

The Christian Hope

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Date: 31 December 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Good afternoon friends, brothers and sisters, we welcome everyone in the name of the Lord. A few intimations as always before we begin. First of all, of course, tomorrow, God willing, we have our New Year's Day service at 12 noon in the church.

So 12 noon tomorrow, of course, everyone welcome. And if anyone you know who is perhaps even considering coming along to the church, then tomorrow, please invite me along so you can begin the New Year in the best way possible.

So New Year's Day service here at 12 noon tomorrow. And next Sunday evening, another swap. I'm in Barvis again, but this time Mordor Campbell's coming here.

Last time you had Emma Critchie, so next week, Lord's Day evening, Mordor Campbell and myself are doing our swap. So you have Mordor and I'm off to Barvis. So please remember both of us in prayer for that.

This doesn't matter to any of you, but next week, I should say. So a week tomorrow, I'm heading off for a few days to Edinburgh for my in-service training.

[1 : 0 7] Every minister has to do it, every new minister has to do it. So it's my first time going away for three or four days to Edinburgh. The training schedule looks good, it looks quite intense. And it's hopefully, when I return back to you, I'll share with you some of the learning points we cover together.

So just keep myself in prayer too, that it's a worthwhile time for us. There's about 20 of us, 20 ministers, gathering together for that training in Edinburgh. We've been used to follow next week with our schedule of our Bible study in advance, and also our schedule for our fellowships, our monthly fellowships, which we'll start and have in place, God willing, this year.

So Bible study, our next session will take place at some point in January, and in our fellowships, we'll begin again in the hall after our evening services. That's all our intimations.

We're remembering in prayer today, as always, we're trying to remember at least one local congregation, one free church congregation, and also one wider mission concern. This morning with a member of Badenoch, we give God praise for them.

They're a small congregation, but they're a growing congregation. They are seeking to reach out to their community, and even the last two months, I was reading, they've managed to get real access to the various Shinty clubs in their area.

[2 : 3 0] and there's a lot of chaplaincy work going on with these clubs so please do pray and remember Badenoch. We also bring before the Lord in our prayer later on Dumasani. They of course are the training college, a theological college based in South Africa.

The Free Church once provided plenty of funding for it but the reality is they're a college in their own right and they've grown in such a way that we now as a Free Church stand back and they're in full complete control of their own education and their own training.

We pray for them, for the students who are trained to be ministers and the students who are there seeking to serve the Lord in their own country, in their own nation, in that great nation of Africa where the Lord has blessed his work for thousands of years now.

We're here to worship the Lord together. We can do so by singing to his praise from the Scottish Psalter and Psalm 116. That's on page 395 of the blue psalm book.

Scottish Psalter, Psalm 116 on page 395. We can sing verses 1 down to verse 7 of the psalm.

[3 : 47] Psalm 116, verses 1 down to verse 7. Psalm 116, verses 1 to 7.

To God's praise. Thank you. We sing it forever. My Lord, Lord, because my voice Am prayer shaded here I, while I live, will call on him, through the turning is the end.

O, let the hearts and song rosters about me, in this act.

The streams of healthy walked me and gave me proofs of my mind.

The crowned in upon the earth, Lengthen by God and save.

[5 : 43] In the earth, my soul, Lord, Lengthen by God and save.

The crowned in upon the earth, The crowned in upon the earth, God's kingdom in thy works, The crowned in upon the earth, The crowned in upon the earth, For you then return unto thy fire.

The crowned in upon the earth, The crowned in upon the earth, The crowned in upon the earth, Let's join together in a word of prayer.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Amen. Lord our God, we come before you this day, And we humble ourselves down before you.

We come before you, And we come before a holy and sovereign God. There is nothing this day hid from you. We come before you just now, A God who has created us, A God who sustains us, Who sees us and who knows us.

[7 : 51] A God who has known us from before time itself, Before creation, In the courts of eternity, You knew us. It was in your perfect plan to one day create us.

We would live our lives in this time and in this place. Help us then to have a view this day, A true view that we come before a holy God, One who is eternally unlike us in so many ways.

You are perfect in all that you do. You are holy and righteous in all your actions. That your days are unending. You are eternal.

As we look to ourselves, We see ones who are not holy. We are not perfect in what we say or what we do, What we think or how we act. We are those who again and again go against that holiness.

Our days are not eternal. We have a beginning and, as we all know, We have an end. We come this day not to a distant God.

[9 : 00] Yes, you are sovereign, but you are not uncaring. Yes, you are holy and other to us, But you have not remained far away from us. We come this day to a God who has made yourself known Through the giving of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for that gift. As we've been hearing this past month, That you gave of yourself the only begotten Son, The greatest gift that has ever been sent or received.

The one through whom, if we believe in who he is and what he has said, That we can have the sure and certain hope of eternal life.

