

Advent Mission The Prisoner

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[0 : 00] Let it sink into your hearts and your minds while your eyes follow it on the page and your ears listen to my voice.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the land.

From the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Some sat in darkness and in gloom, prisoners in affliction and in irons, for they had rebelled against the words of God and spurned the counsel of the Most High.

Their hearts were bowed down with hard labor. They fell down with none to help. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

He brought them from out of darkness and gloom and broke their bonds asunder. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to the sons of men.

[1 : 16] For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron. Whoever is wise, let him give heed to these things.

Let men consider the steadfast love of the Lord. Please bow your head for the prayer that follows.

The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for the brightness shall the moon give light to you by night.

But the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. be, O Lord, our God, the light in our darkness.

Amen. I believe the core of Christianity is a relationship to the person, Jesus Christ.

It's not simply a set of religious practices like going to church, Bible study, giving to the poor, but these things can be inspired by a relationship with Jesus.

[2 : 37] Someone once described a religious man to me as one who went through the motions without knowing the Lord. I'm beginning with this distinction because it's relevant to the process that led to my conversion.

I've been exposed to religion ever since I was born. My dad was a Roman Catholic and my mom was a Baptist, converted Anglican, so the whole issue of religious education was very tense for a while in our house.

In marrying my dad, my mom had to agree to bring us up in the Roman Catholic tradition, but dad never went to church, so mom took us to the Anglican church. As a result, I was baptized a Roman Catholic, confirmed an Anglican, and subsequently introduced to Jesus.

I think the experience that influenced me the most as a teenager was the Christian exposure that I received at summer camp. It was an Anglican camp, and I know that some of you are familiar with Quebec Lodge in the eastern townships.

Anyway, during those three or four summers, I learned all about Jesus. I never knew Jesus as a person at this point, but through Bible studies, workshop, and worship services, I was learning more and more about what I think I was doing then was being religious.

[3 : 52] It's sort of as I described in the beginning, I was going through the motions, but I wasn't acting out of a relationship with Jesus. The unfortunate thing about this camp was that when we had completed high school, we were considered too old to go anymore.

There was no appropriate program or follow-up after that. Happily, that's changed now. But as a result of that, I felt rejected, and because I equated Christ with camp, I hadn't the reason, maturity, or context to continue in Christianity anymore.

So after high school, I spent three years in CEGEP, which is a community college before university. If you graduate in Quebec, you have to go to CEGEP before you can continue in university.

So I went three years in CEGEP, and I was a little walking stick of rebellion. I rebelled against anything that was moral, structured, or right. And by the time I had graduated from CEGEP, I was spent.

I was just empty. I was despairing, and I think I was just starving for any sort of truth. At one point, I would wake up in the morning, and if you'll excuse the expression, I had an overwhelming sense that I was just going to hell in a bucket.

[5 : 07] And each day got deeper and darker, and I just longed and ached for the wholesome fun that I used to know at camp, and for the joy and the peace that I thought the people at camp had.

So to get out of that state, I figured that God could help me, so I set out to find him. I was either looking for God, or I was looking to get that camp feeling back.

So I took a year off between CEGEP and McGill, and I joined a French missionary organization in Dano, Quebec. I must confess at this point, as desperate as I was to find God, and as convinced I was that he must live in this place, I hated it there.

I absolutely hated it. It was an old converted girl school. It was absolutely enormous. I couldn't count the number of rooms.

It was dark. It was damp. And the cook was vegetarian. Now, no offense to vegetarians, but I can't stand beans, millet, lentils, and pumpkins.

[6 : 19] We grew pumpkins in the garden, you see, so it didn't cost us any money to eat them. So we ate them, breakfast, lunch, and supper. I still get queasy at Halloween.

Anyway, to top it all off, my daily chore in this million-dollar mansion was to clean every single toilet in the whole house every single day.

I mean, this place was a real delight, let me tell you. I did learn a lot from that experience, and in retrospect, I'm grateful. But at the time, I could have thought a lot better things to do.

