

AM 1 John 1:1-4

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Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[0 : 00] A warm welcome to you to our service today. Sorry, I'm slightly out of breath. I must be getting older coming up those stairs. One or two notices at the beginning. We meet as usual this evening at six o'clock when, God willing, I shall be preaching again.

We meet in the week on Wednesday at seven o'clock for our Bible study and prayer meeting and Jonathan Kenyon is leading that meeting.

We will have our usual services next week, eleven o'clock and six o'clock, but we're not quite sure yet as to who the preacher will be. You'll appreciate that there are some practical difficulties because of the COVID regulations.

The visiting preacher won't be able to come into anyone's house, which is difficult. But we're trying to find ways of overcoming that problem.

Let's begin our service this morning by hearing a singing of Psalm 93.

[1 : 22] It's the Scottish Psalter version that we're going to hear. And it's verses one to five. Verses that begin, The Lord doth reign, and clothed is he with majesty most bright.

His works do show him clothed to be, and girt about with might. Psalm 93. Psalm 93. The Lord of great and old is he, With majesty most bright.

His works do show him clothed to be, and girt about with might. And girt about with might.

And girt about with might. The world is all so established yet, that it cannot defight.

Thy throne is fixed so old, and long from everlasting heart.

[2 : 59] From everlasting heart. The floods, O Lord, have lifted up.

They lifted up their voice. The floods, O Lord, have lifted up their ways.

And made a mighty voice. And made a mighty voice.

But yet the Lord that is on high, Is more of might by far, The noise of many waters is.

For great sea billows are. For great sea billows are.

[4 : 28] Rightest in one is everyone, In faithfulness excel, And holiness forevermore.

Thy house be calm and well. Thy house be calm and well.

Let's come before God in prayer. Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence, And we worship you in your great majesty.

Holiness indeed befits your house. For you are a holy God, and a powerful God. We praise you that your almighty power is greater than all the Floods of this world.

As we have just heard sung, The floods have lifted up their voice, But your voice is greater. Amidst all the troubles of this world, Amidst the coronavirus, Amidst all the troubles of our own individual lives, We thank you that our majestic God rises above it all.

[6 : 14] And we desire this Lord's day, To come into your pure and holy and mighty presence, And to adore our God and King.

We thank you that not only are you mighty and powerful, But also you are full of love. And we thank you that in your love, You have sent your dear Son, Jesus Christ, To be our Saviour.

And we praise you for him, The Lord of glory, Who died on the cross, And rose again for our salvation. Grant, Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit, That Christ may be exalted today in our midst.

Draw near to us, Grant us a deep sense of your presence, Grant us to enjoy fellowship, With the Father and with the Son, Throughout this Lord's day.

And grant us that the word of God may speak, Vividly into our hearts, And may accomplish good things, Within each one of us. Forgive our many sins, Lord, We always know that we need forgiveness, We thank you for the blood of Christ, That cleanses from sin.

[7 : 42] And we pray that we might all know, That peace of conscience that comes, Through trusting in Christ. Cleanse us by the blood, Pour out your Spirit, And grant us to know your presence.

For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now, children, Good to see our children with us. Always good to have children in a congregation. Brought along something to show you. You can probably already guess what it is from the shape.

I don't know if you've seen one of these before. Any offers what that is. No, you may have seen one, Or you may not.

Almost there. That's absolutely right. Yes, it's a boomerang. This one was given to me by my father, About 50 years ago.

[8 : 57] Comes all the way from Australia, And he brought it back with him, When he went on a business trip to Australia. Now, these things, These boomerangs, They were used by the Aborigines.

Those were the first people who lived in Australia. And they used them for hunting. I've never quite sure exactly how you're supposed to throw them.

I have read that you're supposed to throw it like that. But it does seem more natural to throw it like this, doesn't it? I'm not sure.

But you throw it, Well, they used to throw it, And it would go way off into the bush, And hopefully, It would hit an animal, Which they were hunting.