Not based on who we are or what we have done. Not based on our history or our lineage. But based on his finished work. Based on his love for his people.

We give you praise we've had the opportunity to spend this month. As it were, looking up. Reminding ourselves as to the beauty and the glory of Jesus. As to the wonder what it is to worship and know and serve and praise the living Saviour.

[10 : 09] Who became like us in all ways apart from sin. Who took on human flesh. Who lived a real life. Who was hungry and thirsty.

Who was a baby needed looking after by his mother and father. Who grew up. Who had friends. Who suffered day after day for the sake of his people.

As to him we come this day bowing ourselves down before him. The one who calls his people. Not just his disciples. But he calls his people his friends.

I give you praise that we as your people here today. Those of us here who know and who love Jesus. We can say that he is our friend. And we can mean that and know that to be true.

For we enter into this new year. Knowing our closest and greatest friend. Is the Lord Jesus Christ. The one who created all of us. The one through whom all creation was made.

[11 : 09] Who sustains this very creation just now. By the word of his power. We ask that Jesus would be known and loved by all in this place today.

We give you praise for this gathering. We understand we are here as a mixed gathering. We all have different stories. Different family situations. Private situations. Different personal situations.

We bring before you today. We bring before you today. Just now all the pains and worries and burdens. Which we bring to this place. We bring just now before you all the pain.

All the hurt. All the anxiety and darkness of this past week. Lord you know our stories individually. We also bring to you the responsibilities.

Responsibilities which perhaps weigh on many of us of this coming week. Personal responsibilities. Family. Perhaps work. Lord you know our exact situations. Lord be with us we ask.

[12 : 06] We bring these many things. These things which distress us and distract us. We bring them to the throne of grace. That place where you promise your people will find mercy and peace and grace to help in time of need.

We come before you just now especially at this time of year. We are understanding that whilst it's a time of great joy and great celebration. As we think of the giving of your son. As we think of the beginning of this new year.

We are very mindful that there are many even here today. And across our community. That this time of year it is a hard time of year. We pray just now for those mourning recent loss.

Even this past week Lord we bring before you once more that mourning family who we gathered around. Lord just a few days ago. We pray for them as a wider family. We pray Lord your blessing on them.

We pray that you be with them and support them. As they come to terms. At this awful time of year. With the loss of a mother Lord. We do ask that your spirit would comfort them and be with them.

[13 : 14] And as we feel ourselves so lacking of words to say. That you would support them. We also bring before you those who have lost loved ones in this congregation. In this community. This past year.

We know even some are amidst here who have lost loved ones and precious people to them. Lord we ask you be with them and support them. We pray just now for those mourning a loss perhaps of many years ago.

As this time of year brings all the memories good and painful back to the fore. We ask Lord you be with them also. And again comfort them with your word this day. With the glorious hope we read in a short while.

That there is hope to be found in Jesus. There is life. And there is love. For it is mercy. And there is kindness to be found in the risen saviour.

As we pray for ourselves. We remember the wider gospel work in this island. We pray for all the various congregations today. Which are worshipping you in spirit and in truth. Across the denominations.

[14 : 13] We give you praise that you are not bound by denomination. We pray Lord for the gospel cause across this island. We remember our brothers and sisters next door. As they seek to worship you also this day.

We pray for the wider good of North Tulsa. We thank you for placing us here. We ask once more that you would bring your gospel to be a glorious shining gospel in this place.

We pray just now for those here who do not and who have never perhaps prayed for themselves. Pray for many households in this place who have no knowledge of the wonder or the beauty of the glory of Jesus.

We bring them before you. We pray just now Lord for those here who have never heard the gospel. Lord we ask that even this new year. It will be a year they hear the gospel for the first time.

The glorious good news of Jesus. That they were made with a purpose. They were made to worship and to know you. There can be hope for them. There can be joy for them.

[15 : 11] There can be life for them. There can be life for them if only they would come back to the one who made them and who knows them. We ask that for our village. We ask that for our own families.

For our own loved ones. For those who are in our minds just now. Those who we love so dearly. But who as of yet show no care for their souls. No concern for their eternity.

Lord we bring them before you today. Give you praise that you have chosen us to be witnesses to them. Help us in our witness to be faithful. Help us not to be a bad witness.

Help our conduct and our words and our actions. To show the glorious love of our Savior. Forgive us for the times that we as a church and we as members of a church have been a bad witness to this.

A bad witness to this congregation, to this community, to our family and friends. Where our words and our actions have not matched with our profession. Lord forgive us for these things.

[16 : 07] We bring just now before you. Especially the congregation in Badenoch. We thank you for them. Lord we pray for the inroads we have made this past year into the school. Into the various other community groups.