But the interesting thing about this place was that the people displayed those same characteristics of hope, joy, and peace that I had known in the people from camp, only this time it repelled me.

I think I thought they were hypocrites or just religious, so I was afraid to draw too close to them.

When they would gather to pray, I would go to the gym and shoot baskets by myself.

[7 : 17] Or when I still showed signs of this walking rebellion stick, you know? When they'd go and sing together, I would go and take a run down the road. But one day, I stopped.

I decided I wasn't going to run anymore. And I cornered one of the girls in the bathroom that I knew really did believe in God. And I asked her why she did. She was a little startled at first.

I was probably a little forward. I wanted to know. And when she regained her composure, she began to explain how she'd been involved in lots of rebellion herself.

See, that I already knew. But that she had found a relationship with Jesus. She described her love for him as though he were alive and interacting with her in very intimate ways.

And I have this impression. She spoke as though he were right there.

[8 : 15] She told me that when she got up in the morning, she dressed for him. And that struck me because I knew she'd been a dancer and involved in the nightclub scene. And so a comment like that was very significant to me.

So this I decided, this kind of intimacy and this kind of relationship I decided was what I was looking for. So I left her. I went to my room.

And in all sincerity, now I wasn't being religious at this point, in all sincerity, I got down on my knees and I made this prayer. I said, God, I know you're there, but I don't know who you are.

And I don't love you. You are not my Lord and you are not my King, but I want you to have that place in my life and do whatever it takes to show me this love too.

This was what I was looking for. This is why I had come to this terrible house in the first place. So shortly after I made this prayer, maybe a week, maybe two weeks later, I was reading my Bible.

[9 : 15] If you think at this point I was being religious, I was. It was one of the few times my roommate was in the room and I wanted to impress her with how good I was getting. So I read my Bible that morning. And I was reading in Matthew and it talked about, it said, the eye is the lamp of the body.

If your eyes are good, your whole body is good. And if your eyes are bad, your whole body is full of darkness. Now, I can't even today explain that verse theologically.

But very practically, what happened was I went to the bathroom to brush my teeth before going downstairs when suddenly there was just a little squirt of oil that came out of the corner of my right

eye.

And I didn't have a clue what was happening. I didn't know what that meant. I just knew that something had happened. So I yelled to the girl that I had previously cornered in the bathroom. Her name was Lynn and she was walking by. She had her arms full of sheets. And I said to her, Lynn, come here. Come and see this. And she, I mean, she had her arms full of sheets.

[10:20] She was going to the closet so she wouldn't come. So I pushed her out of my way. All the sheets came falling down. And I ran into my room where I saw my roommate.

And my roommate had a very frequent habit of praying. I mean, often I would walk into the room and she would be on her knees. And I knew that at least 50% of that time she was praying for me. She was worried I was going to hell in a bucket too. So I told her what had happened. And neither one of us knew what had happened. But we both knew that something had happened. So that afternoon I was compelled to leave my toilets for a while.

And I went back to my room. And I picked up my Bible that was open at the verse in Matthew. The eye is the lamp of the body. And I suddenly understood that a lamp can't shine unless it has oil. A lamp doesn't give light unless you put oil in it. And I realized that I'd always been a lamp. But I had lived in darkness. And somehow God had miraculously filled my lamp with oil.

[11:22] So now I could live in light. And it was at that point, the point of that incident, that I had the revelation of my answered prayers too.

That I would know and love Jesus. And that he would make himself my King and my Lord. I finally knew in my own experience the intimacy of knowing the living Jesus.

And I knew Jesus. Not just about Jesus, like I knew at camp. But I actually knew Jesus. And I knew the Jesus that Lynn, the girl in the bathroom, was talking about.

Well, that was five years ago. A little over five years ago. And I'm still getting to know Jesus in deeper and more intimate ways. But I'd like to add that my Bible is no longer just a printed page or a story about Jesus.

