

tearfund

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[0 : 0 0] little bit risky to applaud before you hear what i have to say and you might not be so minded after you've heard this week but let me move this down a little bit shall i well it's a pleasure to be with you uh this morning and to share a little bit from uh from god's word and also um a bit about the the work of uh of tear fund i've kind of been a tear fund rep in these parts for since 2018 so a little a little while now and um i should i should tell you how we get into this so a friend of mine who's who was my opposite number at international christian college in glasgow before before bible college in glasgow many of you know it either as a as glasgow bible college or bti bible training institute as it was of old uh graham went on to work with um with with tear fund and uh you know he he knew that i'd been a supporter of the work and all that is but he said he came and spoke to me and he said look we're we're looking for we're looking for new tear fund speakers in the north of scotland and i said he said and in particular we're looking for a younger generation of uh of tear fund speakers and i thought well flattery won't get you everywhere so um and so that was kind of how i i got involved i've been a supporter since i was in my 20s really um and uh they they just asked if i would represent them through some of the churches here in the north and uh i'm more than uh more than glad to do that okay sam 82 let's just have a few minutes on the on sam 82 before we think about the uh the the the work of tear fund okay be honest who thinks this is a bit of a weird text i i certainly think it's a bit of a weird text it's a strange it's a strange passage what's going on here this this this idea of god appearing in the assembly of the gods that you're all you know all all good christian folks uh brought up in the evangelical tradition i'm sure probably some of you are catechized in your youth that you go through that that any of you learned the westminster shorter confession in your youth and you'll you'll you'll know that there is only one one true god and yet we've got this this strange passage here in sam 82 about god appearing in the assembly of the gods um and uh and just you know what what's going on here if uh if there is only one true god what's what's actually happening in this sam and what's the sam is saying to us in uh in this song in this poem uh this is what we call a type scene uh effectively that we get in sam 82 there's a few of these in the scriptures but this is perhaps the the clearest one it's called a type scene effectively what's happening is the sam is the saying imagine the scenario just imagine what it would be like if such a a series of events were to happen so all of the nations around about israel they all believed in a in a pantheon of gods they all believed that there was a kind of government of gods and each of these gods small g had a different function and there would be one high god who ruled over this this government of gods and that was kind of very common way of seeing spiritual reality in the ancient world so all of israel's neighboring neighboring nations they would all have a variety a variation of that theme they would all believe in this idea of a pantheon of gods now we're probably most familiar with this from greek mythology aren't we if you did classics and in school those kinds of things where um where zeus was the high god and and all of the other gods had there had various functions to

um to fulfill the sign for example the god of the sea and so on and that's the kind of that's the that's the mental backdrop that we have in this psalm so the psalmist is not saying that that's real he's not saying that that's really real but what he's saying is just imagine if the one true god the creator of everything that we see were to truck up amidst the pantheon of gods what would that that look like and he takes us through um precisely what that might look like in in this sense so uh there's a there's a lovely kind of player words which is sort of hidden uh a little bit in our english but but it's clearer than the hebrew of uh of verse one uh so god presides in the great assembly he renders judgment among the gods the the the hebrew verb and the first line is it's to do with standing and if you uh you know what we can see from the um that these uh these ancient background stories if there was a government then then they would stand to government so if anyone have you seen i claudius or or any of these uh these older books about you know all of the the chicanery and in the ancient roman governments and or greek governments so an ancient roman parliament or greek parliament they would actually stand to debate so they would all stand and they would uh they would debate their the various points that were under discussion here so in the first line of verse verse one it looks like god has turned up to take part in the parliament but the second line of uh of verse one tells us he renders judgment among among the gods so he's not come along just as one of the participants to debate his point of view but he comes because he's king he comes because he rules uh absolutely he comes as it says here to render judgment uh among the gods now what's the basis you know of that judgment for what is it that the the gods are being judged and we see that in verses two to four here they're being judged because of their lack of care for the poor their lack of care for the marginalized the lack of care uh for for the oppressed how long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked defend the weak and the fatherless uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed rescue the weak and the needy deliver them from the hand of the wicked now the other interesting thing about these about the ancient world was that um that the the gods would have human representatives on earth and vice versa and the human representatives would be seen as the voice pieces of these gods within the pantheon so so uh so in in um in one sense the psalmist is is telling us to to imagine this kind of spiritual reality that doesn't exist but on the other sense that the psalmist is saying to us this should characterize our leaders this is what should characterize our human leaders as representatives of the gods on earth and so he's telling us how we should um how we should prioritize leadership within our social structures he's telling us effectively what should be the um the the the the the markers of good leadership uh within uh our society and these uh markers of good leadership revolve around uh and not showing partiality to the wicked defending the weak and the fatherless upholding the cause of the the poor the oppressed uh the weak and the needy and so on and then if i can skip to the end here we