We also pray with them. Especially as they have done good work with the Shinti teams there. In that area Lord we thank you for them. Thank you Lord for your people there who are striving to serve you well.

We also bring before you just now the many years of legacy in Dumasani Bible College down in South Africa. As they serve the Cape there.

We pray Lord for the many students who attended that facility over the years. We pray Lord that you are building your church in every corner of this world. We give you praise that perhaps where we see days of less growth of ourselves perhaps.

We see the gospel flourishing in nations and in places of this world that are so far away from us. We give you praise Lord for the flourishing gospel in parts of Africa.

[17 : 11] As we hear the gospel flourishing in Ethiopia. The gospel flourishing in Sudan and Kenya and places perhaps in these nations where the gospel seems so unlikely to flourish. You are building your church there.

For safety for our brothers and sisters in these places. As we face great persecution even from our families for daring to share the gospel. We also thank you once more for the gospels that flourishes in Central Asia.

In various countries there Lord we pray especially just now for Steadfast Global. That local organisation who do an amazing work amongst your people. And we pray Lord for them just now as they seek to serve you this new year.

As they go out to certain countries and do their quiet work of encouraging your people. Thank you Lord for the places where once there was no gospel.

Once there was no hope. You are building your church there and your people are growing in their faith and love of you. Pray just now for this world.

[18 : 12] We feel ourselves so removed at times. So small. So helpless to help in any meaningful way. Help us never to forget that we have access to the throne room of heaven.

Help us then Lord to remember to take in prayer to you the hurting and the pain of this world. To remember the ongoing conflicts. There are many conflicts in this world we have no understanding of.

And we have even no idea that are going on. But we bring just now before you once more the conflicts we see in the Middle East. Lord, I pray Lord for the hurting and the pain we see in Palestine and Gaza and those in Israel.

As at times quite literally brothers and sisters on both sides of that border are finding themselves mourning the loss of their families. Lord, we bring that situation to you.

The politics is beyond us. The understanding of it is beyond us. But we bring just now before you those who are in pain. Those who have lost loved ones. We also remember the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

[19 : 19] I pray Lord for your people in Ukraine today as they seek to worship you in spirit and in truth. We thank you Lord for that many of your people there. We hear good news of your church growing in that country. With many coming to love you and coming to serve you.

We also pray Lord for those who are in pain today. Those who have lost loved ones even this week as we hear of renewed strikes. The power of your people in Ukraine. We also remember your people in Russia as they seek to serve you in a difficult place in a difficult time.

We give you praise that you are building your church. And the very gates of hell will not prevail against it. Help us as we come to the conclusion of this year to look back and understand that every day we have had.

It's been a gift from you. Help us to look forward to this new year understanding. Not to waste time but to come to Jesus. The one who knows us. The one who lived and who gave up his life for us.

For all who come to him to be saved. To be saved eternally. It's in his name and it's for his sake we ask these many things. Asking forgiveness of all our sins. In his name and for his sake.

[20 : 28] Amen. Let's read in God's word. We have two passages to read. First of all from the Song of Solomon. That's on page 525.

It's a very easy book to skip past. Page 525 in the church Bibles. Song of Solomon page 525.

And afterwards we can turn to the book of Revelation. But first of all Song of Solomon. Page 525.

Song of Solomon chapter 2. Let's hear the word of God. I am a rose of Sharon.

I am a lily of the valleys. As a lily among brambles. So is my love among the young women. As an apple tree among the trees of the forest.

[21 : 26] So is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow. And his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house.

And his banner over me was love. Sustain me with raisins. Refresh me with apples. For I am sick with love. His left hand is under my head. And his right hand embraces me.

I adjure you. O daughters of Jerusalem. By the gazelles of the does of the field. That you stir not up. Or awaken love until it pleases. The voice of my beloved.

Behold he comes. Leaping over the mountains. Bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle. Or a young stag. Behold there he stands behind our wall.

Gazing through the windows. Looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me. Arise my love. My beautiful one. And come away. For behold the winter is past.

[22 : 28] The rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth. The time of singing has come. And the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.

The fig tree ripens its figs. And the vines are in blossom. They give forth fragrance. Arise my love. My beautiful one. And come away. O my dove.

In the clefts of a rock. In the crannies of a cliff. Let me see your face. Let me hear your voice. For your voice is sweet. And your face is lovely.

Catch the foxes for us. The little foxes that spoil the vineyards. For our vineyards are in blossom. My beloved is mine. And I am his. He grazes among the lilies.

Until the day breathes. And the shadows flee. Turn my beloved. Be like a gazelle. Or a young stag. On cleft mountains. Now turning to the last book.

[23 : 24] In the scripture. Revelation. I read two short sections. First of all. Revelation chapter 21. Revelation chapter 21.

On page 977. Revelation 21. Page 977. We read verses 1.