But that the words in my Bible now offer life in a way that I hope you can discover too. Thank you. Prisoners in affliction and in irons.

[12:29] And you will have seen sketched before your eyes tonight the terrible reality of the prison in which we live.

And it's not a prison that is merely iron bars and stone walls and brass doors.

It's a prison that's much harder to escape than that because it's a prison which we have created for ourselves. And it's not an unusual thing that you find people in everyday circumstances in pubs or in coffee shops or gathered for lunch or wherever they have a chance to talk to one another or casually run into one another they talk in terms of the terrible prison of their own lives and the desperate need they have to break out of that prison.

And that prison may well be their job. And they're caught. Caught much more firmly than mere manacles around their wrists and leg irons around their ankles they're caught by the necessity of a perpetuation of things that they can't escape from.

The sun is up and up must I to wash and dress and God knows why ten thousand times I've washed and dressed and all's to do again.

[14:21] That that's a song of imprisonment. And you don't have to travel very far on the bus to hear someone talking in that way.

You hear people talking about the prison house of their marriage and how they want desperately to escape from it and sometimes haven't the courage to escape from it but it's all described in terms of chains and being tied down and having no freedom and having nothing to yourself.

And so they describe marriage in that way. They describe their world in that way sometimes because of their sick minds that their mind is so entrapped with fear or paranoia of some kind that they cannot escape from the network that their mind has caught them in so that they are imprisoned by it and imprisoned by fears.

We take an enormous amount of trouble to teach people in our society to be afraid and so people are very often locked up by their fears so that they become virtually paralyzed and totally immobilized.

And many people are caught in in the prison house of idealisms which they have they have sought to to build a house from certain religious or political ideals and that very house has become a terrible prison.

[16:13] It's very interesting that one of the families I visited in this parish once upon a time described to me how he attended one of the private schools over on the island where he went to chapel twice a day for six years and that gave him enough religion for the whole of his life.

Now I'm sure you've heard that a whole lot of times because I certainly have and he was nobly going to spare his children that terrible fate that he himself had suffered and keeping them strictly away from religion.

The only thing that he was afraid of was that one of the sects would get them and lock them into a prison house because they didn't know any better. They didn't understand what was going on. And so there's those kinds of prisons too. So all our life is marked by the expressions of the sense of being chained to our duties, tied to a program, caught in a job.

It's all there and we are the very thing that we thought was going to free us is the thing that ties us down.

[17:39] A young friend of mine, an engineer, got married and got a job and got a mortgage and it was a terrible spiritual crisis for him because he didn't want to lock himself into our society by a long, almost endless program of financial repayments on a mortgage.

He wanted some kind of freedom but he had to tie himself in just like everybody else tied themselves in. And so we begin to resent our society, we begin to resent the prison house in which we find ourselves, we begin to resent why it is that we sit in darkness and in gloom.

Look again at the passage and you will see that there are certain characteristics of this imprisonment which are featured as you read the story.

The darkness and gloom is the darkness and gloom. I mean, they didn't have problems with electric lights when they wrote Psalm 107.

darkness and gloom was something within themselves, it was something in their own minds, and Paul describes it in his epistle to the Romans in the first chapter when he says, for although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened.

[19:24] That darkness and gloom comes because understanding, which may be at a time in our lives contained the furthest horizons, gradually closes in on us and in on us and we understand less and less and less and then we come right down to the heart of our existence which is ourselves and we understand that the ultimate darkness is that we don't even understand ourselves.

so we're trapped in darkness and in gloom, the futility of our thinking because, as Paul says, they knew God but they didn't honor him as God.

The second way that it describes our imprisonment is by saying that they were prisoners in affliction and in irons.

So not only was their mind darkened and in gloom so that they had no understanding, but this imprisonment that we create for ourselves is the physical limitations that are set upon us as we find ourselves caught in this psalm in irons.

The terrible physical limitation. situation. You can imagine what it must be like to be in a cell where it's impossible to stand up straight, it's impossible to lie down.

