

The Necessity of Dying In Order To Live

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 January 2024

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] Well, we begin by Psalm 106, singing Psalm 106 in the Scottish Psalter. That's page 378, verses 1 to 5, the tune of St. David.

Give praise and thanks unto the Lord, for bountiful is he. His tender mercy doth endure unto eternity. God's mighty works who can express or show forth all his praise.

Blessed are they that judgment keep and justly do always. Remember me, Lord, with that love which thou to thine dost bear. With thy salvation, O my God, to visit me draw near, that I thy chosen's good may see, and in their joy rejoice, and may with thine inheritance triumph with cheerful voice.

Here's the psalmist's expression of praise to God and thankfulness that he belongs to God's people, God's worshipping people, God's believing people, and he wishes God to answer his prayer so that he will see more of the good that belongs to them from God. So these verses give praise and thanks unto the Lord.

Amen. Give praise and thanks unto the Lord. Give praise and thanks unto the Lord, for bountiful is he.

[1 : 3 0] God's Suddenly, watch and thanks unto the Lord. Him that was■■■■■■■■ating. God's tender mercy, thou can endure, unto eternity.

God's mighty works to perish once great Christ, forhold she'll for glory. The St. Gospel, Osnore!

Remember me, Lord, without love, which thou doest I not care.

Let thy salvation, O my God, to visit me all near.

That I thy chosen stood facing, and in their joy rejoice.

[3 : 1 1] And live with thy inheritance, by thy wretched voice.

Let's unite together now in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. Amen. Gracious and almighty God, we give thanks tonight as we gather together in your name for the privilege we have of belonging to your people.

Belonging to that people in this world who confess you as their God, who seek to live their life in a way which pleases you, and which seeks to follow the directions you have given us in your word.

A people especially who value, Lord, your contribution toward us for our well-being in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you tonight for him in whose name we come.

We bless you for his perfection, for all that he has done and continues to do, and will yet do, in the redemption of his people. We give thanks, Lord, for the gladness that we know in our hearts as we belong to your people.

[4 : 3 1] We give thanks for every opportunity to be together to praise your name and to seek to encourage one another in the things of God. We thank you tonight for the way in which you present yourself to us in the gospel as a God who is mighty to save, a God who is unlike any other, one who is in yourself utterly different, and yet in many ways has come to show your likeness to us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks, O Lord, for all that you are to your people, for the way that you encourage us along life's way, for the way especially that you continue to offer yourself to us in the gospel as one who is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above what we are able to ask or think.

Lord, help us to believe these things. Help us to apply them to our lives each day we live. Enable us to see our life individually and as a congregation set under the terms and provisions of your word and set in relation to a life that seeks to please you and to live in obedience to you.

Bless us, we pray, Lord, here tonight. Bless to us your word. May your Holy Spirit be evident in blessing your word to our hearts. Open up our minds anew that we may understand your word, that we may come, Lord, to receive it once more into our minds to be enlightened.

We need your Spirit to teach us. We need your Spirit, Lord, to guide us on the way through life. We need your Spirit to sanctify us. We need your Spirit to enable us to benefit even from those events in providence that you have chosen for us.

[6 : 19] And for all of these ways, O Lord, we commit ourselves to you as we come before you this evening. We ask, too, as we come with our thanksgiving, that you would hear us as we confess our sins.

For, Lord, we do have sin to confess. Indeed, we do come every day with our sin to confess it to you. And we acknowledge that we need to know that forgiveness of sin which you alone are able to bestow.

We thank you for that forgiveness. That you are a God of abundant pardon. A God who has promised that the sin of your people you will remember no more.

But when you cover our sins from your sight, you tell us in your word that they are covered completely. That they will never again rise to accuse us before your face.

And yet we are conscious, Lord, that we do commit our sin against you in ways in which we fail each and every day to be the kind of people, inwardly and outwardly, that we ought to be.

[7 : 22] Lord, we ask that you would continue to bless us in our mind, in our speech, in our visible life. Help us, we pray, to seek to live that holy life, that life dedicated to you, that life that would seek to be in your likeness as we live amongst our fellow human beings.

