

# Hearing the Gospel

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     We can carry on that public worship of the Lord. First of all, singing from the Psalter on Psalm 98. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 98.
- That's on page 360. Psalm 98 on page 360. We can sing verses 1 down to verse 4 of the Psalm.
- Psalm 98, verses 1 down to verse 4. We'll sing a new song to the Lord. For wonders he hath done. His right hand and his holy arm whom victory hath won.
- The Lord God his salvation hath caused to be known. His justice in the heathen sight he openly hath shown. Psalm 98, verses 1 to 4. Take God's praise.
- O sing a new song to the Lord.
- [ 0 : 5 6 ]     For wonders he hath done. His right hand and his holy arm whom victory hath won.
- The Lord God his salvation hath caused to be known.
- His justice in the heathen sight he hath done. His justice in the heathen sight he hath done.
- He might full of his holy arm whom victory hath done. He might full of his grace and his holy arm whom victory hath done. He might full of his holy arm whom victory hath done. Christ's holy arm whom victory hath done.
- He might full of his holy arm whom victory hath done.
- [ 2 : 1 3 ]     The Lord, for all ends of the earth have seen. Let God be here, man, to the Lord.
- Send for that joyful noise. Lift up good voice, Father, to them.
- Give praises and rejoice. Let's join together in a word of prayer. Let's pray.
- Lord, we thank you once more as we draw together. We come before a true, living God. Help us once more then to our hearts and our minds to come to this place, ready to listen, ready to listen to your living word.
- Hearts and minds ready to be taught. Hearts and minds ready to praise you. The one God worthy of worship.
- [ 3 : 3 2 ]     The one true, living God who is worthy of all our time. Worthy of all our praise. We give you praise, Lord. We can sing your praises this evening. Help us never to neglect the great privilege we have of being able to sing together.
- We sing as those who have been rescued from the dead. Those brought from death to life. We sing as those who have been redeemed and rescued. Those who know what it is to be held and to be known and to be loved by a God who himself is love.
- And because of that, Lord, we then sing in response. We sing these psalms of worship, these psalms of lament, these psalms which take in and capture the full breadth of human experience.
- Because we understand that we worship just now a God who is not far away. You are not distant. But you are a God who is with us in every part of our experience. Through the days which are so dark that it feels like nothing good will happen.

To the days that are full of brightness and joy and happiness. We sing in the dark days and we sing in the days of light and happiness. For you are worthy to be praised every single day.

[ 4 : 53 ] Help us, Lord, then, to have a heart that is content. Not one that is happy all the time. We know that is not possible. But one that is content. As we reminded this morning, your servant Paul.

He was, he faced many situations. He faced many complicated situations. Yet he was able to say that he was content.

Not because of his situation. For he had nothing. At times persecuted himself. At times chased, shipwrecked, attacked, imprisoned.

Yet he was content because he knew that he was serving and worshipping our risen Savior. Lord, help that to be our story this new week. Help us be a congregation of your people.

A family gathering. Brothers and sisters that are content. We live in a day of small things where we find ourselves so lacking in hope.

[ 5 : 51 ] So lacking, if we're honest, in expectation. So lacking in seeing the desire of the gospel work in North Tulsa. Help us to be content.

We see it as a situation where friends and family and perhaps even those who are so near and so loved by us. Are showing little to no gospel response.

Even after years of prayer. Even after years of faithful witness. Yet, Lord, help us to be content. Content in the fact that we worship a sovereign God.

That nothing is beyond your control. Nothing is beyond your power. You are in full control over all things. Your people rest in that hope. As you assure us again and again through the Bible.

Through your word. The whole universe is yours. All of time and space. And those who seem to be farthest away from the gospel. Those who seem to be against your gospel.

[ 6 : 51 ] Even those who are close to us. Who show no gospel interest. Their hearts are not untouchable by you. They are not unreachable. For they fall under your creation.

And you have full control over all your creation. Therefore, they are not beyond you. Help us, Lord, this evening to be faithful in our witnessing. Pray just now for the brothers and sisters here this evening.

Help us to be faithful. To lay hold on every chance we get. Including what we are doing just now. This challenge we have set ourselves. To pray for free families or free individuals in this community.

We bring just now before you these free individuals or these free families. Lord, everyone, every brother, every sister here. We have perhaps different people in mind. But you know our prayers.