we come back so we start with this image of of a god who reigns and a god who reigns uh absolutely and we end with the same image uh in verses six and six and six and eight and you are gods um you're i said you are gods you are all sons of the most high but you will die like mere mortals you will fall fall like every other ruler and rise up will god judge the earth for all the nations of your inheritance so the reality is and that god is creator and maker of all things the god who has sent his son to redeem humanity and to restore at the created order the gods who will uh he will invite us into a new earth which will look very much like the edenic reality only uh only bigger and better um in that sense that god is in control he is in control of all things and that's the the you know the the nations are his inheritance and he will judge the earth all of these images here in the in the old testament poetic literature they point to god's control they all point to to god's control over all things so he is in control and he is uh he's judging our governments he will judge our governments when it comes to voting we should be voting for for those politicians if we can find them we should be voting for those politicians who side with the the the poor and the needy who will challenge and the wicked and so on i appreciate that becomes a an ever more difficult task in an increasingly secular world but these should certainly uh these should certainly shape our understanding of the political realm uh as we participate as uh as voters and so on and just to close a short short reflection on uh on sam 82 verse 5 there's a there's a new testament scholar called uh john dominic crossman and he has uh he has written that sam 82 in verse 5 is the most important verse in scripture now if i were to ask you to to tell me what you think the most important verse of scripture is i i would i would hazard a guess that it probably wouldn't be sam 82 in verse 5 would it john 3 16 uh you know that was probably a a prominent one and i'm sure you all have your uh your own favorite verses but he says um this is um this is the most important verse in scripture uh verse 5 the gods know nothing they understand nothing they walk about in darkness all of the foundations of the earth are shaking and and the point that that that the crossing is making here of course is that something that we fail to realize uh you know god as creator has instilled his ways within the earth he's instilled his ways within the created universe it's like he said uh he's engraved his wisdom he's engraved his priorities within um within the created order of which we are a part and god's ways and god's wisdom revolve around care for the marginalized revolve around uh care for the poor challenging uh the wicked the the god's ways revolve around just society and a just world these are things that are important to god and when they do not take place when that's not our reality it's as if the foundations of the earth are shaking the foundations of the world in which we live are shaken by that rejection of god's standards that are rejection uh of god's ways we sometimes get kind of blasey about the injustice in the world don't we

it's just that kind of thing we're surrounded by 24-hour news aren't we and uh and each new new cycle seems to bring bad news with it and we can just kind of get into that habit of well that's just the way things are and that's just the world in which we live we live in um but uh but what the sound is the same to us here is no we should be shocked we should be appalled and the the whole point is that um uh surely if these things are important to god then uh they should be um they should be important to us and it's texts like this that that motivate the work of tear fund mike if you can get the slides back up thank you sir it's texts like uh like this text in sam 82 that really motivate uh the work of tear fund it's just this idea of this is if this is what our god is like if these are the things that are important to our god then surely these are things that should be important to us as his people and i just want to to to tell you a little bit about the work of tear fund uh it won't take too long but uh and i thought what i'd do is that i'll tell you about a trip that a number of us from scotland took to rwanda back in 2018 if you want to click through a bit like just keep going to the end of the slide perfect thank you sir keep going keep going yeah uh they they took us there because and they particularly for new tear fund speakers they like to uh they they like to just show us the work in reality so that we can uh we're better prepared to answer people's questions and that kind of thing so the a group of tear fund scotland has links with tear fund uh rwanda so there was a group of about eight of us went out to rwanda in 2018 uh rwanda i'm sure as you're all aware and one of the one of africa's smallest uh countries but a third of the land mass of scotland but uh but more than double the population of scotland 11 million uh 11 million people living in a very small space and of course their their neighboring countries are quite unsettled so so that that that number can vary by around a million people at any given time given moment in time due to unrest in places like burundi and the democratic republican congo so can you imagine uh trying to fit an extra million people into scotland the the challenges that that would bring to schooling and health care and all of our infrastructure and yet that is the frequent reality um in rwanda as i'm sure you you will remember um the country marked by the genocide in 1994 hard to believe that that was 30 30 years ago this year but in many ways that was their grounds you know i think the the people realized that they um they had to change uh they had to change the society otherwise this was going to be a a never repeating cycle and just getting worse and worse we heard some amazing stories of reconciliation absolutely incredible stories of reconciliation and of course god's church was was very involved in that work of reconciliation as was tearful as uh as an organization very uh involved in that work of reconciliation things have changed in rwanda it's a very positive very forward-looking um society uh the the um it's moved in those 30 years from being a francophone country a french-speaking country to being largely an english-speaking country as a second language and also the evangelical church that has grown hugely it was it was it was predominantly a catholic country prior to um the genocide of 1994 and now

