

# Devoted to Prayer

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[ 0 : 00 ]     God, this evening all our worship is from the Psalter. It's all from the Psalter, so the second half, the back half of the Psalm book. First of all then, Psalm 138, Scottish Psalter, Psalm 138.

We can sing verses 1 down to verse 4 of the Psalm. Psalm 138, verses 1 down to verse 4. For thee will I praise with all my heart. I will sing praise to thee before the gods and worship will toward thy sanctuary.

I'll praise thy name even for thy truth and kindness of thy love. For thou thy word has magnified all thy great name above. Psalm 138, verses 1 to 4. To God's praise.

Psalm 139, verses 1 down to verse 4 of the Psalm.

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[ 1 : 46 ]     Psalm 139, verses 1 down to verse 5 of the Psalm.

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Let's pray.

Your name glorified in prayer and sung worship to hear a word read, to hear a word that in part explained. Lord, we thank you for that. Lord, we thank you for that. Help us never to grow tired of the great privilege we have of worshipping you like this.

[ 4 : 01 ]     Understand that there are many in this world, many of your people, who greatly desire to worship in a building like this. Who would love the opportunity to worship so openly and prayer and prayer and pray for the Lord, who would love the opportunity to worship so openly and so freely as we do.

Just now, brothers and sisters who are worshipping you. And at least being careful of our movements. Lord, Lord, we thank you for that.

Lord, we thank you for that. Help us then, Lord, to have the wisdom to make the full use of the freedom you've given us whilst we still have it. Help us then to be salt and light.

To be openly and publicly and consistently declaring the glory of the risen Saviour. That he is the one way to you.

That he is the one hope. That he is the one king. There is no other king apart from him. That he alone has full reign and full control. He alone deserves our undivided obedience and allegiance.

[ 5 : 28 ]     Help us, Lord, then to live lives that glorify him. Pray this new week for gospel sharing opportunities. In our own homes. In our private lives.

As we work and as we live in the village. As we go to work. As we perhaps study. Lord, give us, we ask, the chance to share the good news. To be engaged with the gospel work.

To be mindful that every person we talk with. Every individual that you put in our path. As a chance to model in action and in word. The truth and the beauty.

The love and the care of a Saviour. We ask, Lord, once more. We plead once more. For every single home in North Tulsa. Every home from the Glen to Gary.

Every single individual and family. Every home represented. Many we know. Some as of yet we do not. But you know every single person.

[ 6 : 28 ] Both those who attend here regularly. And those who have never attended. Those who have a gospel interest. And those who have zero gospel interest. But all these people alike are known to you.

We ask then you would make full use of us as your people. And our interactions week by week. Help us to be salt and light to everyone in this area.

To faithfully and carefully. With love and with joy. Be witnesses of our risen Saviour. As we engage the next few weeks and months.

Looking at the account of the early church. As we follow the journey of your people. As they begin serving you. In a world that hated them. Help us to be encouraged.

As we see just a handful of believers. Become many hundreds. Become many thousands. And a small area of gospel knowledge. Then spreads across that whole area.

[ 7 : 27 ] Up and east and west. Into Europe. Into Africa. And slowly but surely. Making its way to North Tulsa.

Help us Lord then. To have that global view. That we are just a small part. Of your wider church family. A family across the world. But also a family across the ages. That this evening as we worship you.

We join in the worship of all the many. Saints in glory. And as they worship you just now in spirit. As we worship you in our body and in our spirit. We join together. As you receive our worship.

The worship of your one church. Your one people. Lord we ask you for this short time this evening. You'd help us to focus clearly on your word.

We admit that there are many things which distract us. Both necessary and unnecessary. We ask Lord you keep us far away from the evil one. And keep him far from us. Forgive us Lord for the sin we have engaged in.

[ 8 : 28 ] Willingly and knowingly and unknowingly this week Lord. The things we have said and thought and done. Also Lord help us. As we come just now with so many distractions.

Worries and burdens. You know the full variety of them. We bring all these things to you. Life worries. Relationship worries. Money worries. Health worries. Job worries.

Lord the list we know can go on and on. We live in a world where it seems to be worry after worry at times. And distress after distress.

We bring just now before you those in our community who are going through difficult days. Remember again especially our brothers and sisters who are mourning just now.

Remember Lord the whole family that's mourning just now. The community that's mourning just now. We give you praise Lord that the word was read and went out to a large number of individuals.

[ 9 : 26 ] That you can even use the voice of death to bring the good news of Jesus. To people who are there to hear the words of comfort.

That's not how we would do it Lord but it's how you work. You're able to use every situation. Every worry. You're able to use every distress.

And you can turn these things around for good. Pray just now Lord for any here. Who are seeking. Who are asking as aware of the big questions of life. Who are wondering is there more to life than this.

Who are wondering are you there. Who are wondering is Jesus real. Is all what we think about him and hear about him is all true. Who are wondering what it is to become a Christian.

Perhaps haven't shared these big questions with anyone yet Lord. We ask that even through your word this evening. You would work and you would answer the questions they may be dealing with just now. We ask that you would place in our hearts the reality that those who knock you will open the door.

[ 10 : 31 ] And those who seek after you they will find you. As we come to the end of this holiday Lord we thank you just now again for times of rest. We pray just now for those who were and those who are still on holiday from our number.