And you know those who are being prayed for. Those who perhaps have little gospel interest. Or no gospel interest. Those who perhaps were once here but are no longer anywhere near a church worship.

[ 7 : 54 ] Or near a church building. Lord, you know the circumstances and the stories. And we ask you bring them to a saving knowledge of yourself. We do cry out once more for the salvation of North Tulsa.

We cannot make it happen. We plead for it. We strive towards it. We endeavour to share the gospel again and again. Week after week.

Chance after chance. And we sow. And we water. But you alone give the new life. You alone give the growth. You alone bring that seed.

And cause it to come to life. And to sprout. And to flourish. We give you praise that. Where you bring that new life. For the evil one.

And nothing in heaven. Or on earth. Nothing in all of creation. Can then cease the love. That you have for your people. Help us then to understand that this evening. We come before a God who loves his people.

[ 8 : 58 ] Who calls your people your own. As we look forward. As we look forward. With your plan. And with your will. This coming weekend. To sitting again around the table. As we share in the simple meal.

Of some bread and some wine. Shared as brothers and sisters. As sons and daughters. As family. As friends. That we do so.

Understanding. That as we remember. The death of our saviour. We do so until he returns again. That every Lord's supper. We engage in. It is one step closer. To that promise.

Being fulfilled. That he will. Return again. Until that day comes. Give us the sense. To be bold. And brave witnesses.

I pray just now. For the wider. Denomination. Thank you Lord. For the encouragements. But also. We bring before you. The challenges. In our own denomination.

[ 9 : 58 ] Encouragements. We hear. Of some congregations. Flourishing. Some congregations. Which were. Close to closing. Some years ago. Are now flourishing. And growing.

And expanding. Their reach. Now our congregations. Are now facing. A future. Where. They cannot call. Or they have. Perhaps.

Little human hope. Of carrying on. For much longer. Lord. We know. That your people. Are there. And your word. Is there. And the church. Belongs to you.

As we pray for that. We remember. The glory is yours. Not the glory. Of this ministry. Of the glory. Of this church. Not the glory. Of the free church. You are. Out with.

Our denominations. You have your people. Across the many denominations. And those with no denomination. You have your people. Across this island. Across our nation. Across this world. This evening.

[ 10 : 54 ] Everywhere. Where you are. Truly worshipped. In spirit. And in truth. That you are there. We pray just now. With that wider mindset. That we are a small part.

A small part. Of that wider. World wide church. Give you praise for that. Across. The cultures. Across. The languages.

Across all. The various. Many differences. Between us. And our brothers and sisters. Around this world. But we are united together. This evening. In our love. For a saviour. Who has saved us.

Who gave himself. For us. Once. We were all in darkness. But now we are in light. Help us Lord. Then to be faithful. Understanding. As we engage.

In a. Small work. In Tolstah. Amongst a small community. Here. Of a few hundred. We are an essential. Building block. Of your wider church. You are here with us.

[ 11 : 51 ] In all that we seek to do. I pray just now Lord. For those. Who this week. Have not prayed for themselves. Who this month. Have not prayed for themselves. Nor this year.

For friends. And family. And those. Who are our neighbours. Who have no concern. And no care. For their souls. Who have an understanding. Even as to the simplicity. Of the gospel. As to the gospel hope.

And the gospel promise. They could have. If only they would listen. We were reminded. Last week. That there are many. In our community. Who have never even heard. The gospel. Who are not.

Unwilling to come. But are completely. Unknowing. Completely ignorant. In terms of the fact. They have never heard. The gospel. Lord. We ask you. Would use us.

To be. Faithful witnesses. To share. Boldly to them. The simple gospel. That brings. Eternal change. Help us Lord. Then. To focus this evening. To listen clearly.

[ 12 : 47 ] To your word. Help us. In our own weakness. We confess. That our minds. Wonder so easily. And so quickly. We confess. There are so many things. Which weigh down. We bring.

Just now. Before you. Those suffering. Here. Those who are still. Mourning. Recent loss. But also. Loss. Of years ago. As grief.

Lord. We know. Remains. Pray. Just now. For those. Who are going through. Complicated situations. Physically. And mentally. Those who are struggling.

With lives. That are hard. Lord. You alone. Know. The detail. And there is nothing. A little. We can do. So I bring them to you.

You know. Your people. And you keep your people. Pray just now. Once more. For any here. Who are. Yours. And who know you. And who love you.