It would hit the animal, And then, of course, They would go over and collect the dead animal, And bring it back, So they could eat it. Good thing they don't have to catch the cows on the farm like that, Doesn't it?

[10 : 07] I quite like the idea of your dad going out there with a boomerang, To bring in the cattle. But that's how it used to be done, Years ago in Australia.

They made them rather beautifully. All sort of beautifully decorated. I don't know whether you can see from that distance, But on the left hand side here, I think that's a kangaroo.

And on the right hand side, I think that may be an alligator, Or something like that. Very peculiar pictures though, Because they show all their bones.

It's rather like if you have to go to hospital, And they have to take a photo of your insides, They take an x-ray, And all your bones show through. And that's how they show them here, With all their bones showing through.

Presumably these were the animals, That they were hoping to catch. Of course, If it didn't catch the animal, If they missed, No problem, They wouldn't have to go and find their boomerang.

[11 : 19] The shape of this, Is so that when it spins around in the air, If it doesn't actually hit something, It will come back to you. So that's rather useful, isn't it?

It comes right back, And they can throw it again. They don't use these for hunting now, You'll be pleased to know. They use them mainly just for fun.

You could use one of these for fun, You could take it out into a wide open space, Take it down to sandy hills maybe, Providing there's no one else there on the beach. Throw it as fast, As hard as you can, See how far you can throw it.

And they have competitions, To see how far they can throw them. And apparently, The world record, Is 427 meters. That's an astonishing distance, Isn't it?

Now when I think about these boomerangs, I think of a verse in the Bible, In the Old Testament, There's a verse where God says, My word will not return to me empty, But it will accomplish that for which I have sent it.

[12 : 45] Just think about that just for a moment. God's word is thrown out into the world, As it were. Every time the Bible is preached, Or every time the Bible is read.

And God says, It's not going to be a waste of time, It's going to hit something. It's not going to come back to me like a boomerang empty, It's going to do what I want it to do.

Well what does he want it to do? Well of course he's not hunting us to kill us. Quite the opposite, He wants to save us.

And that's why he sends out his word. He sends it out, To tell us about Jesus. Jesus who came into this world, To save us from our sins.

What he wants to do, Is to bring us, Back to himself. That's what he wants to do with us all, Young and old.

[14 : 00] By his word. That's what the word is for. To bring us, Back to God. Let's come before God again in prayer.

Heavenly Father, We thank you for, Your word, That brings us back to God.

We pray for these, Young children here, Only just beginning on life, Thankfully not having had opportunity, To do much in the way of sin, And yet, We know that, From the moment we're born, Sin is within us.

And we need to be brought back, Right from the beginning. And as the years go by, Perhaps some find that they've wandered, Further and further.

But we thank you that, You're able to send forth your word, Far out, Into the depths of this world, To bring back even the worst of sinners.

[15 : 08] And we pray that you will do that, In these days in which we live, That there will be people, Who will be brought back to God, Through Jesus Christ. Lord, we pray, For these children, That you would, Grant them, Lives, Not only full of happiness and joy, But full of faith and love.

And that you would help, Their parents, As they bring them up. Lord, how important that is. Not only for the children, That are, Visibly here in our midst, But for those who are, As it were, Invisibly here, In the womb.

Lord, we, Look forward, To their birth. And we pray, For the whole future, For each and every one of them, That they may be, In your gracious, And loving hands.

For this we pray for us all, Lord, Through the coming week, Guide and keep us, Grant us to walk, In the ways of Christ. Grant us, Lord, To avoid sin.

Grant us, To walk in the light, To walk in holiness. We pray for the various, Activities that, Will take place. We pray for Jonathan, As he, Leads that meeting, Midweek.

[16 : 32] We pray that you will, Give wisdom to, Kenny MacLeod, As he, Acts as our interim, Moderator, And particularly, In finding a preacher, For the coming, Lord's day.