[21:01] The kind of cells that were provided by the North Vietnamese for American troops during the war, where there simply wasn't the possibility and it was a terribly physically cramping reality.

And people try, I think, and resist that sense of being imprisoned in their own bodies by trying to burst out of it and to find themselves free and physically able to use their bodies to the maximum to, as it were, be a Jonathan Livingston seagull and to go way beyond the normal barriers of our physical being and to enjoy some sense of tremendous physical freedom.

It is a discouragement to me to discover that in the gym next door we have a tremendous constituency that come there week after week to find some freedom from the imprisonment of their bodies through physical exercise, to break out of the illness and the weakness and the crampedness of having to live the whole of our lives in this seriously handicapped body of ours.

for in reality most of us suffer far more handicaps than we think in our physical being. And through exercise and through diet we do all that we can to try and escape the imprisonment to our bodies which is spoken of here when it says we are prisoners in affliction and in irons.

It's very interesting though that there is a kind of interesting contrast there because we become very conscious of the food we eat and very conscious of the air we breathe and we don't want to contaminate our physical bodies but the garbage that we allow to go through our minds day after

day after day is enough to poison us beyond all hope.

[23 : 34] We're funny that way. The third way in which it describes our imprisonment is when it says their hearts were bowed down with hard labor.

Now the heart in the Old Testament is the really center of our human personality. Who you are as a person is bent over double by hard labor.

Minds darkened, bodies cramped, and hearts bent over in hard labor. That's the picture of the imprisonment.

Again, it's not imposed from outside. It's what we do to ourselves. It's the reality of our own human circumstance that is being described so eloquently in the song.

And the condition of so many men in our society who are so utterly given to the demands of their work that the very core of their person is imprisoned.

[24 : 45] It's doubled over with the pressure of constant work so that they cannot stand up. So that the very center of their being, their heart, is bowed down with this.

That's what happens to us in our society. And I don't know how we are to understand it or what we are to do about it, the consequences of it, that we are imprisoned so that our relationship to the people around us, to wife and to children, let alone to ourselves, is so twisted and so damaged and so hurting because our hearts are bent over with the hard labor that we are committing ourselves to.

And which was beautifully expressed by that sketch, the terrible problem that we have to keep working and we have to carry this burden and we refuse to be lifted up to face the reality.

So bent over are we with our commitment to work? And there's a lovely poem which goes, booze man, booze is the stuff to drink for fellows whom it hurts to think.

Well, that's what happens when our hearts are bent over with hard labor, is that we don't have the time to think. We are like the person described in Psalm 127 who goes to bed late and rises early and eats the bread of anxious toil day after day and he has not got the time to think about himself, his wife, his family, his children, his God.

[26 : 35] He hasn't got time for anything. And that's imprisonment. And that's the eloquent way that this imprisonment is described here in this song.

And the imprisonment becomes harder and harder and the walls become higher and higher and the depression becomes more and more acute.

And then you see why it happens. And if you look at the passage you will see stated very specifically, they rebelled against the words of God and they spurned the counsel of the Most High. And spurning the counsel of the Most High means treating with contempt the counsel of the Most High.

You know that lovely chorus, his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.

[27 : 47] That we are meant to live with and under the continuing counsel of God. We are meant to live with our minds deliberately and constantly submitted to the Word of God.

And instead of that, this describes rebellion against the words of God and spurning, treating with contempt the counsel of the Most High.

That's what happens. And it's the Most High is the God who has created us, the God who sustains us, the God in whose hands our lives are held, and we treat him with contempt, and we treat his word with contempt, and the garbage that goes through our minds day after day from every possible source, and the pictures that illumine, as it were, our minds and by which we live our lives, that we have a voracious appetite for.

We rebel against the words of God. We will not sit under them and listen to them and be taught and built up by them.

We will not learn them so that we can communicate one with another. None of those things happen. We hold them in contempt.