Down to verse 8. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city.

New Jerusalem. Coming down out of heaven from God. Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying. Behold.

The dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them. And they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God.

[24 : 23] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning. Nor crying. Nor pain anymore.

For the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said. Behold. I am making all things new. Also he said. Write this down.

For these words are trustworthy and true. And he said to me. It is done. I am the alpha and the omega. The beginning and the end. To the first tree I will give.

From the spring of water of life. Without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage. And I will be his God. And he will be my son.

And turning to the last section. Of chapter 22. Verse 12.

[25 : 22] Chapter 22 verse 12. The last words of scripture. Behold I am coming soon. Bringing my recompense with me. To repay each one for what he has done. I am the alpha and the omega.

The first and the last. The beginning and the end. And the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes. So that they may have a right. To the tree of life. And that they may enter the city by the gates.

Outside of the dogs and sorcerers. The sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters. And everyone who loves and practices falsehood. I Jesus. Have sent my angel.

To testify to you. About these things for the churches. I am the root. And the descendant of David. The bright morning star. The spirit and the bride say come.

And let the one who hears say come. Let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires take the water of life. Without price. I warn everyone who hears the words.

[26 : 20] Of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to them. God will add to him. The plagues described in this book. If anyone takes away from the words. Of the book. Of this prophecy.

God will take away his share. In the tree of life. And in the holy city. Which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things. Says.

Surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus. Be with all. Amen. Give praise to God.

For his holy. And his perfect. Word. We can again sing. To God's praise. Carrying on the psalm that we had. The Scottish Psalter. Psalm 116.

Scottish Psalter. Psalm 116. And carrying on. From where we left off. Psalm 116. Verse 8. On page 396. Psalm 116.

[27 : 19] Verse 8. Down to verse 16. For my distressed soul from death. Delivered was by thee. Thou didst my mourning eyes from tears.

My feet from falling free. I in the land of those that live. Will walk the Lord before. I did believe. Before I spake. I was afflicted. Sore.

Psalm 116. Verses 8. To 16. To God's praise. For my distressed soul from death. In heaven I was by thee. That this my mourning eyes from. tears.

My feet from falling. ZANG. To God's praise. To God's praise. To God's praise. That this my mourning eyes from tears. In heaven I was my dear, The mist my holy eyes on tears, My feet from falling clear, I knew that I was so sad, And will what I work before, I knew that I was so sad, Therefore I say I was a figure's soul,

I said when I was in my face, The moment I was here, O child of heaven, Thank you, the Lord, For all my sins to me, I hope salvation, Take the cross, On God's King will I fall,

[30 : 02] I will my heart now to the Lord, Before it be the Lord, Dear God's King will I fall, I will my heart now, I will my heart now, I will my heart now, I will my heart now, I will my heart now, I will my heart now, I will my heart now, I will my heart now,

And turn back to the chapter we had in the Song of Solomon, Song of Solomon chapter 2, Focusing on verses 8, down to verse 14, Now the hope is that both today, and this evening, we'll look at these verses, So this afternoon looking at verses 8, down to verse 13, then this evening, with the Lord's help looking together at verse 14, And our two sermons, our whole section today, this morning we're seeing, hoping to answer the question from these verses, Where are we going?

And this evening seeing, the question, Where are we now? Or, where are we going, and where he finds us?

We've covered chapters and sections of the Song of Solomon before, just to refresh us, this, at the very base level, was a song, written by Solomon, to his beloved, this is a love song, and there's no shame in saying that, on one level that is true, but again and again, throughout the Song of Solomon, we see that there's something, underlying that love song, there is something deeper taking place, there's something more about this song.

This is a song, which from the very early church, right up to today, it is clear for the Christian, as we read through this, this is a song, which speaks of Jesus, and the church, Jesus, and his beloved people.

[32 : 50] And these two things, there's no problem in taking these two things together. It's really a modern problem, perhaps, that we, if we're honest, sometimes cringe a bit, and think, when we speak of such loving, glorious terms, and apply it to us, and our Saviour.

That kind of came in with the Victorians. Before that time, the church had no problem, no problem at all. If you read any of the Puritans at all, read Calvin, read any of the reformers, before that, read the early church fathers, they have no problem speaking, in beautiful ways, for the love that Jesus has for us, as his people.

We'll cover, God willing, this year, but Paul tells us, does he not, that the, the very institute of marriage itself, what is the theological purpose of marriage?

Why did God give us marriage? Theologically speaking, it's to be a mirror, a mirror, to show us, Christ and his church. It's the closest we can get on earth, to seeing the, the love of that.

We'll cover that, the Lord's help, this new year at some point. All that to say, when we read this, we're reading about the love of Jesus, for his church. That's the whole sermon itself, how we show that, how we prove that.