And we pray for, The future of the church, Generally, That you will guide, And give wisdom, In every matter. And that we may see, Days of, Your reviving grace, Here in Dumfries.

It's a long, Long time, Lord, Since there were, Multitudes, Coming into the house of God. We long for such, Days to return. We pray, Heavenly Father, For all the churches, Of this town, And of our country.

And ask you, That churches, Everywhere, May flourish, For the glory, Of the head of the church, The Lord Jesus himself. We pray for this nation also, Both for, Scotland, And for the government, In Edinburgh, And for the whole of the UK, And for the government, In Westminster.

We pray, Lord, For our royal family also. We ask you for wisdom, For all in authority, Particularly at this time, Making big decisions, That deeply affect, People's lives.

[17 : 50] Those that have been, Affected in, Any way, With the coronavirus, We commit them to you, And we pray, Lord, That, You would somehow, Work good through it all.

That even through this, Terrible virus, There may be some, Who think afresh, And perhaps will come, To Christ, For salvation. We pray for our brother Jack, As he goes for his, Covid test today, And for him on Tuesday, When he has that, Cataract operation, That all may go smoothly, And well, And that you may, Grant to both him, And Averill, Perfect peace, Knowing that, He is in your hands.

We remember Joan, Before you, Having gone up, To see Catherine, To be with her, At a time of great crisis, And trial. Lord, Do comfort them, And be with them, At this time.

We pray, Heavenly Father, That you would cause, Your gospel, To continue to go out, Into all the world. We remember your, Ancient people, The Jewish people, And we long, For their salvation, For the veil, To be taken away, That they may see, The Messiah, And believe.

And we pray, Lord, For all the Gentile nations. We thank you, For that great vision, In the scriptures, Of that great multitude, Of every kindred, Tribe and tongue, Gathered around, The throne of the Lamb, Worshipping the one, Who has saved, Multitudes, By his blood.

[19 : 34] We long, For the day, Of Christ's return, But in the meantime, Help us to walk, Faithfully, Serving our Lord, And our Saviour, In whose name we pray, Amen.

Let's hear now, From the word of God, And two readings, Both of them, From the writings of John, Going to read first, From John's gospel, Chapter one, And the first 18 verses, In the beginning, Was the word, And the word, Was with God, And the word, Was God, He was in the beginning, With God, All things, Were made through him, And without him, Was not anything made, That was made, In him was life, And the life, Was the light of men, The light, Shines in the darkness,

And the darkness, Has not overcome it, There was a man, Sent from God, Whose name was John, He came as a witness, To bear witness, About the light, That all might believe, Through him, He was not that light, But came to bear witness, About the light, The true light, Which gives light, To everyone, Was coming into the world, He was in the world, And the world, Was made through him, Yet the world, Did not know him, He came to his own, And his own people, Did not receive him, But to all, Who did receive him, Who believed in his name, He gave the right, To become children of God, Who were born, Not of blood, Nor of the will of the flesh, Nor of the will of man, But of God, And the word, Became flesh, And dwelt among us, And we have seen his glory, Glory as of the only son, From the father, Full of grace, And truth, John bore witness, About him, And cried out, This is he, Of whom I said, He who comes after me, Ranks before me, Because he was before me, For from his fullness, We have all received, Grace upon grace, For the law was given, Through Moses, Grace and truth, Came through Jesus Christ, No one has ever seen God, The only God, Who is at the father's side, He has made him known, Now we read just a few verses, From John's first letter, 1 John chapter 1,

And just the first four verses, Which we're going to look at later, That which was from the beginning, Which we have heard, Which we have seen with our eyes, Which we looked upon, And have touched with our hands, Concerning the word of life, The life was made manifest, And we have seen it, And testify to it, And proclaim to you, The eternal life, Which was with the father, And was made manifest to us, That which we have seen, And heard, We proclaim also to you, So that you too, May have fellowship with us, And indeed,