[29 : 22] well, it reminds you, doesn't it, of that joke about people getting something and having a list of instructions on the outside of the box and being told that if all else fails, they should read the instructions.

Well, this picture of imprisonment is the picture of when you have found yourself so totally imprisoned by the narrowness of your little mind and your little concept of your little world with little you at the center of it, then something's gone radically wrong.

And the thing that's gone radically wrong forces you to do what this psalm is about, to cry unto the Lord in your trouble.

trouble and he delivers you from your distress. Trouble means a narrowing in, a kind of terrible constricting and confining kind of life.

It is very much a picture of imprisonment. That's the kind of trouble that forces us to call to the Lord in our trouble and he delivers us from all our distress.

[30 : 53] The thing goes on, the passage in the psalm goes on to tell us how he delivers us, the ways in which he must deliver us. Because we are prisoners in our minds, the medicine for that in scripture is a deep repentance.

And I told you, I think, the other day that repentance is changing the way you look at your life. and that's the thing that affects our minds and the imprisonment of our minds. That we repent, we change the way we look at our lives.

And the instrument of our repentance is the word of the word of the word of God, the spiritual counsel of the Most High.

You see, the difficulty I think we run into here is that there is nothing higher in our world than ourselves.

[32 : 16] There are things there and there and there, but there's nothing there because we stand dominating, as it were, the horizon of our own existence.

So there is nothing higher to look to than ourselves. And repentance means that you come to hear the counsel of the one who is infinitely higher than you and me.

The one before whom it is no surprise that we should be able to bend down and confess our failure fear and fear and our fear and our anxiety and our despair and our paranoia.

All those things we confess to God and say, I don't want this anymore. I don't want to think this way. I don't want to live this way. I don't want to carry this any longer.

I don't want my thoughts to be constricted by this. I don't want my speech to be narrowed by this very little way of thinking.

[33 : 24] I don't know if you ever get tired of listening to yourself. Talk to your friends. They get tired of listening to you and to me.

The difficulty at this time in the week for me is that I've heard all I want to hear about from me. But it's because we so much need something to break in on our minds and open them up to the light and the understanding of the counsel of the Most High which he conveys to us in the scriptures. And if this congregation is to survive in this secular and material world, it will only be because we constantly bring our minds under the word of God.

we constantly bring ourselves under the counsel of the Most High. We have to do that. We cannot live apart from that. All that happens if we don't do that is we have a small pot in which our thinking goes around and around and around and gradually ferments and becomes a stinking pot of narrowness.

And nothing fresh and nothing life giving and nothing healing is founded. That's why we need to change our whole way of thinking.

[34 : 57] And the exercise by which we do that is to get out and pray. Get out in a hundred acre field and shout to God and say, I cannot go on like this any longer.

my world is too small. My understanding is too limited. I can't live this way any longer. I want to break out of this.

I want to repent of who I am and change my way of thinking. There's nothing wrong with repenting of who you are because you may think that at your time of life and at your attainment socially and professionally, that you're at the top and if not very close to it and there's not much left for you to do with your life.

Let me tell you that God has plans that make you look like you haven't even begun. You haven't even started in terms of God's plan and purpose for you to conform you to the image of his son Jesus Christ.

God has got a tremendous amount for you and our narrow little minds must be broken open and the light pour in from the word of God and from the council of the most high.

[36 : 26] The second thing that has to happen is that God has got a smash as it were the bondage of our grossly handicapped little bodies fat and overfed that they are and to give us some sense of freedom from the bondage of these bodies and that's what happens to us.

Do you remember that lovely passage in Isaiah which talks about the freedom that is to come to our bodies and that freedom is spoken of as a kind of I have this strange dream I've never told anybody about it yet.

I can fly when I dream. I don't know if you do I can walk along and I only have to touch the ground about every half mile and I'm just really going.

And in fact if I try and you know it's a wonderful feeling. I don't know why I dream that way but I wonder if it's related to something that has to do with this passage from Isaiah when it says he gives power to the faint and to him who has no might he increases strength.