We thank you for the privilege of witnessing to you and for you in this world. We bless you, Lord, that in your own particular promises to your people, your promise is that you would keep them, keep them from the evil one.

We pray that you would do so, that when we know of the workings of our own hearts and especially of the way in which the enemy of our soul, Satan, comes to stimulate what is still within us of our sinfulness.

Oh, Lord, we ask that you would help us to resist that, to resist him in the faith, as your word tells us, that he may flee from us. And we thank you for all your protective care of us, for the ways in which, oh, Lord, you lead us, even at times without our notice.

Yet when we reflect on life, we can see how you have kept us, how you have directed us, how you have dealt with us at times when we ourselves have not been conscious of it.

[8 : 45] Oh, Lord, your goodness to us is so great. Your goodness extends to us in every single aspect of life. And we pray that you would continue to enable us to appreciate this and so to depend upon you all the more day by day.

Bless us in our congregational life, we pray, oh, Lord. Bless all that we seek to do in your name, not only in these times of worship services, but also the other activities in which we engage as a congregation.

Lord, remember these activities. Remember the work that goes on amongst our young people, right down to the youngest, and through to those who are approaching adulthood. We pray that your blessing will accompany all the efforts made to teach them the things of God.

Bless, we pray, our homes, our families, all our extended families. Bless those of them who may not be of a mind to come to attend the services or even attend online and watch by that means.

We pray, Lord, for them. We pray for all whom we know are not interested in these things just now. We pray that you would draw their hearts to yourself. We pray that your Holy Spirit may reach forth and claim their minds and give to them to see, oh, Lord, the abundance of blessing and of life that lies in the promises of the gospel to all who trust in you.

[10 : 11] We pray for those of our number tonight who are ill. We ask that you'd bless them. Those who have been long-term ill, those whose faculties have failed over many years sometimes.

Lord, for many years, a burden to their families. We pray that you'll bless the families of those who are so affected long-term. We ask that you'll bless them themselves in their time of illness.

We pray that you'll bless those with mental health issues. We thank you for the provision made for us in our community. We pray that those who provide that will be blessed.

We pray that you'll bless those suffering from various kinds of addiction. Lord, be merciful to them and bless them. And again, bless the agencies, Lord, that are seeking to bring them help.

We pray that that may be effective for them. We pray for all our care homes, all in the hospital, all in the hospice. We pray that you'll bless them and bless the provision made for us there in our time of need.

[11 : 16] We pray for all in our community, Lord, who help at various times, the emergency services, the police service, and all other agencies, Lord, who help with different kinds of aid to us in our times of need.

We pray for those who visit in our homes. We ask that you'd grant your blessing, O Lord, to all who come with the different types of care that they minister to us.

And we pray that you'd bless, to that end, Macmillan Nurses and Crossroads and every other agency, Lord, that helps us in our times of need. We ask that you would continue to watch over us as a community.

We pray that you would bless the gospel, especially amongst us. We pray that throughout our land, O Lord, as we appeal to you for your blessing, that we would see many turning into your ways and being turned by the power of Christ into the ways of life.

Remember our government, we pray. And remember, we pray, those who are ruling over us in different ways. We pray for our King. We pray for all that he seeks to live out in his own life.

[12 : 29] We pray for him this time, in his time of illness, and for the Princess of Wales. We commend them to you, O Lord. We pray that they may indeed be an example to us as a people.

We pray for the cabinet. We pray for the government in Westminster, for those in Edinburgh as well. We ask, Lord, that your blessing would be upon them to lead them into the ways of your truth.

And we do pray that you would help those who stand for your truth in our parliament and in our other public bodies as well. We pray that you would grant to us, O Lord, that we may see days of prosperity, morally and spiritually, in place of so much that we see that is offensive to you.

Be merciful to us, Lord, we pray. Hear us then in our prayer and continue with us now, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Let's sing further to God's praise, this time in Psalm 119.

119 and sing Psalms on page 159. That's that section beginning at verse 33.

[13 : 39] Teach me to follow your decrees, then I will keep them to the end. Give insight and I'll keep your law with all my heart to it attend. We're saying to the tune, Herongate, verses 33 to 40.