[23 : 55] Our fellowship is with the father, And with his son, Jesus Christ, And we are writing these things, So that our joy, May be complete, Well, before we come to that portion, Of his word, We'll hear again, The singing of God's praise, In the hymn, Be thou my vision, The first verse is, Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart, Nought be all else to me, Save that thou art, Thou my best thought, By day, Or by night, Waking, Or sleeping, Thy presence, My light, Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart, Cross be all else to me, Save that thou art, From my grace,

God, My dear, For my night, Ready, For sleeping, Thy presence, My light, Be thou my vision, Thou my true word, I have raised me, Thou with me, Lord, Thou my great heart, Thou my great Father, I thy true Son, Thou in me dwelling, And I with thee one, Be thou my battle shield, Sword for the fight, Be thou my dignity, Be thou my dignity,

Thou my delight, Thou my soul, Shatter, Thou my light star, Praise thou me, Thou may not be w ■■■■, Thou may be the joy, O my yon is coming, I free God ever reformed.

Seal me by wisdom, O Lord and all. The last verse of that hymn describes God as the High King of Heaven.

It was many years before I realised that that was a technical term. The hymn is an Irish hymn.

Those of you with Irish connections may know from your Irish history that there were many kings in Ireland.

[27 : 26] But there was one who was supreme over them. And he was called the High King. And that is exactly what our Lord Jesus Christ is, isn't it? There are many kings on the earth.

But he is the High King, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But let's come now to the Word of God and to 1 John chapter 1.

And as and when I'm asked to preach over the coming months, I want us to look at this first letter of John.

This morning I want us to look just at these first four verses that we've read. But I'll read again verse 3. Some 50 years ago in 1969, Some 50 years ago in 1969, the drinks company Coca-Cola introduced a new advertising slogan.

It's the real thing. The message was, Don't be fobbed off with cheap imitations.

[29 : 01] Buy Coca-Cola, the original and the best. Well, the message of 1 John is rather similar.

Though obviously he is talking about something much, much more important. Real Christianity.

That is the theme of 1 John. Notice even here in the verse that I read, that little word, Indeed.

Indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son. Some translations have truly. In other words, our fellowship is real.

It's the real thing. The message is, Don't be fobbed off with cheap imitations. Make sure that what you have spiritually is real.

[30 : 09] Now this is important for all kinds of reasons. It's important firstly for us to know that our faith is real.

We will be missing out in this life if it isn't. We will be missing out even more in the world to come. Our eternal future depends on us having a real faith. Our Lord himself says that there will be some who will be sadly disappointed on the day of judgment.

People who thought that they were Christians and they were not. To whom our Lord will say, Depart from me. I never knew you.

We don't want that to happen to us. And John doesn't want that to happen to us. John wants us to have a real faith. And he wants us to know that we have a real faith.

[31 : 19] He wants us to enjoy that same full assurance of faith that he and his fellow apostles enjoyed. It's important also to be able to recognize false imitations of Christianity so as to avoid them.

John was writing probably towards the end of the first century AD by which time all kinds of false teaching was beginning to creep in.

John mentions it in chapter 2 and verse 18 where he reminds them that the Antichrist is coming in the last days and he says already many Antichrists have come.

Now one of the most dangerous heresies in those days was a cult called Gnosticism which claimed to have secret knowledge of God.

They saw Jesus as a divine being who had come to give us that secret knowledge but otherwise they denied most of the great doctrines of Christianity.

[32 : 37] Now this had only just begun to appear in the first century but John wanted to nip it in the bud. Today many other false ideas exist.

Many religions many cults and many distorted ideas even within the churches. many false experiences are offered to us and we need to be able to distinguish between the true and the false. Finally it's important for the world to know what real Christianity is. Many people judge Christianity by what they see in Christians but sadly most people have only ever encountered nominal Christians.