[34 : 14] But for our time together today, that is how we're seeing it. And that is what these verses show us. So this morning, looking together, this afternoon, looking together from verse eight, down to verse 13, with the question, where are we going?

As we spend time together in these verses, for the Christians here today, brothers and sisters, these verses remind us of our future hope. Not our hope of this new year, but our future hope.

But one day, as those who love the Lord, when we close our eyes, in this reality, and open them in the next, what does that mean for us?

How do we understand that? What hope does that give us? And for those here today, we give you praise for everyone here today, we give the Lord praise for you, for our friends, who have been here perhaps for many years, for many decades.

But as of yet, you can't say that you know Jesus. You can't yet say you love him. As we spend time in these verses, just hear for yourself, perhaps for the tenth time, a hundredth time, hear for yourself the glorious hope that can be yours today, if you come and believe in Jesus yourself.

[35 : 32] This hope could be yours too. So where are we going? Just under three very broad headings. First of all, his beauty, then his call, then his promise.

So his beauty, his call, and then his promise. First of all, his beauty. The voice of my beloved, behold, he comes leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills.

My beloved is like a gazelle, or a young stag. Behold, that he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. This past month, as a congregation, we've tried to, in every sermon, as it were, look up.

Every sermon, we try and we hope we preach Jesus. That is our goal, that's our aim. But this month, especially, we've tried to focus on the beauty of who Jesus is, the wonder, the glory, what it is to know him, and to follow him.

I would end this year by looking just at these few verses. And how the beauty of our Saviour, what it means for us, when we think towards our future, our eternal future.

[36 : 44] His beauty. There is great beauty in verses 8 and verse 9. First of all, note how he speaks. The voice of my beloved.

This is the church speaking. Christian, this is you speaking. The voice of my beloved. As the woman thinks through these verses, this is her thinking back to what her beloved said to her.

This is us as Christians, us as the church, thinking through the glorious promises and truth of our Saviour. And as we think of our Saviour, we realise he speaks to us.

As we said in our prayer, we don't come to church worshipping an unknown, distant, far away Saviour. We come to worship today a Saviour who is close to his people.

A Saviour who has shown his love for his people and is coming down to live alongside us. One who speaks to his people. We aren't here on a Sunday trying our best to work out what God is saying to us.

[37 : 49] It's not some elaborate thing that goes on. I hope you know this, but just in case you're surprised when you talk to people, they think sermons are written.

There is no secret magic going on in that study. When we put sermons together as ministers, we sit and we pray and we read and we pray and we read and we think and we read and we pray.

We go to God's words. We find help in our places, of course, but we go to God's word. As Christians, you have access, the same as I do, to God's word. We keep saying this, but the only difference between the Christian and the minister who's serving is that I've got more time to spend in God's word.

That's what you're paying me for. Quite simply. We all have equal access to God's word. We can all hear God's voice in the same way as we turn to his word. And we all hear the Savior as he speaks to his beloved.

There are so many voices in our lives which demand and require our attention. Now, some of these voices are valid voices. Those we love and those we perhaps care for.

[39 : 01] Family and friends and work commitments. All these things are important. And their voices, as it were, we must listen to. But over and above all these other things, it's his voice which we listen to the most.

Because he speaks to his people. And he does so in love. And his is the only voice who is speaking life to us.

Who is speaking hope to those of us who are weary, who are storm-battered this past year. As we come to the end of this year, with all the voices in our heads, all the demands and requests, responsibilities and burdens, anxieties, sadnesses, pains, whatever else going on in our minds today.

We come to a Savior who speaks to his people clearly, singly in love. And for his people here today, we can know for certain he speaks to us in love.

And we'll see that more, God willing, this evening. My beloved, his voice. And look how the beloved is described.

[40 : 13] As he speaks to his church, behold, he comes leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. This flies in the face, perhaps, of how the world views how we love Jesus.

When the world, perhaps, when those who don't know Jesus think of Jesus, they see him, perhaps, as a good man. They see him, perhaps, as God even. But he's somehow there. Just out of touch.

And we have to go to him all the time. And try and live good lives to impress him. Try and live lives to somehow keep him happy. What do we see in this verse?

Who's doing the movement? The beloved comes towards us. Leaping like a young stag. With the virality, with the joy, with that movement we see as the stags jump our fences into our gardens.

It was the simplicity of movement. Our Savior bounds towards us. We couldn't go to him. We can't impress him. We can't do enough, as it were, to be holy enough to please him.

[41 : 27] So he instead comes to us. And even here, there's more than that going on. The Savior, he loves us enough. And he calls us precious so much that he spends time with us.

For us to spend time with him and him to spend time with us, it's not a burden to him. It gives him great joy to do so. He bounds towards us. Every day, Christian, you wake up and you live your life.