We ask you to help them to come back home safely. What's the man for just now of our Sunday school. We thank you for it. We thank you as always for the leaders. Not just the leaders now but the leaders over many years.

Those in this congregation who led years ago. Who did many years of hard work. And who sought week by week to bring the gospel to the boys and the girls.

We know that your word wherever it goes out is never wasted. It does not return to you void. But you will use it for your purposes. Just pray Lord for the current Sunday school. We thank you for it. As we see so many more faces over the last year.

Lord you receive all the praise and all the glory for it. Pray just now for any families in the village who are thinking about sending their children out. And who are worried or who just aren't sure whether they should or whether they can.

[ 11 : 36 ] Lord you would direct them. Direct them to see that they are welcome. That every young people are welcome. To come and enjoy a short time in a safe and welcoming place.

We will hear about Jesus. Lord we ask that first and foremost that would be our desire. That our young folks even in their young days would come to know and love Jesus. We understand and we give you praise.

But age is no barrier for the gospel work to take place. Not too young and not too old. You are able. Neither is intellect or ability.

You are able in all circumstances. Among all people. To bring them to a saving knowledge. A saving hope. And a love of Jesus as their saviour. Thank you Lord for Sunday school teachers.

I ask you to give them strength. As they carry on. Start this new session. We thank them. For their service Lord before you. And we ask that.

[ 12 : 33 ] You bless them as they seek to serve you. We ask the same for every individual who works in this congregation. Who works to serve you here. In various ways. Those who often go without thanks.

Those involved in the catering. For every single event in the hall. Every fellowship. And every gathering. Those involved in cleaning the church. Those involved in every single small detail.

Which keeps this place as aware open and running. We give you praise for these people. Who are willing to do what needs to be done. For your name's sake and for your cause. Help us this evening. To be enthused once more as we come.

To read your word. With hearts and minds full of understanding. And full of joy. It's called these things. Clinging on to our saviour. At times. It feels just barely clinging on.

But he holds. With his eternal love. As we heard this morning. He holds eternally on to us. Bless us Lord. And keep us. It's called these things.

[ 13 : 32 ] In and through and for. Jesus name's sake. Amen. Just unrelated. As a prayer point. I forgot to say this morning. I just saw last night. That Glenelg Free Church.

I've called a minister. James Blackwell. So please remember. Be in prayer for him also. He wasn't for William. As an assistant of sorts. But he's now been called Glenelg Free Church.

I just heard that. This afternoon. So please be in prayer for him. James Blackwell. And his family. Let's turn now to read in God's word.

We're carrying on our series. Our brand new series in the book of Acts. If you remember. We read parts of Acts last week. We can read just now. The whole of chapter 1. Acts chapter 1.

The Acts of the Apostle. Of the Apostles. Chapter 1. It's on page 855. Page 855.

[ 14 : 33 ] In the Church Bibles. Acts chapter 1. Let's hear together again God's word. In the first book of Theophilus.

I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach. Until the day when he was taken up. After he had given commands through the Holy Spirit. To the apostles whom he had chosen.

He presented himself alive to them. After his suffering by many proofs. Appearing to them during 40 days. And speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them.

He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem. But to wait the promise of the Father. Which he said. You heard from me. For John baptized with water. But you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Not many days from now. So when they had come together. They asked him. Lord will you at this time. Restore the kingdom to Israel. He said to them. It is not for you to know times.

[ 15 : 31 ] Or seasons. That the Father has fixed. By his own authority. But you will receive power. When the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will be my witnesses.

In Jerusalem. And in all Judea. And Samaria. And to the ends of the earth. And when he had said these things. As they were looking on. He was lifted up. And a cloud took him out of their sight.

And while they were gazing into heaven. As he went. Behold. Two men stood by them. In white robes. And said. Men of Galilee. Why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus.

Who was taken up from you into heaven. Will come in the same way. As you saw him go into heaven. And then they returned to Jerusalem. From a mount called Olivet. Which is near Jerusalem.

A Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered. They went to the upper room. Where they were staying. Peter and John. And James and Andrew. Philip and Thomas.

[ 16 : 28 ] Bartholomew. And Matthew. James the son of Alphaeus. And Simon the zealot. And Judas the son of James. All these with one accord. Were devoting themselves to prayer.

Together with the woman. And Mary the mother of Jesus. And his brothers. In those days. Peter stood up among the brothers. The company of persons. Was in all about 120.

And said. Brothers. The scripture had to be fulfilled. Which the Holy Spirit. Spoke beforehand. By the mouth of David. Concerning Judas. Who became a guide.

To those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us. And was allotted his share in the ministry. Now this man acquired a field. With reward of his wickedness.

And falling headlong. He brushed open in the middle. And all his bowels gushed out. And it became known. To all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. So that the field was called. In their own tongue.

[ 17 : 24 ] A kardama. That is the field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms. May his camp become desolate. Let there be no one to dwell in it. And. Let another.

Take his office. So one of the men. Who have accompanied us. During all the time. The Lord Jesus went in. And out among us. Beginning from the baptism of John.

Until the day when he was taken up from us. One of these men. Must become with us. A witness to his resurrection. And they put forward. Two. Joseph called Barsabas.