If only they knew what real Christianity is and could see it in us maybe just maybe they would want to follow Christ for themselves.

Now this morning I want us to look just at this introductory prologue in verses 1 to 4 where John sets forth his great desire for us that we might have fellowship with God and with Christ and with one another real fellowship.

[34 : 19] Now when we use the word fellowship we tend to think of a cup of tea after the service or perhaps spending a few hours together on a Sunday afternoon and that is of course very important.

One of the many difficulties that we face with the current coronavirus regulations is the restriction upon our fellowship.

A cup of tea is out of the question and now we can't even go into each other's homes. But John is speaking here of something much deeper than that.

The Greek word is koinonia occurs about 20 times in the New Testament and it means sharing. And the thought is that real Christians share in a common spiritual life.

Not only with one another but with God himself. Indeed it is our union with Christ which unites us with our fellow believers.

[35 : 36] Now that fellowship depends John says on our shared belief in the apostolic gospel. That's why he goes back to the facts about Christ in verses 1 and 2.

We proclaim these things so that you may have fellowship. Real fellowship is impossible without real faith. I want us to consider then two things from these verses.

The truth we believe in verses 1 and 2 and the fellowship we enjoy in verses 3 and 4. Firstly the truth we believe in verses 1 and 2.

Let me read those verses again. That which was from the beginning which we have heard which we have seen with our eyes which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life.

The life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

[36 : 52] Although he doesn't name him here it's obvious who he's speaking about. Our Lord Jesus Christ who is the eternal word and who is the source of eternal life.

There is a deliberate echo here with John's gospel. Remember from our first reading how that starts. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. That is speaking about Christ. The eternal word.

That passage in John's gospel is itself an echo of Genesis chapter one. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And a little later in Genesis God said let there be light and there was light.

[38 : 07] As the eternal son of God Christ was there from the beginning. He is our creator. He is our spiritual light.

Now this was not just some philosophical theory. to John. He had actually known Jesus. And what he's giving here is first hand testimony.

He'd heard him preach. He'd seen him. He had even touched him. Remember for example how he leaned on his breast at the last supper.

Even after the resurrection. we're told in Luke 24 that Jesus risen from the dead had said to all his disciples not just Thomas but all his disciples see my hands and my feet that it is I myself touch me and see.

The Gnostics who I mentioned that heretical cult they questioned whether Christ was human whether he was a real man.

[39 : 25] John knew. He could testify from first hand experience that Christ was a real man and an amazing man.

He could report from first hand experience what Jesus had done and said. And he could report from first hand experience how Christ had died on the cross and gloriously risen again.

He'd seen his humanity. He'd also glimpsed his divinity. He says in John 1.14 the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory.

The apostles saw his glory in the transfiguration. they saw it in his miracles. They saw it above all in his resurrection and his ascension to heaven.

John knew and he testifies that Jesus was both God and man. And something more than that.

[40 : 42] He had heard from Jesus himself the reason for his coming. that we might have life through his death.

John knew all this and he proclaimed it to the world as also had the other apostles. He proclaimed hypnosis.

These were not just theories for discussion. These were historical facts. Now this apostolic ministry is unique.

They were eyewitnesses. Eyewitnesses of his life, of his death, and his resurrection. And we have believed their testimony.

That is what makes us Christians believing the apostolic message concerning Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world.

[41 : 44] Now we in our turn pass on that message. We too can speak from experience. We can speak of what we've seen and heard.

We've known the power of Christ in our own lives. We have a personal testimony and that personal testimony can be very powerful. But at the heart of it all is this apostolic testimony.

The historical facts concerning Christ. That is the very foundation of our faith. And that faith leads to fellowship.

So let's look now at the fellowship we enjoy in verses 3 and 4. That which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you so that you may have fellowship with us.

And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. You have here two levels of fellowship.