Dear brother, dear sister, you are living your life beside and walking alongside a Savior who loves you. And you know that. You've heard that. But we see here a Savior who is, as it were, joyous to be beside you.

Who is bounding towards you and has love for you. He doesn't have to. But he wants to. Because he loves you. His voice is glorious.

He has great joy in being beside us and getting to us. But there's something going on here. He comes close to us. But note, behold, where he stands behind our wall.

[42 : 37] Gazing through the windows. Looking through the lattice. As we pray to our Savior. As we talk to Jesus. As we spend time in his word.

And spend time in fellowship with him. The reverend of your sister. There's times, isn't there, we feel so close to him. There's times we know he is so close to us. And we feel that.

It's not all about feelings. He is always close to his people. Whether we feel it or not. Feelings change. He does not. But there's times, isn't there, in this life. Where you're so close.

You could almost just touch us at where he is. But there's always a distance. As close as it is, there's always a distance. What is the distance?

The distance is, of course, the reality that we are here. And physically and bodily we are here in this world of sin. But the day is coming when this distance we see here is closed.

[43 : 38] We love him. And we can get so close to him in this life. So close. It's like looking at him, as it were, through a lattice. But then we see of days coming where that lattice is gone.

Where that closeness is not just close. That closeness is full togetherness. What are these days? Well, that's the day of our death as a Christian. So the Lord calls us from this life to the next.

For all the love and all the peace and all the joy of the Christian experiences in this world from our Savior. It is not comparable to the love and peace and joy we will receive from him in the world to come.

We see that here in the call of the Savior. Our second point here. Verse 10. My beloved speaks to me and says, Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

Here we see the call to arise. The Christians here, we heard a similar call in our lives. The point that Jesus came to save us. The point where you were taken from death to life, from darkness to light.

[44 : 51] At some point in your story, for some of us here, it was an instant clear, as it were, thunderbolt and lightning bolt from heaven. For others of us, myself included, it was a gradual, slow process where you just realized that you now knew him and loved him.

Whatever your story might be. At some point for every Christian here, there was a call to our lives where a Savior spoke to us and said to us, I love you. You are mine.

I have forgiven you. I have rescued you. I have taken on myself the punishment of your sins. And you're beloved to me. That's happened to every Christian here.

But here we see a future call that every Christian will hear. At some point in our lives. At some point, we will close our eyes to this world and open them in the next.

And this is not just some airy, gradual, just out there hope we have. This is the Christians' very real hope. We are just saying this as a pep talk to start this new year.

[46 : 01] This is real. And we believe this and we know this to be true. And our Savior one day will call to each one of us. And he will say to us, to arise.

Arise. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. I'm willing to say that I don't think there's probably not a single person here today who doesn't in some way associate this time of year with all the joy.

We said in our prayer, but just speaking honestly. With all the joy of this year, there's not one person here, I'm sure. There's not some sadness that comes along this time of year. For some of us here, there's sadness around this exact time, this exact month or two.

And for others here, it's sadness of death this past year, this past 10 years, 20 years, as reminders, anniversaries come and go. And we read this verse.

And for those of us who have loved ones who have gone to be with the Lord, those of us who have loved ones who knew and who loved Jesus as their Savior, this verse is what gives us hope, doesn't it?

[47 : 16] For all the reality of the pain, the physical pain and the physical sadness of death. We're not downplaying that for a second.

But it's great pain, great sadness. No one is looking forward to the physical reality of death. But here we're speaking more than that. We're speaking to the great hope of the Christian.

We close our eyes in this world, no matter how long the struggle up to us closing our eyes might be, how painful that journey might have been for us as Christians. We have the hope we will hear from our Savior, words similar to, arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

The call to come away. Come away from this world. Come away from the sin and the pain and the darkness and the sadness. Come away from the years of worry, the years of sadness, the years of great longing.

And come back to me. And note, it's a command. It's a loving command, but it's still a command. It's one spoken in great authority and great power.

[48 : 25] The very grammar of that is a command. You've got an exclamation mark after arise. Arise. A loving command, but a command that reminds us that he alone has the power to tell his people to arise and to come to himself.

And what's the call to? Or where's the call to? As our beloved one speaks to his beloved people at the point of death, and he calls us to arise, my love, my beautiful one.

Note how he calls his church. Note the love of our Savior towards his church. We may be a bit squeamish. We may be a bit strange at using such words in our church building. Jesus is not.

He is happy to call us his love. He is happy to call us his beloved. There's no shame for him. There's no embarrassment for him. He loves us so much. He can use his glorious terms for us.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. Where are we going to? We come away into his promise.

[49 : 30] Our third short point here, his promise. And here, verses 11 down to verse 13, we see given us in images just the beauty and the glory of heaven that awaits the Lord's people.