Who was also called Justice. And Matthias. And they prayed and said. You Lord. Who know the heart of all. Show which one of these two.

You have chosen. To take place in this ministry. An apostleship. From which Judas turned aside. To go to his own place. And they cast lots for them. And the lot fell on Matthias.

[ 18 : 20 ] And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. And make a praise to God. For his holy. And his perfect word. We again sing the psalm we had. Psalm 138.

Psalm 138. This time verse 5. To the end. It's called a psalter. Psalm 138. Verse 5. Yea in the righteous ways of God.

With gladness they shall sing. For great's the glory of the Lord. Who doth forever reign. Though God be high. Yet he respects. All those that lowly be.

Whereas the proud and lofty ones. Far off knoweth he. Psalm 138. Verses 5. To the end. To God's praise. In the righteous ways of God.

With gladness they shall sing. For great's the glory of the Lord.

[ 19 : 29 ] Who doth forever reign. Though God be high. Yet he respects.

For those that lowly be. Where else the proud and lofty ones.

The heart of glory and thee. Do odds ■ shield and thee.

The sword of glory and thee. Oh Let's turn back then for a wee while to the chapter we had, Acts chapter 1.

Remember when we started of course last week, we got down as far as verse 5, down then to verse 11. We're carrying on then, just from verse 12.

[ 21 : 12 ] I'm looking from verse 12 down to the end of the chapter. Remember last week we saw just a very brief summary as to why Luke wrote this book.

Remember we said that we had to think of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles as two volumes, or two volumes I guess, of one larger set.

So imagine a two set book on yourself. Luke writes one to show all that Jesus did, all that Jesus was, to make, as he says, an orderly account of all that Jesus did.

And now this is the second book, this is the sequel. He writes to this man, Theophilus, who we said could well be a high up Roman official. We weren't too sure and we're not too sure.

This is the second book, where he gives the full detail up to his own time, up to the day he wrote it, of what the church had done, of what God had done through his people, of how the Gospel of Jesus has spread through fishermen and crofters basically, and the strangest bunch of people the Lord has used to share his word.

[ 22 : 33 ] And we'll see that more in the next few weeks. Just how odd, just how varied, just how strange and unique and quirky the people are that God uses. I hope that rings a bell for us this evening.

Brothers and sisters, I hate to tell us all, but we are not particularly that normal at times. Every one of us are unique. Every one of us are quirky. We all have our quirks.

We all have the ways we act that are different to one another. And in God's glory, he uses that for his glory, for his purposes. One thing in the back of our minds as we go through Acts is to see that God uses all types of people for all types of Gospel purposes.

There is not one single, as it were, cut-out Christian who looks a certain way, acts a certain way. Within the limits of liberty we're talking here, of course, there's ways we shouldn't act and things we shouldn't be and do, but I'm talking within the limits of liberty we see in Acts, God uses a wide variety of personalities, which would encourage us as we go through this book.

So a short time this evening looking then at what happened next. Our Lord has ascended, and that's how we left him last week, with the angels saying to the men of Galilee, Why do you stand staring?

[ 23 : 56 ] Why do you stand looking into heaven? And that verse always, it's just an incredibly evocative verse. In Greek, it's almost, Why are you standing staring?

Why are you staring into heaven? You can imagine the poor disciples. They've just seen all they've seen. Their Saviour has now gone before them, and all the glory of the ascension.

You can imagine them all, they're all standing there looking up, just gawping, just confused and glorifying God. But now reality begins for them.

See, they've had the heartbreak of their Saviour being brutally killed and nailed on a cross, watching him from a distance, choked to death in his own internal fluids. They then had the joy, the unbelievable joy of seeing their Saviour resurrected, talking with him, walking with him, eating with him.

We've now seen the joy of his ascension. But now, now it's just them. And now we see really the reality of the church, of ministry, begin to exist.

[ 25 : 07 ] Verse 12, Then they return to Jerusalem, from a mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem. They've ascended away down, literally and metaphorically, from this mountaintop experience, are now descending back down into the real world, into the jam-packed city of Jerusalem, back into the normality of life.

And the rest of the book of Acts now follows their journey, as they now serve their ascended Lord. Now, next time we gather together, after our holidays and after the Communion, then, how fast this year is going in.

And we'll see then, that the Holy Spirit, the Lord sends, he sends his spirit down, as the spirit comes, and makes his home in the disciples, and in the Lord's people. But this evening, we can see what else takes place.

Yes, we all need the Holy Spirit. We can be a Christian without the Holy Spirit, living and moving in us. That is true. But before the Holy Spirit descends upon them, we see that they aren't doing nothing.

In fact, they're very active in our verses this evening. If there's a title for this week, and the next time we gather together, we would call it Foundations for Mission.

[ 26 : 25 ] Foundations for Mission. This is Foundations for Mission, Part 1. The Holy Spirit, we know we need him. That's next time. But tonight, ourselves.

What do we need for mission? Foundations for Mission, then Part 1. Well, there's three elements we see in these verses. Three elements we need for mission.

Three elements we need ourselves to learn from the disciples, these early Christians, of how they sought to serve the Lord. And three ways we can do the exact same thing.

