty works is to refuse that reconciling work that God would do in our lives.

If the language of condemnation is properly used of this passage, it is self-condemnation. By rejecting God, by refusing the mighty works of transformation, the people of Karadzin and Bethsaida were condemning themselves and we too often follow right behind them.

We choose condemnation rather than reconciliation. God is on mission towards us right now, right today.

God would welcome us into his presence and his love. We need to recognise that we need to come, that we are not presently at home with God.

We need to acknowledge that we have rejected God and his mighty works in Jesus. We need to dig deep within and expose the rejection of God that lies at the heart of our sin.

[14:47] This is what we need to do beneath the shadow of the cross of Christ. Repentance is changing our lives by turning away from our rebellion against God.

Repentance is beginning to live together with God. The characteristic call of the Lord Jesus to us each and every new day is follow me. Come and be with Jesus.

Go where Jesus goes. Do what Jesus does. Live as Jesus lives. So just in the last few weeks at the end of chapter 9 we read of Jesus meeting the needs of people who were blind and who were demon possessed and caring for them.

In chapter 10 we read of Jesus sending his disciples out to take the blessing of the gospel to everyone around them. Last week in chapter 11 Jesus does the work of God's king in God's kingdom.

He displays works of power to care for those in need. In repentance we are now the people who follow Jesus and do what Jesus did.

[16:02] We receive his mission which is now our mission. Those who repent are Jesus' people.

We follow him and we recognise Jesus as our king. Jesus is the one and only son of God the lord of life the captain of salvation.

Jesus is the only one who has sacrificed himself upon the cross for us and our salvation. There is no salvation or hope apart from Jesus.

Those who repent are Jesus' people. We cling to him. He is the leader and we follow him. The same things that Jesus did we do.

Jesus fulfilled God's mission to bless others and he now sends us to fulfil God's mission to bless others. You can't follow Jesus and not be sent by him on mission.

[17:07] What can you do to bless your neighbour? Can you knock the door and chat with someone who you know is living on their own? Can you say a kind word to someone working in a shop or driving a bus?

Instead of complaining about the news and which of us this past week when watching the news or reading it on a website has not turned and loudly complained about something we've heard or read?

Rather than complaining can we not turn the news into prayer and cry out to God that he would be at work in these situations which distress us rather than our false pride criticising others for their bad behaviour we are the people who can tell them about Jesus who by prayer and showing them God's grace and our words and our deeds can see their lives transformed what would you rather do?

Complain about bad behaviour or see Jesus change it that's our mission if we who follow Jesus won't share the good news of Jesus' love with others who will?

if our repentance doesn't get as far as transforming every part of our lives then it isn't repentance at all Jesus said I tell you it will be more tolerable on the day of judgement for the land of Sodom than for you are there any more terrifying words that Jesus has said?

[19:02] Thanks be to God he has not left us without hope God sent Jesus to call us to the new life of repentance and in Christ through repentance we can be transformed we can live that new life in the presence of God God in Christ renews our lives transforms all of our rejection of him into service in God's mission God changes us from those who refuse his mighty work to those who rejoice in them and celebrate them and hunger for more of them each new day God gives us new gifts of his love new mighty works of Christ among us all of them leading us and others to his home our hope for new life our hope for repentance is not in ourselves and in our ability to repent or in our ability to reshape our own lives this is not a self help class all our hope is only in the grace of

God all our hope is only in the cross of Christ alone all our hope is brought to life within us only by the work of God's Holy Spirit we need to repent believe the good news and be reconciled to God let's pray together father right now we pray for one another that you would humble us that we would submit to this narrow way of life that we would hear your call to reconciliation and we would walk there on the path of repentance we pray for one another that you would transform our lives that you would renew us and make us more like Jesus father we pray that you would be powerfully and gloriously at work among us through Jesus Christ our Lord amen