And it's given images that we can understand because the true beauty of it is beyond understanding. We read in Revelation, but even there, the Lord uses building terms to help us understand it.

He speaks of New Jerusalem. He speaks of a new walled city. But we know that this is just human word to help us understand a spiritual reality so far beyond what we can begin to understand.

And here we see the same thing. Here, heaven is described in terms of things we know on earth. How is heaven described? When a Christian is called out of his life into glory, where is a Christian called to?

A Christian is called to a place, verse 11, where winter has passed. There's no more cold. There's no more darkness.

[50 : 39] There's no more, as it were, waking up and seeing a dark, cold world outside. There is no more darkness of power cuts, as it were. There is no more darkness of night.

Winter has passed. He spent any time with C.S. Lewis. That's the Narnia book summarized. That is how he chose to describe the winning of Aslan.

The power of good. The power of life triumphing. Winter has passed. Winter has passed. The rain has gone.

All the floods and misery of this life. As the storm floods battered up against your door, dear Christian. Day after day after day. All the years of your life.

All the various things you had to worry about and work through. All the family emergencies. All your health emergencies. All the pains and darkness. All the floods as they came pouring down on top of you.

[51 : 41] It's all gone. The winter has passed. The rain is over and gone. And you go now to a place where there's life. So much life.

The flowers appear on the earth. The image here is winter into an eternal spring. An eternal summer.

There is growth as the flowers grow. That symbol of new life. It's read in Revelation. As Christians we will exist in a place with ever flowing water coming from the throne of God.

That symbol that he is giving us eternal, never ending, glorious life. That is the hope of the Christian. A place of growth. Of eternal growth.

Never ending growth. As we grow in love for our saviour. In love for one another. Day by day. For all the endless days of eternity. The flowers appear on the earth.

[52 : 42] And my own personal favourite line in this whole beautiful poetry section here. The time of singing has come. The time of singing has come.

We sing many songs in this world. At times we sing songs of joy of course. But at times we must sing as aware songs of great sadness. Mourning songs. If you think back to the induction.

Reverend Ian McRaeutri. He told many truths about me. Which have caused me great trouble since I came here. But one truth he said. That I love a good Gaelic song. And when you look at all.

Even our own culture. All the Gaelic songs we have. I did this for the degree. I won't bore you with my findings. But when you do a study of all the Gaelic songs we have. Collected and collated.

The great majority of them. They're coping with sadness. They're coping with pain. Is that because we're a miserable bunch up here?

[53 : 45] No. It's because our lives are overwhelmingly one of coping with sadness. Coping with pain. Coping with disappointment. But now in glory.

Our hope is. It's a time of singing. Of joy. Of dance. That is the beauty we're heading towards. And finally.

The fig tree. Ripens its figs. The vines and them blossom. They give forth fragrance. There's no more the scent of decay.

No longer the scent of death. No longer the. Even the sight of decaying plants. Everything is in continual bloom.

Continual blossom. Fig tree. Ripens its figs. There's food for all. Now physically that may well be true of new heavens and new earth. That's our worry today.

[54 : 45] But spiritually speaking. Symbolically speaking. There's no more lack. There's nothing more to be deprived of. There is resource for all eternity.

There's figs for all. And the vines and them blossom. Or literally at times also the vineyards you can see there. In other words. There's milk and wine.

There's bread and figs. There is all that you want. Of course. Figs and wine. Symbolically speaking. In Old Testament days. They are signs of God's blessing.

God promises his people. Full vineyards. Bursting forth of wine. Fig trees. Heavy laden with figs. To show times of prosperity.

An eternity of full prosperity. And the section is concluded here. By the repeating of the same phrase. As we look forward to all these great and glorious things.

[55 : 50] We look forward once more to healing the voice. Which says to us. To those who know and love Jesus. Arise. My love. My beautiful one.

And come away. Arise my love. My beautiful one. And come away. There is a future of hope. And glory.

For those who know and love the Lord. That is the sure hope. Of our sure future. As we come to an end of this year.

For those who have come to this place often. For those who come here every Sunday. Every Lord's Day. That you have heard the gospel. Preached.

Morning and evening. By myself and others. And you let me speak plainly. Just for a second. I don't do this lightly. But speak plainly for a second. For all the glory. And all the beauty.

[56 : 50] We've read about. And all the hope. And wonder. If you don't come to Jesus. Then you can. Take your hand. And block out.

That whole paragraph. It doesn't concern you. It's not something you'll ever get to see. Or know. Or spend time in. Or spend time with.

That's the bad news. The bad news must be there. Because the good news is. It's a very poignant meeting today. The good news is. Lord willing.

We begin a new year. But a few hours time really. And you can spend. And even you can bring in. This new year.