[ 13 : 42 ] Or any in our community. Who know you. And who love you. But. As of yet. Friends. Who are. Who. Are. Adding layers. and strains onto themselves because of it.

They are listening perhaps to the voices of others, listening to the voices of the world, and who as of yet haven't publicly proclaimed their Saviour, but every year they have that burning need to do so.

Lord, we ask that this year they would listen to that gospel call, listen to the call of their friend and of their Saviour who tells them to publicly proclaim his name and to do so alongside brothers and sisters.

Encourage your people. Be with us all. Forgive us for sin. We confess sin today. Obvious and hidden from us. Public and private.

Willing and unwilling, Lord, we know that naturally we find ourselves at times so inclined to sin. We'll give you praise that if we know you this evening, as we heard last week from your word, if we know you this evening, we're no longer chained to sin.

[ 14 : 54 ] Yes, at times attacked by it, but no longer chained to sin. We've been purchased with a precious price, the blood of our Saviour. It's in his name and it's for his sake we ask these many things.

Amen. Let's turn to read in God's word. Let's read in God's word. Letter to Romans and chapter 10. Romans chapter 10.

That's on page 889. Romans 10, page 889. Romans chapter 10.

Let's hear again the word of God. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

For being ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

[ 16 : 05 ] For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them, of a righteousness based on faith, says, Do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down, or who will descend into the abyss, that is to bring Christ up from the dead.

But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that is the word of faith that we proclaim.

Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes and is justified, with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the scripture says, Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[ 17 : 17 ] How then will they call on him whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it's written, How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. But they have not all obeyed the gospel.

For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us? So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. But I ask, Have they not heard?

Indeed they have. For their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. But I ask, Did Israel not understand? First Moses says, I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation.

With a foolish nation, I will make you angry. Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, I have been found by those who did not seek me. I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.

[ 18 : 22 ] But of Israel, he says, All day long, I have held out my hand, my hands to a disobedient and contrary people. Amen. I give praise to God for his holy and his perfect word.

Let's again sing again from the Psalter. This time, Psalm 87. Psalm 87. It's called a Psalter, Psalm 87, page 342.

A psalm which reminds us that God's people, the church, it's a varied church, it's a scattered church, all shapes and sizes, all backgrounds, often the most unlikely of people.

Psalm 87. Upon the hills of holiness, he, his foundation sets, God, more than Jacob's dwellings, all delights in Zion's gates.

The things glorious are said of thee, thou city of the Lord, Rahab and Babel, I to those that know me will record. Psalm 87.

[ 19 : 33 ] The whole psalm to God's praise. Presidential win of the ark, and Jesusität!

At the pulpit. Oh Oh He Oh yeah

Amen. Let me that sing and pray and all my well-springs in the air.

Turn back to the chapter we had, Romans chapter 10. Romans chapter 10. We're going on our short evening series looking at the basics of evangelism.

Calling it Evangelism 101. Remember last week we saw knowing that before we begin to even engage in evangelism, we must first be reminded as to why we love the gospel.

[ 22 : 34 ] What it is we actually share. Why it matters. Now we're reminded from Hebrews chapter 1 that we share a gospel that talks about Jesus.

That's all about Jesus. That is based on Jesus. That flows from Jesus. And the Hebrews 1 reminded us he is glorious in all that he is and all that he does.

So then from now moving on now to the second section, sharing. We know why we must share, but now the biblical mandate for us for actually sharing the gospel.

What does it look like? Why do we do it? For a short time, and it will be a short time this evening, looking at verses 14 down to verse 17 of chapter 10 in Romans, it's verses I'm sure we've looked at before and you've heard before, but looking very precisely this evening for our minds asking the question, why do we share the gospel?

Or what does it look like perhaps to share the gospel? Taking verses 14 down to verse 17, under three, four, very broad headings.

- [ 23 : 49 ] First of all, seeing the motivation for sharing the gospel, our motivation for sharing the gospel, then the need for sharing the gospel, then the method of sharing the gospel, and our call to share the gospel.

Beginning then with our motivation for sharing the gospel. For everyone. For everyone.

Verse 13. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

We begin quite simply with the simplicity of the gospel call. This is our motivation, isn't it?

Brothers and sisters, this is our motivation for sharing the gospel. That everyone then hears the gospel and calls to the Lord and is saved.