[42 : 56] Firstly fellowship with us. That means in the context first and foremost fellowship with the apostles. apostles. We read in Acts 2 about the first preaching of the gospel on the day of Pentecost how 3000 believed and it says they devoted themselves to the apostles doctrine and fellowship and to the breaking of bread and prayer.

how wonderful it must have been to share fellowship with Peter and John and James and Andrew and all the rest of the apostles.

Now as I've said this was more than just a cup of tea after the service though I would be quite thrilled to have a cup of tea with the apostle John.

It was a shared life together resulting out of a shared faith. Right from the beginning back in Acts 2 they were one family.

It emphasizes in Acts 2 how they freely shared their possessions with each other. How they loved to be with one another. How they met daily with one another. One family.

[44 : 16] The apostles recognized these new believers as brothers and sisters in Christ because they had believed the same gospel and they had the same spirit.

Now we too if we believe that apostolic gospel hinted at in those first two verses if we believe the gospel we too are part of that apostolic fellowship.

Obviously we won't meet the apostles themselves until we come to glory but we are part of the same family and that family today is represented by millions of believers worldwide.

Being part of the church we are part of a worldwide family of God. We recognize them as our brothers and sisters.

Even if not all of them see things quite the same way that we do on everything still if they have truly trusted in Christ they are our brothers and sisters. Our lives are inseparably bound together.

[45 : 31] Now many people will find that an attractive thought. Indeed there are people whose chief desire in coming to church is to be part of the Christian community.

It's a great desire for community today. People are very isolated in the modern world and they long to be part of a group of people who care about them.

And people do look at the church and hopefully if they see the church at its best they will see a group of people where they will be loved and accepted. And they want to be part of that.

Well that's good. So long as we remember that faith comes first. You can't have the community without Christ.

To be truly part of the church you must trust in Christ. Others it has to be said find it an intimidating thought.

[46 : 31] They want Christ but they don't want the church. They want to be saved but they don't want any commitment. Well it's good that they want Christ but you can't have Christ without his people.

They go together. Christ's aim is not simply to save individuals but to build a community. If you're saved then you're part of that community the church.

But also there is a deeper level of fellowship. Fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

John may perhaps have in mind hear that prayer of Jesus after the Last Supper in John 17. John was there remember he'd heard that prayer first hand.

Jesus had said Father the hour has come glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

[47 : 48] And this is eternal life. that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

That's fellowship with the Father and the Son. And Jesus himself says that is eternal life. Now to know God is obviously more than just knowing about him.

It's more than just knowing that God created the world and rules the world. It's more than just knowing that Jesus is the Son of God and that he came to save the world.

All of that is true and it's vital that we know these things. But it's not enough. We need to know God personally.

That in a sense is the purpose of the gospel. to bring us into a real personal fellowship with God. Our fellowship with one another rests upon this that we share in that deeper fellowship with God.

[49 : 05] Otherwise being part of the church would be no more than just belonging to a club. Sharing in a common interest. But it is in fact more than that because we share in a common spiritual life.

We share the same father. We share the same elder brother whom we know and love. Knowing God personally means that we can talk freely with him in prayer and know that he hears us. it means that we can hear his voice speaking to us in the Bible. This isn't just any old book that we read occasionally and enjoy but here we meet with the living God whom we know and who knows us.

It means that we know his love for us personally not just as a doctrine but as a real personal experience.

Now this fellowship with God will bring us great joy. John concludes this introduction by saying we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

[50 : 25] Some manuscripts have your joy rather than our joy but of course it's both since the joy of the Christians will be the joy of the Apostles.

My joy is your joy because we share all things in common. Again some commentators say that he is referring here to the things he's just written.

Others say he's referring to the things he's about to write. But again it doesn't really matter because the purpose of the whole letter really is to establish us in this fellowship with God.

Fellowship with God brings joy and the deeper that fellowship is the greater that joy will be. Finally notice that he wants our joy to be complete.