This evening. By knowing for certain. What I always said today. All the hope of the future. Can be yours. How? We know the answer about.

[57 : 45] Or remind us all how. We come to know the one. Who promises. To love. His people. Come and know Jesus. Not by some means.

Of some. Strange activity. No. There's no secret handshakes. For us. No. There's no secret ceremony. No. You come. To him. In prayer.

You've never prayed before. Good. Doesn't matter. What words to say. Doesn't matter. You come to him. And in your own words. In your own words. You say words.

Or themes. To the effect of. Lord. Lord. I've not done this before. I don't know what I'm saying. But I know. That you promised life. To all who come to you.

I know I've done things against you. I know I've sinned. Against you. But I trust. That you promised me. Eternal life. If only I come to you.

[58 : 40] Dear friend. Come to Jesus. I've. Said this. I'll say it. For as long as you have me here. I keep seeing the same request. Come to Jesus. We saw the last few weeks.

How simple it is. The gospel is simple. Come to Jesus. And be saved. We add things onto it. Don't we? We add arms and legs. And rules and regulations.

And to our shame. We do that. And to our shame. One day. We may. Come to face. The consequences of that. But as Christians. Once more. We came to know Jesus.

By coming to know him. We came to. Our salvation in him. By saying to him. Lord save me. And he saved us. There is nothing else to it.

For your salvation. The price has been paid. Jesus says. He has paid it all. In his body on the cross. Therefore. Come to me. Who? All who are heavy laden.

[59 : 37] Well that's all of us. Isn't it? And he promises rest. He promises salvation. And as we heard today. He promises the full glory. Of all these verses.

Can be your future too. You haven't come this year. And you've done many good things. I'm sure this year. You've had a good year. I'm sure in many ways.

I certainly hope you have. But our genuine prayer. And again. If I could. Put on my hoodie.

And step down. And talk to you all normally. If I would help it. I would. If I could lock the doors. And preach you all individually. I would. It won't work. You can't be preached into heaven.

You can't be dragged into heaven. You must come yourself. Come and believe in the saviour. Who has done all the work for you.

[60 : 33] So this new year. As we'll hear tomorrow. With the Lord's help. You can know for certain. You begin this year. You're secure. And safe.

In Jesus. Because he has done. All the work for you. Our hope. And our prayer is. You will one day. With us. Hear the words of our saviour. Who says to us. And will one day say to us.

Arise my love. My beautiful one. And come away. Let's bow our heads now. A word of prayer. Lord we thank you. For the gift of your word. Thank you Lord.

For the promises we find. And especially as we've. Read today. The promise. That there is. Hope and life. And a glorious future. Awaiting all your people. Help us Lord.

As your people. To be encouraged by these messages. To be encouraged by these words of hope. As we go through the life. We lead just now. Life often times. Of hardness.

[61 : 28] And of darkness. A life often of pain. And sadness. We come just now. Asking Lord. You'd. Set our eyes on Jesus. The one who has gone before us. And made a way for us.

Who promises never to leave. Nor forsake us. Promises to be our elder brother. Our closest friend. With us every step of the journey. I pray once more for our friends here today.

We thank you for their presence here. Those who as of yet. Cannot say that this promise is theirs. We ask that even by the end of this day. We would have come. Perhaps even for the first time.

To truly understand and hear the gospel call. That you have come to save sinners. Of which we all are. Come to give hope to the hopeless. Come to give eternal life.

To those. Who have no way of earning it for themselves. You have paid the way for us. If only we would come to you. Help us Lord. We ask as we come to sing our item of praise.

[62 : 27] Give you praise Lord. For the one who leads it. We thank you Lord. For those who lead the worship week after week. Those who have led the worship this past year. For their diligence. And their willingness. To serve you in this glorious way.

Help us the rest of this day. To have our hearts and our minds focused on you. And bring us together again this evening in safety. Let's call these things in and through and for Jesus. In his glorious name's sake.

Amen. Let's bring our time to a conclusion. By singing to God's praise. Scottish Psalter once more. And this time in Psalm 73.

Scottish Psalter Psalm 73.

Verses 23 down to verse 26. This Psalm is once more a reminder for the Christians. That for all the pain and time drudgery of this life.

[63 : 31] We have a sure and certain hope. As verse 26 tells us. My flesh and heart doth faint and fail. But God doth fail me never. For of my heart God is a strength and portion forever.

Sing together Psalm 73 verses 23 down to verse 26. To God's praise. Like may of His ■■■■!

For God's praise. For God does not have sin.

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[64 : 45] And to thy glory after her receive it to the light.

And to thy glory after her receive it to the light.

Thy glory after her receive it to the light.

Thy glory after her receive it to the light. Thy glory after her receive it to the light.

Thy glory after her receive it to the light. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore.

[66 : 26] Amen.