- [ 24 : 58 ] That's why we do what we do, isn't it? That's why we long to see North Tolstah come into faith. Forget the free church. Forget our congregation.

You know, we know it's ourselves. But once we weren't here, and in a few short years, the grand scene of things, we'll be gone. Every one of us. I'll be gone. We'll all be gone.

This church, brother, will crumble away. What lasts forever is the eternal destination and the eternal relationship that people have with God.

That is our main motivation, isn't it? For all we seek to do this year, all the sermons and all our plans and ideas, and, you know, there are plenty of them, fine.

And it's good we lay hold in every opportunity we have and we'll make full use of it as the Lord gives us chances to do it. But our main motivation, it's not our glory, it's not to get more numbers in this congregation, it's not to fill out better forms for Edinburgh.

- [ 26 : 05 ] No. Our main motivation is, verse 13, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. We have a gospel that is open to all. The gospel call is open to all.

Now, salvation, in one sense, isn't open. There's only one way of salvation, it's through Jesus, and we know that. He has the only route to salvation, the only way to the Father, is through Jesus. So, in one sense, it's a very narrow call, but the call itself is open.

It's a free offer of the gospel, to give it the theological term, I guess. It is what Reformed Church has loved from the start. We preach and we maintain the free offer of the gospel.

The gospel goes out from this pulpit, and I trust, brothers and sisters, from yourselves, we share the gospel to everyone, without limit. We don't share the gospel to those who look promising.

It's not just for those who have an interest in church, not just for those whose lives look like they could well be close to coming to some sort of faith. No. It's a free offer of a free gospel.

- [ 27 : 16 ] It goes out to all shapes, all sizes, all types of people, and all types of situations. Those suffering mental health problems, physical health problems.

That's obvious. Those who right now are worshipping different false gods. We share the gospel with them. Those who are going through hard times, addiction perhaps, family situations, and so on, financial situations, you name it.

We know that in North Tulsa, as every other place, that we care about North Tulsa, and North Tulsa just now, from the Glen to Gary, there is every single type of problem and worry and issue in the 400 odd people who live here.

The gospel is for all of them. For those who have come here before, those who attend here, our friends who gather with us, those who gather next door, of course, too. But it's also for those who have moved into the area, who've got no idea, not the slightest inkling as to what it is we're talking about in here.

The gospel calls for them, too. We share the gospel to all. And because the gospel call is for all who believe, it also means, brothers and sisters, we lose hope for none.

[ 28 : 28 ] We share to all, and we lose hope for none. In other words, perhaps you have in your mind just now, I certainly do, of one person who you think, you know, I believe the Lord can do it, but I just can't see it happening.

I know theologically the Lord can save them, I know theologically I believe that, but Donald, just as Donald, I just can't imagine it, I can't think it would happen, and I can't quite perceive it would happen to that person.

They're so far away, they're so uncaring, there's nothing going on spiritually in their lives. And that was wrong. So wrong. Why?

Because the gospel call is open to all, therefore there's hope for everyone. Those who, the Christians who, who Paul was dragging away into prison, the Christians that Paul was, was ransacking this morning, what gospel hope did that man have in their eyes?

Probably very little, to zero. The man who was ravaging the church, who was destroying the Christians, who was there, who was bent of all his energy to decimate the church.

[ 29 : 43 ] That man's a hopeless case. He's an evil, Christ-hating human being who deserves hell itself for all the chaos he is causing. And yet, Paul himself this morning reminded us that now he loves the Lord and was willing to suffer for the Lord and die for the Lord.

Paul was a hopeless case, yet the gospel call was given to Paul, of course by revelation, but either way, Paul heard the gospel call from Christ himself, and Paul is saved.

The gospel is open to all, the simplicity of the gospel. Brothers and sisters, we know this, and just to say, we are so prone to adding to the gospel.

We heard that this morning, but just to say it again in this context, we're so prone to adding caveats and adding stipulations onto the gospel. We are on very thin ice as Christians and very dangerous ground as Christians.

If we find ourselves adding stipulations and rules onto the gospel, the Lord does not add. That is adding to God's word, and it's a dangerous place to be as Christians and a dangerous place to be as a church.

[ 30 : 57 ] I'm not saying we do that. I certainly hope we don't, but we're liable to do that, aren't we? Like the Judaizers this morning, we're quite liable to adding on bits and pieces.