Not in Jerusalem, or Judea, or Samaria. but in North Tolstead. Three simple elements, then. Prayer, Scripture, and Personnel.

Prayer, Scripture, and Personnel. I couldn't think of a P for Scripture. I'm no more to Campbell for that. But prayer, Scripture, and Personnel.

[ 27 : 25 ] First of all, then, prayer. Verse 12. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day journey away.

And when they entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, and Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon, the zealot, and Judas, the son of James.

All these, with one accord, were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the woman, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. Prayer.

As commanded by Jesus, we see in verse 12, they return from this place of ascension, and they go back, this place of wonder, this place of holiness, and they go back down to reality.

Back now to the upper room, where they spent these past good few hours with their Savior. As he broke bread with them, and shared the wine with them, as he spoke with them, and prepared them, for what was to come.

[ 28 : 33 ] We're now here, and he is gone. Imagine the upper room, once it was filled with the presence, of their Savior, and now, it's just them.

There's plenty of them, but it's just them. The last time, they were in the upper room together, it was glorious, and terrifying, and horrifying, and comforting.

Now, in this upper room, they are together again, but their Savior is not with them. In many ways, it was easy for them, to as it were, stay on the mountain of ascension, where they saw their Savior go.

It's quite easy for them, to stay there longer, and if they had their way, they would have stayed there longer, but we see the angels are there, these two men, clothed in white robes, who remind them of their duty, who say to them, why are you standing here, staring?

In other words, have you not got work to do? Jesus tells them, once he ascends, to go back down, to the city, and to wait, for what he will do next with them.

[ 29 : 46 ] Brothers and sisters, it's very easy for us, metaphorically, very easy for us, to, as it were, stay in the place of ease, to stay in the place of comfort, to stay, as it were, on that mountaintop.

Perhaps for us, that's thinking back, to days, where this church was jam-packed. Perhaps for us, it's thinking back, to times, in our own lives, when we were so much, closer to the Lord, when we were so much, on fire, for the service, when we didn't, feel embarrassed, or awkward, sharing the good news, to our friends, and family, and neighbours.

We look back, to times, of gospel blessing, when you could count, on one hand, the homes, in the village, who didn't go to church. When this village, you could think, of every single Christian, almost in every home, you could walk through, in your mind, and think of all the blessing, and all the homes here, throughout this place.

Days of gospel blessing, mountaintop days. The reality is, like the disciples found here, there comes a time for us, and we have to descend.

We have to, as it were, get on with, where we are, and do the work, we've been given. We're not in these days, we're not in these times, we're not perhaps, the same people, we were then.

[ 31 : 11 ] We are, where we are, and we are, who we are, and the disciples, are about to find that out, for themselves. We return, to, the upper, room.

Here we see, this gathering, we can say, it's the early church leaders, all the names, that we've named there, in verse 13, and verse 14. But here we see them, not just the leaders on their own, they're there with, a number of women, with Jesus, mother Mary, with Jesus, brothers.

Here we see, the church. Here we see, the church gathered. Here we see people, who know the Lord, who love the Lord, and they're gathering together, seeking how best, to serve him.

Right, from the start, we see, one thing, they are together. Yes, their saviour is gone, and although, there's still a sense of joy, in the air, the excitement, of seeing the ascension, they are of course, now, no doubt, missing their friend, Mary, missing her son, the brothers, missing their brother, and all of them, now missing, the Lord, who has, in one sense, physically, left them all, alone.

The question is, then, what are they doing? As they sit, in this upper room, or exist, in the upper room, why are they there? How are they spending, their time? Are we just sitting, and thinking back, to the days, Jesus walked with them?

[ 32 : 54 ] What are they actually doing? Well, we're told what we're doing, in verse 14. Everyone in the upper room, all of us assembled, brothers and sisters together, all these, with one accord, were devoting themselves, to prayer.

They were devoting themselves, to prayer. The disciples, the number of women here, Mary, Jesus, brothers, this whole gathering, were praying.

They were engaging, in heartfelt, ongoing, prayer. We can note, then, the two things, we're told, about their prayer, in this verse.

First of all, told, they were praying, with one accord. All of these, the disciples, and the women, Mary, and Jesus, brothers, all praying, with one accord.

We were praying, with one desire. We were praying, with one heart. We were unified, in, what we were doing. It's a beautiful image, the very start, of the church, is a gathering, of normal people.

[ 34 : 07 ] Normal people. Again, think who is there. Think of the disciples. Think of Jesus, brothers. Think of the women, who are there also.

the strangest mix, of people. Some well off, many of them not. Fishermen, those who work to land, tax collectors.

In any other world, these people, would not be, in the same room together. Never mind, being in the same room, and be of one accord, together. Just take the tax collectors, alone.

They would be, allowed nowhere, near that room. They'd be, battered, and bruised, leaving that room. But here they are, together. Also note, the subtle thing, we might not notice, if we, think of it, from our point of view.

You've got men, and women here, praying together. Perhaps not strange, for us I hope. But in the mindset, of the day, men, did, not, lower themselves, to pray, beside a woman, and women, and men, did not pray, in the same space.

[ 35 : 14 ] You see that even today, at least in Orthodox Jewish groups, the men and women, are separated, either by aisles, or some synagogues, if you visit them. The women have their own, special, sealed off area, where they, pray and do their worship.