the the largest church is the is the anglican church protestant uh angry community uh evangelical church in rwanda if we go so we went out to um thank you mike and we went out to visit the the work there uh and and i'm not going to dwell on this slide that if you're interested i'll point you to the the websites that are there the tear for the website itself and the other website there transforming business.net which is run by uh by uh a friend of mine and so tear fund does do uh disaster relief emergency relief but that's not the main work of tear fund so tear fund is a member of deck the the the disasters emergency committee the big organization that draws together uh 12 of the largest charities in the uk oxfam christian aid um and tear fund and save the children and others and so it does work with with with deck when there is a you know a catastrophe so um the earthquake in syria um last year for example those kinds of things flooding uh conflict famine um but that's that's not their daily work now uh tear fund's actually quite a valued member of the disasters emergency committee because their work is so local they're actually on the ground with uh with working in local communities often in the poorest areas of the poorest countries of the world and because of that they have access which other um which other organizations sometimes don't have and but the the basic work the normal work and that that that tear fund does go back for just a moment uh and thanks mike the basic work is development work rather than uh rather than the aid so they're trying to encourage development in these small communities effectively this revolves around creating small scale micro businesses that's uh that's uh that's what uh what they do and they do that thanks mike they do that through this process of um um um localized investment and and training and so basically what happens if you give money to tear fund scotland they will uh they very it's a very lean organization if you're you're always asked charities how much goes in overhead nine percent of what you give is taken to run the the the tear fund office um in scotland so anything less than 10 percent is kind of the gold standard in terms of operating costs for charity so um so the the vast majority of any money that you use individuals or or or as a church gift goes directly to the work amongst the poorest um people in the world tier fund scotland will give to tier fund for example in rwanda now we visited the the tier fund rwanda office and there are five people and five people to cover the whole country and in fact one of them also covers um parts of the democratic republic of congo and parts of burundi as well so it's a very lean uh operation but then they work with organizations who are on the ground and they're they're actually based living working in the the poorest parts of the world so we visited uh and tier fund work a tier fund sponsored work that was run by the the diocese of kigali the angica diocese of kigali by africa enterprise and and other missions agencies who are who are based on the ground um in um in these really really uh poor large largely rural although some of them are uh some of them are urban as well and the work is really focused on creating micro businesses and these micro businesses help to transform um the communities of which they uh they are a part so

[20 : 26] if we can go on mike and so if you if we leave the photos just one at a time well if you go back back perfect good man uh mike is my clicker today thank you mike uh so when when we visited the work in in rwanda we saw how these uh micro businesses work they they largely revolve around three areas agronomy livestock and um entrepreneurship and all of this is through shgs and cct sorry for the the abbreviation so it's just because i couldn't fit them on the slide shgs are self-help groups and cct is the church and community transformation program so this is a training program that tier fund has developed to to help transform and to alleviate poverty and and food poverty in particular in some of the poorest areas uh of the world and effectively what they do is they come alongside um they come alongside people in poor communities and they set up these small self-help groups of 10 to a dozen people and what they do is they uh they each invest absolutely tiny amounts of money into a shared pool and then one of the the the people within that self-help group will start a business um whether that's um um agronomy based or or livestock based or whatever it is now they they borrow money borrow money from that pool and they they they do have to pay it back and they pay it back even with them with a small amount of interest uh on that uh on that on that loan but of course as soon as one person borrows money from that that that that that pool from that trust and you've got 10 people or 12 people who are invested in the success of that business who are invested in the the the success of that activity and then they pay back into the pool and others borrow from that pool and so businesses are created and communities are genuinely transformed by that so one of the things that tear from does is they um they have they developed together with the um agricultural university in rwanda a new strain of banana and because the banana is a staple product obviously like potatoes in that part of the world and but the the traditional strain of banana has a very poor yield and it also depletes the soil uh rwanda has two rainy seasons and that depletion of the soil frequently leads to landslides and and that kind of thing so this new strain of banana developed by the national university in rwanda takes fewer nutrients from the soil so the soil is more robust and the the yield is much bigger so i mean i'm from Glasgow and i know absolutely nothing about agriculture whatsoever but i have eyes and we were taking to these various farms and and strip farming side by side and you would see the traditional strain of banana and this this new newer strain of banana and the difference in yield was just unbelievable uh just uh just just remarkable uh and so tear front has been training people in the the the propagation of this uh this form of banana and um and other things uh like that so and these various businesses and the that that that's that tear front helps people to form and to establish they have a huge impact uh on the cultures not just in the individuals and not just in their families although it does have a huge impact on the individual and the family but a huge impact on the community um absolutely