But the word never includes. The word says the gospel is open to all who will come, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord. Of course, that is not just some, that's not meaning, and I know we know this, but just to make clear, that's not some generic, if you say this prayer, you're saved, and that's it, no questions.

No, it's a genuine call. That has to be a genuine call. That call is one that says, I am a sinner. Not these exact words, but the call is one that takes the vague format of, I am a sinner.

I can't save myself. I come to you, a saviour who has paid the price, I believe, to save me. My life is yours. We call on the Lord.

The Lord hears the call of a sinner, and the Lord saves the sinner, who offers a call, a genuine call, in that kind of way. Where it's good for us to remember that, in that every person here, in every person in our village, who comes to the Lord, they'll have different journeys to the Lord.

[ 32 : 13 ] They won't reflect our journeys, perhaps. Different backgrounds, different stories, but at the very base, at the very core, we said this morning, not one of us can compare our salvation, our conversion, to that of Paul.

The very base, Paul and ourselves, share the exact same story. Once we were lost, and helpless, and hopeless, and now in Jesus, we have life, and hope, and purpose, and so on.

The gospel call is open to all. The gospel call is simple. We're also reminded here, in our motivation, that there's a sure nature of the gospel.

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, will be saved. Saved. Will be saved. Those who respond to the gospel affirmatively, will be saved.

And in the Greek, it's even more precise. We have, of course, everyone who believes, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, will be saved. The Greek cuts out some of that, and says, those who call on the name of the Lord, saved.

[ 33 : 21 ] Saved. When you call on the Lord's name, in a genuine cry, from your heart to the Lord, you are saved. Those who come to the Lord, who call on the Lord, we're not being saved because, of your, your, let's see, your new minister, I'm still new, but, you're, slightly less than new ministers preaching.

No. Won't be saved because of your excellent witnessing skills. We're not saved because of your love for them, of all you love them. We're not saved because you share the word with them, of all you must do that.

They're saved because they call on the Lord. And the Lord uses preaching, he uses yourself, he uses myself, he uses us as his people, to share the word. And the sure nature of the gospel reminds us, it is him who saves, not us by our efforts.

At the same time, we must share the gospel. That's our next point. But as we share the gospel, we remember, we're sharing a gospel, that does the work. We're not doing the work on behalf of God.

He works, his work, through us. He doesn't need us, but he uses us. A simple gospel. A gospel has a sure reality, a sure end.

[ 34 : 43 ] Those who call on the Lord will be saved. It also has a lasting nature. The Lord keeps his people.

Perhaps we are scared, if we're being very honest, to share the gospel to some people, because we worry that person who is hearing the gospel from us, we're worried they might fall away.

We're worried they won't be able to maintain their place for the Lord. Brothers and sisters, I'm sure not one of us can say we haven't stumbled at some point in our walk.

We haven't fallen into patterns of sin, times of darkness. We all have. Those of us who have been on a walk for some time, sadly, it is part of our journey.

We are still caught up in sin. We still find times where we're thrown back into the world, no longer chained to sin, but always challenged by it. The Lord keeps his people.

[ 35 : 47 ] It doesn't mean there won't be stumbles and falls and times, even a backsliding in our journey. But the Lord keeps his people. He loses not a single one of his own.

Even outwardly, we might look like we're again somehow hopeless, lost cases. We've gone too far away. The Lord keeps his people. The simple gospel.

That is our motivation. Our motivation is, all who call the name of the Lord will be saved. What then is the need? Verse 14a, the first half of verse 14.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?



Quite simply, here we have, we summarize as the detrimental danger of assumption. The detrimental danger of assumption.

[ 36 : 54 ] In God's providence, how God works things together. This sermon was written last Wednesday. We finished off that Gordon come on Thursday. Many of the points I had written here, Gordon covered.

Now, Gordon was planned to come here actually earlier on in the year, but it actually coincided with him coming. We rescheduled it and he managed to come.

The only day he had was last Thursday to arrive right in the middle of this series looking at evangelism. The plan was that Gordon would come first and then following Gordon we'd have this series.

But in God's timing all things are perfect. And Gordon touched quite simply on the fact that very often we assume people are unwilling to come to the truth.

Quite often the fact is they have never heard the truth in the first place. That is the need we have here the first half of verse 14. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed and how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?