For one accord, for one people, they're together, serving, and praying. They're unified. And note, the attitude, towards prayer they have.

They are, devoting themselves, to prayer. This is, consistent prayer. This is, you could say, strategic prayer.

This is, planned prayer. This is, as it were, their, their bread and butter, morning and night, they're engaging together, spending time together, and praying together.

Brothers and sisters, we are seeing here, what we long to be like, don't we? We long to have, such a heart, that we, long to spend, time together, in prayer.

[ 36 : 25 ] Imagine, a situation, where, as it were, day after day, you come together, brothers and sisters, and you sit there, and you stand there, and you eat and drink, and you pray together.

That is, that is, the church, is starting here. Why is it important for us? Reminds us, that prayer, has to be, and is, the very basis, of all, that we have, all that we are, and all that we do.

I'm, willing to say, that there is not, one single Christian, here, this evening. Not one single Christian. And humanly speaking, humanly speaking, we're not the product, of our salvation, it's not a product, of so many people, praying for us.

Praying grannies, granddads, praying Christians, in the village, those who, perhaps, ah, there for, long after our birth, who have been praying for us, since then.

Think of my own story. I remember, not so long ago, I was, I was in Glasgow, a few years ago, in a church, and one of the old ladies, kind of making the connections, as we do, and she, she realised, I'm a grabber, and realised, that Mary Ann, was my granny.

[ 37 : 44 ] And she said, do you know what? I remember, praying for you, when you were born. Thinking, man. And this is 20 odd, 25 odd years later, you meet someone, who's been praying for you, on and off, over the years, every time she remembered, I existed, she prayed, for my salvation, and prayed for, or else I prayed for.

Every one of us, we are, the product, humanly speaking, of the Lord's people, praying for us. There is power in prayer, and I know, we're a praying congregation, and I thank the Lord, for that, we really do.

Emma and I, are often aware, of that fact, that we are, part of a praying congregation. So first of all, I encourage you, keep on praying, not just for us, but pray for the gospel cause, in North Tulsa.

J. Hudson Taylor, that famous missionary, very early missionary, to China, he's writing to a fellow missionary, wanting advice from him, to go into an area, of China, that wasn't previously, evangelized.

And Hudson Taylor, just says to this, young missionary, brother, if you would enter, that province, you must go forward, on your knees.

[ 39 : 04 ] Brother, if you would enter, that province, you must go forward, on your knees. Brothers and sisters, as the early Christians, in the upper room, here were recognizing, as they prayed, of one accord, as they devoted themselves, to prayer, as they gave themselves, over to prayer, they're recognizing, the fact, that without prayer, that nothing will take place.

As part of the holiday, I'll be spending, one or two days, just planning, you know, the rest of the, the sermon, direction, now in the end of the year, it's what, we do behind the scenes, usually we try and, I think most ministers, either plan, every quarter of a year, or every half a year, of what's going forward, of what direction, are we taking, all that planning, means nothing, if it's not saturated, in prayer.

Not just my prayer, but our prayer. Every word, that is preached, with power, and enthusiasm, and passion, and tears, it means nothing, if it's not saturated, in our prayers.

Every endeavor, we have, every hope explored meeting, every leaflet given out, every single thing, we try and do, every community gathering, every evangelism gathering, every single plan, we have done, and we plan to do, it all means nothing, if it's not saturated, in the prayers, of God's people.

The Lord, blesses, prayer. And if the Lord's people, are not engaged, in the prayer, then the thing, will not prosper.

[ 40 : 43 ] Simple as that. There's no complicated, theology behind it, it's quite simple, isn't it? The Lord blesses that, which is people, seek, to pray about.

Because by praying about it, you're saying to the Lord, and you're showing the Lord, that you care for it. Our prayer, then, must be united, I know it is, but let's carry on, uniting our prayer, then, as the early church, does here.

Let's be united in prayer, as we pray ourselves, for North Tulsa. And we think, that the numbers, are against us, perhaps. I said last week, there's a room here, of people, 120 at this point, we find out, well plus, the women, in verse 15.

120, say 150, say 200, if it had more people, and women, included. That is it. That is it. There's 200 believers, give or take, and they, are against, at this point, the whole empire, the whole world, every single, patient, pagan nation, thousands, upon thousands, upon millions of people, and these, 120, 200 odd people.

Statistically, we should not be here, in North Tulsa, this evening. Statistically, this brand new religion, should never have left, this upper room.

[ 42 : 19 ] What power, do these people have? A bunch of fishermen, and crofters, and tax collectors. There's nothing to them. The Roman Empire, crushed nations, and crushed, religions, far greater, than this small gathering.

And yet, here we are, two and a half thousand miles away, two thousand years later, worshipping this Jesus, worshipping this Lord, and Savior. Saturated the work, in prayer.

And as Hudson Taylor said, brothers and sisters, we must as it were, if we want to see, Tolstair transformed, we have to go forward, on our knees.

Going forward, just to say now, it's the best time as any, going forward, and by that I mean, perhaps into next year, but just so we have, one idea of what's going on.