Youth shall faint and be weary and young men shall fall exhausted but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles.

[38 : 03] They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. It's a lovely picture isn't it of the bondage and I think it is the picture in which our bodies are no longer subject to the imprisonment of the process of sin and death but that we begin to share the reality even physically of the resurrection and the terrible cycle of our hearts bent over with work.

And I think God needs to break that cycle of hard labor. not that there is anything wrong with hard work and not that there's anything wrong with the achievements of hard work and not that there's anything wrong with the help you do to other people through hard work but the imprisonment of your mind and heart which it forces on you is the thing that has to be broken.

and you know that you know the existential philosophers say that the endless cycle of work demonstrates to us that the meaning of life is that it is totally absurd and that we were caught up in the absurdity of working in order to work in order to work in order to work and that the only way of breaking out of that cycle is suicide.

Well I like that reasoning. It appeals to me. It appeals to me only in the sense that something catastrophic needs to happen.

and that's what the psalm is about. We cry to the Lord in our distress and he delivers us from all our afflictions.

[40 : 03] He delivers us out of that imprisonment of the mind, the imprisonment of the body, the imprisonment of work where our hearts are bent over with labor. He redeems us from that.

Well, that imprisonment is spoken of very eloquently in a hymn. I want you to sing thoughtfully that hymn now.

It's 138 and if you turn to it in your hymn book which you have in the pew you will see how eloquently it describes what Christ has done particularly verse 4 long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night.

This imprisonment which we have created for ourselves we thought we were building a castle around ourselves and discovered that we have locked ourselves into a prison and that's the sad joke that we played on ourselves and we need to find the release and the redemption which only God can bring.

Sing if you will thoughtfully hymn 138 and can it be that I should gain. Would you stand please? I want as I conclude to tell you a brief story.

[41 : 33] The story comes from the pilgrim's progress and Christian and hopeful are traveling along the way to the celestial city and their feet are extremely sore and there is a meadow on the one side which looks very attractive to them and it seems to run parallel to the road so they step off into the meadow and they walk along and they are met by Mr.

Vainglorious who urges them further along the road until they find that they have lost their relationship to the road they were on and when they are about to turn back a terrible thunderstorm strikes they have to find shelter night comes they have to sleep under this shelter and early in the morning the giant who his name is a giant despair comes walking the grounds of his castle and finds Christian and hopeful grabs them and takes them back to his castle which is called Doubting Castle and throws them in a stinking dungeon and there they're locked and giant despair leaves them day after day without food and without water and their trouble and their despair increases and giant despair comes down to visit them and brings with him the branch of a tree and beats them until wounded and hurt they are lying on the floor as a result of having been beaten by despair who then goes back to his wife whose name is a lovely thing she must be her name is diffidence and she suggests that if they are still alive in the morning he should counsel them to commit suicide and tell them that in the condition in which they find themselves suicide is the best way out and they can't give up to that because they recognize that it would be murder and they can't murder and so they

don't commit suicide and giant despair comes down thinking to kill them but unfortunately it's a bright sunshiny day and despair seems to have fits when it's sunshiny and he loses his ability to do what he was going to do then his wife diffidence happily sends him down again and says take them out of the dungeon and show them the stockyard and show them the bones of the pilgrims that have come along before that lie there and then surely they will see that the thing to do is to kill themselves and

Christian and hopeful are taken and shown this dismal scene and indeed feel that they must put themselves to death and they sit in darkness and in despair and in gloom and it gets later and later in the night and at midnight they begin to pray and all night long they pray and lift up their voices to God in prayer and suddenly a Christian remembers I have this key on a string around my neck and it's called promise and he gets up with the key which is called promise and he unlocks the door of his cell and walks out and hopeful comes with him and then they come to a greater door and he tries the key there and again it unlocks it and then they come to the main great iron gate of the castle and they try it and to quote the story it's damnable hard and nevertheless slowly it turns and the great iron gate swings open and they run out across the meadow and find their way back to the way and continue and giant despair comes roaring after them very unhappy that they have escaped well that really is a picture of how our imprisonment is to be broken the kind of promise which is the key by which our imprisonment is broken is spoken of by