[ 38 : 03 ] And here's the danger of assumption. Four questions for us to ask ourselves. I'll address the question to you but I'm asking it to myself too. Four questions on the danger of assumption.

Do our neighbours know us? Brothers and sisters do our neighbours know us? Do your neighbours know you?

Whatever the house is the house you were born in the house you have moved to the house you've married into whatever your journey is brothers and sisters if you are here in this village living and serving wherever you are in the world living and serving you've been placed quite literally beside neighbours who are your mission field.

Our first mission field we could say is our close family unsaved partners unsaved husbands and wives and children and parents our first mission field and after that our next mission field it's our neighbours isn't it?

And then the wider village and colleagues and everything else after that but after family it's our neighbours and the first question is do your neighbours know you?

[ 39 : 21 ] Quite simply taking aside everything else do they know who you are? Have you taken a chance to introduce yourself to them? And the chances are for many of us especially as the years go on that many of our neighbours will be those who have little to zero island connection little to zero community connection they'll be those who have moved into the area and let's be clear that in the past perhaps there's been a tension there at times I'm not talking community wise I'm talking in terms of the gospel do our neighbours know us?

Are we available to our neighbours? Are we there sharing and showing them the love of a Christian neighbour? Second question do our neighbours know we are Christians?

Do your and my neighbours do they know we're Christians? They might know we're nice I hope they might know we're friendly enough but do they know we're Christians? Have you taken any opportunity the Lord's given you to share with them I'm not saying you share with them a full systematic theology but quite simply have you shown them some form of Christian love?

have you had a chance to show them or to share with them some form of Christian communication? With that do your neighbours know of the gospel?

Do your neighbours know of the gospel? A few months ago a month ago maybe now the Kirk session the elders I showed them our discipleship and development plan our our evangelism and discipleship plan reaching out and reaching up was the subtitle and that plan will be available to the whole congregation in due course but safe to say there's an ambitious plan but the very root of that plan is we share the gospel to our neighbours it doesn't get any more complicated than that how did the early church grow?

[ 41 : 34 ] how did the early church grow? They were meeting in secret most of the time they were meeting quietly most of the time they couldn't have Christianity explored they couldn't have community outreach they couldn't have barbecues they couldn't have times of open meetings they couldn't have a faith mission come visit them how did they grow?

they grew as the church has always done from the time the Lord established it till now they grew by one to one relationships we're talking about the big wide ranging miracles that's that's all there in scripture but I mean the first century church the second century church how did they grow?

Quietly slowly talking to neighbour talking to friend talking to those they worked with very often many of them at the start were slaves and they offered fellow slaves to come hear the gospel they talked to their neighbours and the church grew and grew and grew to where we are today in North Tulsa do your neighbours know you do your neighbours know you're a Christian and do your neighbours know the gospel it's amazing how much conversation I've had in the last year out and about walking and what surprised me and I don't know if I should be surprised by this is how open people have been I'm aware perhaps it's because the role I'm here because I'm a minister but I've been there last summer at points in shorts and a hoodie and there's folks who I've never met before and some I'm pretty sure they don't know who I was just talking to them as you do as you're walking around the village and the second they ask where do you live up there what do you do while I'm a minister

I always think conversation done end it hasn't happened maybe once it happened nine times out of ten they start talking they start sharing there's one person I talked to and they grew up in a church context very heavily church context down south they were involved in this involved in that there's something happened and they left the church it's been 50 years since then and that's it what's heartbreaking and this is not just north tolsta this happened in graver and it hurt us in graver and we realised during covid we realised before covid that so many people don't realise they're welcome to walk in here on a sunday it's not they don't know the gospel it's they don't know they're welcome that's our fourth and final question here do your neighbours know they're welcome it sounds so obvious but the question is once if you have a good talking relationship with them if they know you're Christians then have you ever invited them to this place because

I think you'd be surprised I certainly am how many people actually are very interested in what goes on in this place the most common response is fascinating most common response we had in graver over the last few years was oh I thought it was only those who were invited who could come along now that's a heartbreaking thing to hear from any congregation it tells you that they're waiting to be invited it also implies that once they are invited we're not saying they'll all come along en masse but at least they know they're welcome at least they know they're welcome and then brothers and sisters you've done your bit at that point you share the gospel with them you talk to them you're friendly to them I know we are in a way but you tell them they're welcome to church give them the church times give them my business card if you want we can put more in the back door whatever works whatever way you have invite them to a WFM if you're dealing with a lady invite them to this and that plenty of things to invite them to this year plenty of chances and you just then pray for them and if you invite them and you tell them they're welcome and they don't come then it's not your fault it's not your fault