To help us then, to be a people, who are saturating the work, in prayer. There's two, ideas, we hope to start. Again, this is probably, into next year really, but just so we know, the plans.

[ 43 : 28 ] Two things. One's very simple, both very simple. First of all, a monthly prayer sheet, I hope to produce. So last month, we got the, the pastor's letter. Hopefully now, going forward with that, will be a monthly prayer list, or prayer sheet, of main points to pray for, for the month.

Might be a few points, might be ten points, might be, who knows how many. But it's all local prayer points, for us, to pray over. The hope is, that as we pray over that together, we're all praying, at least, in part, for the same items, with the same mindset, the same unity of thought.

Also, informally, and this will be next year probably, informally, we hope to open up, the manse, for times of informal prayer. prayer, but prayer, that is solely based, praying for the, the, the work, and praying for the, gospel work, in North Tolstair.

Again, there will be details for that, when we have them. But just so you know, we do plan on, fully making use, of the gift of prayer, the Lord has given us. If you remember, the, famous, Peter Dynamo, little, prayer, little, power, and the opposite being through also, much prayer, much, power.

We pray together, but also see, they use scriptural will, verse 15, downwards, we see, the use of scripture. As they were in the upper room, they were praying, yes, but also they're speaking, and they're, they're preaching, and they're encouraging one another, from scripture.

[ 45 : 17 ] In those days, Peter stood up among the brothers, and said, brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand, by the mouth of David, concerning Judas, and so on.

One of the very first matters, this brand new church, has to deal with, it is a matter, of complete sadness, and sin, and betrayal, and agony.

One of the first things, they have to deal with, is to replace Judas, in their number. They have to replace Judas. We, know the story, of the account, but we often lose sight, as to the human impact, on these men.

He was their friend, he was with them, for these years. He served, alongside them, outwardly in a way. He walked with them, he ate with them, he slept beside them.

They saw, the great miracles, of our saviour, and heard the incredible, teachings of our saviour, all together. And then behind the scenes, he betrays, he lies.

[ 46 : 31 ] And of course, we know the impact, that has on our saviour, but think for a second, the impact it also has, on these men. Normal men, like you or me. Normal people. And one who, we can assume, they were close to, has now, betrayed them, stabbed them in the back.

His whole life, was proved to be a lie. And then he killed himself, in a horrific way. The trauma of that, the pain of that, the sadness of that.

And they deal with it, as dealt with, by applying scripture, to the situation. In times of sadness, in times of struggle, our aim, our hope, is to copy the way, the apostles, deal with their sadness, their struggle.

They take it to scripture. The truth, and the power, of God's word. As verse 16, as you read, as Peter, quotes from scripture, he applies, we see in verse 20, some segments, from the Psalms, to the situation.

Now we're not saying, and I don't believe, Peter was saying, that these verses, were completely, about Judas. But he applies, what was said, in these verses, to Judas, as we do, when we preach.

[ 48 : 00 ] I mean, this is about, what the apostles did, and the early church did. It's not about, North Tulsa. But we apply it, to ourselves. And right from the start, we see the church, doing the same thing.

They take God's word, they trust God's word, and they apply it, to their own, situation. And here we see, what every, single, God-honouring, minister, and elder, has tried, and attempted, and hoped to do, from the very start, we see here.

To be led, by God's word. As we go forward, into North Tulsa, it is not, Donald's plan, we are following. It's not Donald's desire, my desire, we are following.

It's not even, the elder's desire, the elder's plan. Yes, we have plans, but ultimately, what is our desire? What is our plan? It's to see, the Lord, work in North Tulsa.

To see Jesus, be known, in every single home, from the Glen, to Gary. And all, through the power, of his word, as he works, through it, to his own, glorious power, his own, glorious way.

[ 49 : 11 ] At times, like here, of the apostles, when ministry, is hard, perhaps, when people, are involved in sin, or when people, greatly disappoint, when situations, may threaten, to overwhelm us, perhaps as a church.

When ministry, in terms of, our own ministry, to our friends, and neighbours, when that feels impossible. Where do we turn? What do we do? We follow the example, of the apostles.

We turn to God's word. It's there, we find our hope, our reassurance. There we find, as a way of that solid rock, that does not change, because it's based on God's word, as God's word, and God does not change.

If we turn to ourselves, when things threaten to overwhelm us, we see our own sin, our own changeability, we see our own disaster, of our life at times.

Turn to others, and others will let us down, at times. Our ministry, is not founded, on personality. It is not founded, on the minister, or the elders.

[ 50 : 15 ] It is founded, on God being through, his word being through, and God speaking, and moving, and acting through his word. This ministry, is based on, holding God, and trusting God, to his promises.

And trusting God, to fulfil his word, as he says, he will. The call then, is for this ministry, to be, a ministry of, the word.

And we strive, the word will be proclaimed, in every single chance, we have, in, North, Tulsa. And we come, and we, we beg, and we pray, and we plead, the Lord would, would save, North, Tulsa.

And we do so, believing he will. But he will do so, according to the work, and the power, of his word. It's our duty then, like the early church, like the apostles, to trust God's word, to make full use, of God's word.

Brothers and sisters, as we said, the early church's first decision, or one of their first decisions, was a background, of betrayal, a background, of deceit, a heartbreaking situation, they had, to work through.