transformative and it was incredible to see that when we were right there so so so this chapter is called juvenile and i mean you can't really see it but he's got a cushion in the back of his bike uh here and and the the self-help group um enabled him to buy his bike with the cushion on it and that's a taxi you know so he would ferry people around on the on the back of his bike and and you know had done so very successfully so he was saving up for a motorbike to do the same thing uh that he could uh uh he could drive people around you got the next one uh interestingly sorry during that that guy he got involved because his mom and became a member of a self-help group uh in in her area and he saw the transformation he saw the the impact that was having and so he wanted to uh to get involved this is the ofista the self-proclaimed queen of the the sewing machine um and she again one of her friends started a tailing outfit in her community the ofista had nothing she was quite open about the fact that that that she and her family had absolutely nothing uh until her friend set up this um this uh tailoring self-help group and and that that's just it's been absolutely transformative um for her and her family and they you know they make hats they make backpacks and things like that and then they sell them at local markets and in fact that's been so successful successful we've started a second one uh in uh another part of the area where they live next next slide so that's claire she's the one that set up um the tailoring collective uh there and very much you know christian lady she she just felt that she was called by god to have an impact in in her community and and this was a way uh for her to do that uh next one uh this is van a song vincent um and we're in an onion field uh here van so addictions background he'd been an alcoholic for years again his his wife had joined the self-help group and suddenly there was money coming into the family uh and uh he he became interested what there's going on so he he went to the the church that tear fund was working with basically to see what's you know what's going on here uh he ended up being converted himself and drawn out his addictions background and he was really taken with the new strain of banana that was telling you about and he planted it in his own strip of land saw the differences it made started to train other locals in in in propagating this new strain eventually the local government employed him uh to train others and by the time we met him he'd actually then been employed by the national government to train people in this these new forms of agriculture and husbandry all of the all of this training he's received through through the work of tear fund and that's that that's an onion field because uh um apparently the bananas and onions take the nutrients from the soil so if you you know rather than leaving it absolutely fallow they would plant onions in uh in the other year the second year the second year and one more thank you and this was another telling collective we were at early on in our time there uh and of course this lady was supposed to tell us about the work that they were doing and how that had transformed the um the the community of which uh which she was a part um but of course she stood up and she started to tell us about what they've been studying in one corinthians that uh that uh um that that that semester or that that block of time over the recent ones and everywhere we went um people were as likely to tell us about the work that god was doing the spiritual work that god was doing

uh as they were um to tell us about the the kind of the transformative work that was going on and we are we spoke to one of the church leaders and and actually the bishop of kegali and and he said that the reason why we like to work with tear fund is because they've never moved from their evangelical roots and it's still that motivation that's drawn from scripture and it's drawn from who god is uh that motivates to do the work that they do and then just one last slide um so this this right at the end if you take the photos in uh mike thank you another yep perfect uh most of the groups that we visited were early on in the church and community transformation project so it's a five-year project that tear fund runs and most of them were early on in that period because obviously the tear fund staff they wanted to visit these new works and see how they were going but the last day we were there we went to visit uh um a work just that sort of a a more urban based uh work um just outside of kegali um and they were coming to the end of the five-year cycle and we had the conversation with them uh how how do you feel now that the the the the tear fund people are moving on to a new community to work with them and one of the guys said oh it's okay because there's there's no famine uh in our district anymore and they've gone from a a a situation of of severe food insecurity to you know the the to this scenario where where he could say there is no famine um in our area in our district anymore so it was just it was a great testimony um to the the the effectiveness of the work of the tear fund and really i i mean i always feel like i'm preaching to the choir when i come and talk to about tear fund i'm sure many of you already are supporters i'm sure the uh the church probably regularly gives uh to tear fund and uh and all of these things um so if you are thank you for that uh your your um your giving it is having a hugely positive effect uh throughout the world because the main work is development rather than rather than aid by all means if there's a disaster do give and to the disasters emergency committee via tear fund you can be sure that your money will be put to to good use but because development's their main work and regular giving is is really really important so i've got a few of these uh sign up sheets if uh if anyone wants to to sign up to give regularly and it can be any amount of money no matter how small so don't feel don't feel obliged to to to give more than you're able and but just whatever you can and that will be well received and and it will be well used shall i just pray uh as we close holy god thank you that you are god and king thank you that you are the one who rules and reigns and and we thank you that it's clear from your scriptures that you have a heart for the marginalized uh you have a heart for the poor you have a heart for the needy and we see that so clearly through the uh the the incarnate work of your son jesus while he was on earth and he ministered so profoundly amongst the marginalized and uh holy father if these things are in your heart we pray that you would place them on our hearts in every increasing level and we do thank you for the work of tear fund and for the work of other organizations like tear from lord and pray that you would bless those who are trying to take your blessing to the poorest in this

world so lord god we give ourselves and we give this work into your hands in jesus name amen