[ 46 : 16 ] I don't know if you know this when you've seen someone you know and love come closer and closer to the Lord you begin to see a fight take place don't you as that person shows more of an interest in the Lord's things the sin just spikes and the world just spikes and the interest and the pull away from the things of the gospel the battle begins before that point the devil had them but the second there's a gospel interest the devil then begins to work hard the flesh and sin begins to work hard and you see the pulling force take place all we then do is pray and keep praying that person that family that couple you're speaking with they do come out and you keep repeating the previous points showing them neighbourly love showing them Christian love and sharing and praying for gospel opportunities again and again and again it's simple as that it's also as hard as that there's a great need

Paul is very clear here those who call on the Lord are saved they can't call unless they first believe and they can't believe if they've never heard I wonder perhaps 90% of those we might think are somehow anti-church somehow anti-faith somehow anti-this or anti-that they're just completely ignorant towards it and by ignorant I mean in a genuine way I'm up and down on them I mean ignorant in the fact that they've just never been told they've never heard they have no knowledge of it and yet the Lord in his providence has placed them here in a place where there is the word the gospel preached where God has his people strongly here and they've moved up here they're now living here in this village and they have Christian neighbours

God is bringing the mission field to us week by week and year by year and we have to respond to that what then is the method then second half of verse 14 how are they to hear without someone preaching how are they to hear without someone preaching now bear in mind this is a letter written to the whole congregation in the church of Rome not just to the leaders we have of course letters like 1st and 2nd Timothy for example letters clearly written to Timothy to encourage Timothy as a church leader as a minister as a pastor to give him advice and give him guidance not so in Romans this is a letter written to the whole church the whole of the Roman church Paul is addressing this to the leaders but to all the

Christians to the daily Christian to the normal Christian as Paul writes to the church in Rome advising them on sharing the gospel he asks the rhetorical question if if then to believe they need to hear the gospel how are they to hear without someone preaching traditionally and historically a point in some ways and we know this there's a whole study needn't be done there but historically for our own culture a lot of the gospel sharing was seen as a job of a minister now don't get me wrong here you're paying me for something so it is my job to share the gospel it's my job to be there and although Gordon did it kind of tongue-in-cheek on Thursday he wasn't joking in that if anything's happening and you think questions you can't answer just put them my way not because

I can answer them but because I've got time to look into the answers hopefully and give something one thing I have is space and time to study but the preaching is not mine alone yes in one sense the public proclamation is my duty and my joy to do this every single week but in this context what does preaching mean I think the issue here perhaps is a word we have in English as preaching we think that means this form of preaching no quite simply the word is proclaiming to make known and how are we then to hear without someone making Jesus known to them is what Paul is saying quite simply brothers and sisters every one of us and myself as a as a Christian brother with you all not as minister but as Donald who loves the Lord who was saved by the Lord as a brother together as brothers and sisters together we are called to share to preach to make known

[ 51 : 45 ] Jesus in our homes in our community to back us up in case you think I'm trying to sky with my job 1st Peter chapter 2 verse 9 a command that takes in the whole Christ Christ redeemed church the whole church 1st Peter 2 verse 9 you're a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous life that you may proclaim the same word there is the same word we have the same base word as preach that you may preach the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into the marvellous light how they hear without someone proclaiming to them that is the gospel challenge brothers and sisters that is our call every day every day and perhaps this is a reminder to us a challenge to us every day let's be praying for our neighbours our neighbours in North

Tolstair those around us praying for genuine gospel sharing opportunities the Lord has given us all the task to preach to proclaim to share the word of God if it was optional it wouldn't be commanded but it's commanded to us that brings us finally to the call verse 15 and how are they to preach unless they are sent as it's written how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news brothers and sisters every Lord's Day you and I we are being sent being sent afresh being reminded afresh as to our duty and our joy every Sunday we're hopefully receiving theology that leads to doxology learning about

God that leads to praising God that inspires us that reinvigorates us this new week to share the gospel once more to pray for these gospel opportunities once more the last question is looking at verse 15 the question is do you do you feel your feet are beautiful do you feel you've got beautiful feet do you really think that's how you could be described in a gospel sense it's particularly a gospel sense how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news you think to yourself I'm quite slow actually you know there's feet that run faster than mine that are better witnesses than me I haven't got all the answers I haven't got all the right knowledge

I haven't got the right gospel understanding and yes there's practical ways we'll read the word more study more but that's not the answer the answer is to believe God's word the feet of those who share the gospel are beautiful in other words it's a glorious beautiful task to share the gospel yes there are faster runners than you I'm sure yes there are those with better answers to the questions than you finish off with a quote from Bob to inspire us Reverend Dr.