[ 51 : 30 ] Let's not then, be surprised, when we ourselves, face difficult days, as a congregation, as individuals, challenging circumstances, as we seek, to glorify God, and praise his name.

We keep saying this, but we say it, for good reason. The evil one, we can guarantee, is at work, in North Tulsa. And that's not, some inside knowledge, but it's, it's what we know, to be scripturally true.

Yes, the Lord is at work, where the Lord is at work, the evil one, is always at work, seeking to seed, seeds of, disunity, distrust, dislike, amongst ourselves, but also, in our own private lives, spiritual attack, spiritual oppression, bringing back guilt, and shame, and sin, perhaps more overt, spiritual oppression.

His tactics are varied, be surprised, by none of them. The early church, from the start, deals with evil, and nothing has changed, for us today. But like the early church, we base our hope, on God's word, being true.

Not our feelings, not our thoughts, on God's holy, and perfect word. In all these things, God's word is able, to work, and establish, his plans, in his way.

[ 52 : 53 ] The early church, then relies on prayer, relies on scripture, and finally, it relies also, on personnel, on the people, of the church. Verse 21, we see that, they've made the decision, what to do, they now will decide, to choose, a man, to replace, Judas.

Verse 21, then down, to the end, verse 26, they cast lots, for them, and the lot, fell on Matthias, and he was numbered, with the eleven, apostles.

Quite simply, the Lord, equips, his church, for his work. And we think, perhaps in many ways, we think, we're not equipped, to do the work, we've been called to do.

We're not, got the skill set, to do the work, we've been called to do. You think, well, you know, I haven't got, really, the amount of confidence, it takes, to knock on someone's door, and to invite them to church.

I haven't got, the right words to say, to give a gospel presentation, to someone. I haven't got, really, the way, the manner about me, to try, and convince someone, that the word is true.

[ 54 : 06 ] I haven't got, the way we follow, the internal, strength, to be embarrassed, and to be shamed, the gospel. I haven't actually, got enough faith to, or a big enough, understanding to, and so on, and so on, and so on.

Brothers and sisters, we are not equipped. We're not. I am not equipped. I am not. It's almost, a comedic example of that.

This morning, I forgot the intimations. What you didn't see, maybe you heard, is this evening, I forgot my sermon. We, flew back up the road, with three minutes to go. Your minister, your elders, and yourselves, brothers and sisters, we, are human.

We, are not equipped. In and of ourselves, we make a mess of things, we mess things up, we say the wrong things. But we trust God's word, and God's word, reminds us, and assures us, he equips, his people, for the work, he has given us, to do.

So we are praying, first of all then, for North Tolstown, if we're praying, for the salvation, of our family, and friends, and neighbours, we're praying, that God will be glorified, and known, from one end of the village, to the other, if we're genuinely praying that, and genuinely meaning that, the Lord will then, equip us, for that service.

[ 55 : 29 ] And every Sunday, every time, we're under God's word, we perhaps, don't think much of it. Perhaps, we have a low view of it, I hope we don't. And perhaps, we're hoping, that we get special, 10 step programs, how to be a better Christian, and all that.

And yes, we will have classes, I hope in time, and we'll have, guest speakers come in, to teach us some ways, to better evangelise. But at the end of the day, it's through God's word, it's through hearing, about our saviour, being filled, with love for our saviour, being filled, with passion, for who he is, what he's done for us, what he can do for our neighbours, and friends, and family, by reminding ourselves, of the hell, he saved us from, and the hell, those around us, are still heading towards.

By reminding ourselves, of his love, towards us, by being filled, with him, more and more, that is how, we then, begin, to work well, in North Tolstead.

It's not about, having the exact, right words, it's not about, having the exact, things to say. You know yourselves, people aren't silly, and when people come to you, genuinely seeking answers, it's okay to say to them, I don't know, say to them, that's a good question, can I get back to you, about that?

People aren't wanting, exact answers, all people want to know is, that you care for them, that you're willing, to spend time, listening to them, that you're willing, to go away, and spend time, and come back, with even the start, of an answer.

[ 57 : 14 ] It's not about, the right words, of right tactics, it's about being, good friends, good neighbours, it's about being, witnesses, missionaries, in your homes, in our village, in North Tulsa, as a whole, it's about being, salt and light, you think, well, I'm the wrong person, for the job, I'm the wrong person, for the job, if you're saying, we have to start doing, this and that, it can't be me, if you're saying, we want to start talking, more about the gospel, in North Tulsa, it can't be me, well, it is you, it is me, why?