Jesus when he gives us this promise in verse 31 of chapter 8 if you continue in my word you are truly my disciples you will know the truth and the truth will make you free free from the terrible imprisonment with which you have surrounded yourself if you will continue in my word you will be my disciples you will know the truth and the truth will make you free and that's the key that's the promise that Christ himself gives us to unlock the gate and allow us to escape from this profound imprisonment well that's the good news about the imprisonment and in order that you can in a sense appropriate that good news we are again tonight going to have an epilogue service in the chapel the purpose of the epilogue service is very simply to let you know how in the promises of Jesus Christ the promises that God has made to us in Jesus Christ we can unlock the gate of our imprisonment I have so much more I want to tell you and time's up but there is pilgrim's progress was a book written in prison by a man who was free and all the way through the history of the Christian church some of the greatest literature has been written in prison by men who were free beyond all our imagining and that kind of freedom belongs to us in our jobs in our homes in our families in our personal lives and the key to that freedom is given to us in Jesus Christ and the purpose of this epilogue service is that you might get your hands on the key and that you might be enabled to unlock the imprisonment in which you and I find ourselves that Jesus might give us those promises and that we might in faith receive them and make them ours so in the epilogue service a very simple presentation is going to be made to you about how you do that and then in a prayer of faith you're going to be asked to personally appropriate that and so I invite any of you who wished to stay for the epilogue service to stay in order that you might receive as from

[49 : 17] Christ the promise in order that you might claim as from Christ the promise in order that you might deal with the kinds of imprisonment that you've surrounded yourself with in order that you might know the freedom that belongs to you in Jesus Christ in order that whether you are locked in a body that's handicapped in a mind that's dark and gloomy in a work that is an absolute tyrant in its bondage of your heart that you might find the key which gives you freedom that's the purpose of the epilogue service and it's something I invite you to stay we need to leave the church quickly so that the chapel is quiet so that we can have that over there there are books and there is coffee and there is opportunity to meet people and you will hear a book talked about you'll hear about the supper on Saturday night that you're all invited to come to and you will hear all those things over there so please leave the church as quickly as you can go to the coffee hour next door and those who are at the epilogue service they'll be over there in a little while if you want to wait for one of them let us pray prayers are on page three of the booklet

Jesus Christ is the light of the world. O gracious light, pure brightness of the everlasting Father in heaven. O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed.

Now as we come to the setting of the sun and our eyes behold the best for life, we sing your praises, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be sung by happy voices. O Son of God, O giver of life, to be glorified through all the worlds.

Be light in our darkness, O Lord, and in your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night for the love of your only Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

[52 : 05] Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. We give thanks to the Lord our God. Our Lord God, we thank you for all your blessings, for life and health, for laughter and fun, for all our powers of mind and body, for our homes and loved ones, for all that is beautiful, good, and true.

But above all, we thank you for giving your Son to be our Savior and friend. May we always find our true joy in pleasing you and helping others to know and love you.

For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Let us bless the Lord. Amen. Amen. The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look upon you with favor and grant you his peace.

Now we'll be singing one last hymn. And as soon as the hymn is over, please just immediately begin to move forward. Lord, if you have considered Harry's invitation and want to be part of the epilogue service, when you come to the front, please go off to the chapel on your right.

[53 : 38] And if you're going to go over to coffee hour, please go out the doors here on your left and proceed across to the parish hall. We'll do that after we have sung hymn number 83.

And if you have sung hymn, we'll do that after we have sung hymn number 96. Because it is a song of theöté, because it is niemendous■strapopoules and the joy of the apaté, with regards to speech and anger. Then I'll me y commercily with break.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.