Bob Ackroyd current moderator and long suffering professor of our class in ETS and he quotes from another writer but Bob would always remind us if we're having a hard week and some of the gentlemen in ETS were having hard weeks some of the guys in my class with me the men in my class with me were full time or three quarter time ministers from baptists and other various congregations and nations they were doing full time ministry some were engaged in almost full time prison ministry but we're seeing the real heartbreak and hardships and we're feeling themselves so useless in their service and as students we all think every day we're thinking we're not cut out for this we're not cut out for this job and Bob would tell us again and again quoting I think from Richard Brainerd but I'm not sure I don't quote me that Bob would say gentlemen there are many who can preach the gospel better than you of that there is no doubt he would add that bit himself but none can preach a better gospel brothers and sisters there are many who have better answers than you who can preach the gospel share the gospel better than you there are many who can answer the questions of the world better than you and I but there are none who can preach a better gospel in other words the gospel is sufficient the Lord will do his work with your few small fish and a few bits of bread the Lord takes and multiplies and it's nerve wracking it is terrifying terrifying at times to share the gospel it's terrifying socially to make these connections and interactions that doesn't change that's always going to be there the call then is to self-sacrifice to put away that and to serve the Lord by sharing the life-giving news the motivation is clear everyone who calls in the name of the

[ 57 : 43 ] Lord will be saved the need is dire the whole of North Tulsa is our concern the method is clear we do it by sharing quite simply by being there as neighbours and friends by being good constant witnesses and the call is to everyone who knows and loves the Lord in North Tulsa ourselves next door those who go to our congregation across the island together we're united in the one gospel work in this place that's our challenge this evening but also it's our joy this evening and for all of that when it all feels too heavy remember there are others who can preach the gospel better but there's none who preach a better gospel let's bow our heads now a word of prayer Lord we thank you for the great gift of your word for a reminder we have that at times we feel ourselves so useless as your people we find ourselves feeling so incapable and incapable of sharing the word we have not the right answers we have this little hope in ourselves we bring all these worries to you as a reminder once more this evening of a gospel work as a work for all your people reminded this evening that the harvest fields that they are ready that they are white that they are loaded for harvest the workers are so few

Lord give us then each one of us this evening to follow the callings you've given us to give us the sense to make use of the skills you've given us to share and to engage and to support the gospel work in this place knowing that it's not our work not the work of this ministry not the work of this congregation it is your work and you will bring to you all your people not one will be lost and you do that by making full use of us as instruments in our redeemer's hands Lord help us then to understand the calling is great the burden is heavy but the joy it is full in our saviour and the privilege is a glorious one ask all these things relying on his strength and his alone in his name and for his sake Amen What else to close other than the words of Psalm 126

We sing them in the Sing Psalms Sing Psalms Psalm 126 Psalm 126 on page 171 Sing Psalms Psalm 126 Psalm Psalm 126 Psalm 126 Psalm 126 And looking at quite often this year When Zion's fortunes God restored It was a dream come true Our mouths were then with laughter filled Our tongues with songs anew The nations said the Lord has done great things for Israel The Lord had mighty things for us and joy our hearts new world Read the last verse together The man who bearing seed to sow goes out with tears of grief will come again with songs of joy bearing his harvest sheath Psalm 126 sing to God's praise Elka■.

Mit States whats, With laughter filled our hands with songs and youth.

Let nations say the Lord has come. If he aims for Israel.

[ 62 : 05 ] Then God did not give things for us. That joy had our hearts to end.

Restore their fortunes, Jesus' heart. Thy streets and desert soils.

Have joy for God. This will reward. The weeping so old as I am.

That my good feelings may it to snow. Go sad with tears of thee.

We'll come again with songs of joy. I'm bring in the Sabbath sea and sleep.

[ 63 : 33 ] You think of me. Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, both you now and forevermore. Amen.