Completeness or fullness was one of the watchwords of the Gnostics. Here is John saying true fullness of joy comes through the gospel of Christ.

[51 : 41] This is real Christianity. Now it remains to ask is all this true of you? Maybe that someone listening today feels that all this is rather strange you'd like to have fellowship with God but you don't.

You'd like to have fellowship with Christians but you don't. Well if that is the case go back to the beginning.

Go back to that apostolic message. Go back to the gospel. Trust in Christ as your Lord and your saviour and all of this will follow.

But go for the real thing. Whatever other religions may offer whatever the cults may offer true biblical Christianity alone offers real fellowship.

Remember what Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. There can be no fellowship with God except through Christ.

[53 : 01] But for most of us I am sure it is true. But we would like it to be more true if I could use such an expression.

we would like our fellowship to be deeper. We would like to know God better. We would like our fellowship with our fellow Christians to be deeper.

Well it can be. Fellowship is something that can grow. Fellowship with Christians is something that can grow.

that's true of any relationship isn't it? Think of someone that you've recently met.

You know them and yet in a sense you don't know them. But over time you'll get to know them better. Give you an example. I've only recently met our interim moderator Kenny MacLeod.

[54 : 07] I know who he is. I've met him a couple of times. I've heard him preach. We've spoken over the phone, exchanged a couple of emails. As far as I know we're on good terms with each other.

He calls me Robert and as far as I can tell he's happy for me to call him Kenny. But I don't really know him. I know very little about his family.

I know nothing about his interests outside of church. But perhaps over time I'll get to know him better. And our fellowship will deepen.

And perhaps over time it'll become something very precious and something very real. Same would be true of my fellowship with any one of you.

I've not known any of you more than two years. Plenty of time for us to get to know each other better. For that relationship to deepen. that relationship to grow.

[55 : 13] Or again think about your very closest relationships. Jane has known me now for almost 40 years.

But she and I are still finding out new things about each other. I can't remember what it was now but a few days ago I commented that certain kind of food I rather liked and she looked at me astonished.

I never knew that. You see even when a relationship is deep already it can still get deeper.

Much more so with our relationship with God. We start from point zero don't we? By nature we are separated from God.

we are alienated by sin. Being saved is the start of a whole new relationship. We are entering into a whole new world. He knows of course everything about us but we still have everything to learn about him.

[56 : 22] And even when we have been Christians for 40, 50, 60 years or more we will still have so much more to learn. that relationship with God will still need so much more deepening.

The great apostle Paul could write in his letter to the Philippians that his longing was that I might know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.

You might say well Paul don't you know him yet? You've been a Christian all these years. You've been preaching the gospel. Surely you know God. well yes he did but he wanted to know him more that I may know him more deeply.

That was his longing. I'm sure John would have said the same and I hope we would too. Well hopefully as we study this letter over coming months it will help us to deepen our relationship with God.

may the Lord grant us ever deeper fellowship with him and with one another. Amen. Let's close our service now by singing by well no we can't sing can we by hearing another psalm it's the psalm 84 and we're going to hear verses 1 to 7 in the sing psalms version psalm 84 verses 1 to 7 begins how delightful are your dwellings oh almighty lord to me for your courts my soul is yearning in your house I long to be heart and flesh cry out aloud for the true and living God how delightful are your dwellings oh almighty lord to me for your courts my soul is yearning in your house

[58 : 49] I long to be heart and flesh cry out aloud for the true and living God even even sparrows find their dwelling and the swallow builds and rest here you're all earth lord almighty where the all strength may may rest bless who is you love all we are ever praising God rest are those whose strength is in you those who have a pilgrim's mind whose from autumn praise refresh and swings in make-outs they'll they find strength in peace inside a worthy offering to

God now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore Amen prophesy knowing Him it never He will through your life Him He jud He knows Dios He can hear Eve Him by Father Lord Bo Him will continue to, to Him