because we're here, we are here, as his witnesses, we're here, as his ambassadors, he has placed us here, right now, for this reason, for this place, for this time, therefore, the job, the duty, the pleasure, the solemn joy of it, is ours to do, we are his witnesses, in North Tulsa, you are his witnesses, in your own family, and friendship circles, and village circles, as you could say, whether we like it or not, whether we want to do it or not, we are who we are, his people, we are where we are, North Tulsa, and the duty, he has given us, is clear, we're to be salt, we're to be light, these are normal men, the apostles, were normal men, yes, an extraordinary calling, by the end of the day, they faithfully, sought to serve, their saviour, in every single, way possible, and we know, and we'll see, to go through acts, they fail, again and again, they make a mess of things, again and again, there's some real disasters, in the big of acts, where God's people, act in ways, that are awful, why, because like, the apostles, we are sinners, but like the apostles, we are sinners, who have been saved, by a glorious saviour, who's commissioned us, and set us aside, to serve him, in this place, it's well said, and it's often said, but it's said, because it's true, that God, does not call, the equipped, instead, he equips, the ones he calls, that is a simple message, we see here, these men, we're not equipped, to do, what we're about, to see them doing, we're not equipped, in the slightest, to go, and to face, the whole Roman Empire, we're not equipped, in the slightest, to go, and face, barrage, after barrage, of abuse, from towns, and cities, but yet, the Lord, uses them, he equips them, he sends them out, and we see the church, growing, week by week, and year by year, as the book of Acts, progresses, the work, is the Lord's, we'll see that next time, the work, is the Lord's, the brothers, and sisters, let's not be mistaken, the Lord, uses us, to accomplish his work, he doesn't need to, but he does, why he does, it's not a concern, he just does, the Lord, uses means, and we are part, of the means, that he uses, he calls us, he saves us, he sets us aside, and he prepares us, to serve him, in North Tulsa, the work, is too big, the work, is far too big, and that's the point, it makes us reliant, on him, one thing, and many good things, about the manse, but one good thing, about the manse, is from the manse, you are given really, a,

I don't know, you can probably see, half of Tulsa, if you walk around it enough, if you go up, and a wee bit behind the manse, you can see pretty much, most of Tulsa, and if you look around Tulsa, you think, well that area, there's no one that I know, really going to church, in that area, and that area, for example, there's no one going to church, in that area, the mission field, of North Tulsa, it is white, and ready for harvest, when you talk to people, talk to people, in North Tulsa, and I've been, quite surprised personally, when inviting them to church, and talking about church matters, I always assumed, I get a straight blank, no thank you, not for me, move on, in the last year and a half, I have found the opposite, people want, to talk about faith, people want, to talk about Jesus, they've got questions, they've got history, I haven't yet, had a hard no, get lost, not for me, some people say, it's not really my thing, but even then, they continue to be, quite conversational with me, brothers and sisters, the harvest field, of North Tulsa, is white, and ready for harvest, the Lord has placed us here, for that purpose, it's his work, this is his place, and like the apostles, like the early church, like the men here, and women here, he has given us, the great and solemn task, of being, his witnesses, all done, through prayer, based on God's word, and scripture, and making use, of the means,

God chooses to use, which brothers and sisters, it's you, and I, next time, we'll see, that all this takes place, only through the work, of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit, his power, that doesn't give us, an excuse, not to work, in fact, it gives us less excuse, so we'll find out, just to get a spoiler, next time, we find out, that he lives in us, he moves in us, he works in us, so we have even less, reason to fear, we're saying, and we believe, that God now, lives inside us, as his people, if we believe that, and I hope we do, that he lives, and moves in us, then why do we fear, going to anyone else, why do we fear, sharing of the gospel, we have the very spirit of God, living in us, easy to preach, easy to say, and we'll see next time, much, much harder, to actually put, into practice, for all of us, we'll leave that, with the Lord, let's bow our heads, in that hour of prayer,

Lord we thank you, for the gift of your word, once more, we're reminded, the beauty of it, we're reminded that, right from the start, you have used, normal people, to accomplish, your extraordinary goals, you've used, ordinary fishermen, and ordinary, men and women, to achieve, what is extraordinary, the salvation of people, the pointing of people, to Jesus, the transforming, of whole areas, we pray just now Lord, once more, for our Lord of Tolstah, help us then, to be a congregation, that saturates, the work in prayer, that saturates, this village in prayer, help us to have people, that are based fully, and totally, on your word, going forward, finding in your word, answers for all, the trauma, and distress, and panic of this life, help us then, as people, to be willing servants, to be salt, and light, to be ambassadors, as you've called us to be, to encourage us, that you, who have made your home in us, you are greater, than any opposition, we will face in this world, to remind us then, of our solemn duty, to go out, to be missionaries, to the great mission field, of this village, as call these things, asking for your strength, and your power, asking that you'd, help us to meet often, together like this, understanding, the more we do this, the stronger we become, the more we worship publicly, the stronger we become, the more we read your word publicly, and hear a word, broken down to us publicly, the stronger we become, in this work, we ask Lord, you bless, as always, our presenters, we thank you for them, those who are willing, to lead the public, sung worship, as we sing, praises to you, as we heard every day, we're reminded, we have a God, as your word tells us, that you are jubilant, in your song, over us, ask all these things, in and through, and for Christ, his name's sake,

[ 65 : 50 ] Amen. Let's conclude, again from the Psalter, that great psalm, of church unity, Psalm 133, Psalm 133, Psalm 133, Psalm 133, Psalm 133, Psalm 133, Psalm 133, Psalm 133, Psalm 133, the whole psalm, and to God's praise.

It is, apprais.

And I can do it to you now.

Like gracious wind and on the head, down the reiterates of year 05 and ma'am.

Lord, thanks Senorommen.

[ 67 : 39 ] He may not be.

For let the mercy Lord come as life that shall never end.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, both you now and forevermore, Amen.