Teach me to follow your decrees. Teach me to follow your decrees, then I will keep them to the end.

Give insight from my king, with all my heart to it attend. With all my heart to it attend.

Lead me in your, O mother's path, For there, O Lord, He might I find.

In thine, my heart, towards your loss. From selfish pain, present my mind.

[15 : 13] O turn my eyes from worthless things. Give life, my Lord, into your word.

To be your servant, To be your servant, Keep your flesh, So that you may be feared, O Lord.

Remove from me the shame, my friend. Your loss, accept, Let the rightness.

O how I long for your decrees, Preserve me in your righteousness.

Let's turn now to read God's word in the gospel according to John. And we're reading tonight from chapter 12, beginning at verse 12.

[16 : 43] So as John's gospel, Chapter 12, And from verse 12, These are the events immediately following.

Christ's raising of Lazarus in the previous chapter. So that these events follow on particularly from that. So at chapter 12, verse 12, The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.

And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him, and had been done to him.

[17 : 45] The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went out to meet him was that they had heard he had done this sign.

So the Pharisees said to one another, You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the whole world has gone after him. Among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida and Galilee, and asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip went out and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

And Jesus answered them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

[18 : 51] If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.

And so on, may the Lord add his blessing once again to a reading of his word. And before we turn to this passage, let's sing again. And we're singing this time in Psalm 65.

Psalm 65 in the Scottish Psalter. And that's on page 297, verses 1 to 5. To the end of the double, verse 5, at the Tunis Free Church.

Praise waits for thee in Sion, Lord. To thee vows paid shall be. O thou that hear art of prayer, all flesh shall come to thee. Iniquities, I must confess, prevail against me do.

But as for our transgressions, then purge away shalt thou. That's Psalm 65 from the beginning to God's praise.

[19 : 53] Praise wait for thee in Sion, Lord.

To thee must win shall be. O thou that hear art of prayer, O thou that hear art of prayer, all flesh shall come to thee.

All flesh shall come to thee. Iniquities, I must confess, V Sacramento in Sion, O stlect upon the ■■■.

All flesh shall be. But as for our transgressions, then purge our ancient love.

Blessed Son, whom thou dost choose, and makes thy approach to thee, That thee within thy works o'er, may still not ever be.

[21 : 38] We surely shall be satisfied with high upon the grace, And with the goodness of thy hands, in all thy holy grace.

O God of our salvation, thou with my might justness, Thy fearful words come to thy praise, Thine answer thus express.

Therefore the age of all the earth, and those that are that thee, Have all the seed, their confidence, O Lord, well placed in thee.

Amen. Please turn with me now to John chapter 12. John chapter 12. And tonight we're looking at verses 24 and 25, Especially in that context of the paragraph there, In which we find these verses.

Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, It remains alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it.

[23 : 58] Whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also.

If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Well, here is a principle that's built into the very fabric of the creation.

What principle is that? The principle that's in verse 24 of a seed falling into the ground and dying in order to bring forth more fruit, More like its own kind.

And that's built into the creation. Whatever you see seed being planted, Whatever kind of seed it is, Whether it's just a potato, Any other type of seed that's actually sown like that, In order to produce the crop, That seed itself firstly has to die.

And in order to bring forth the crop, That death is, in a sense, The means through which the following responding life takes place.

[25 : 03] And Jesus is applying that here spiritually, Obviously, in the way he speaks. Here is Jesus applying it, as we'll see, To himself, but also to his disciples or to his followers.

It's a response to the request of these Greeks. We're not told to exactly the word. They were probably proselytes, Those who had joined the Hebrew faith, But belonged not to the Jews exactly, In terms of their ancestry.

But in any case, they came with this request. And they came to Philip, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. And Jesus was stimulated, As that was reported back to him.

And his response to that was in these verses you find, From verse 23. Now when they asked to see Jesus, It's important that we actually understand what they meant, Or what these verses entail, What these words entail.

When they said, See, sir, we would see Jesus. Words literally mean, We would want to meet with him. We'd want to have a conversation with him. Not just see him in terms of him passing at a distance, Or coming to pass near us.

[26 : 15] Or that we might just see him visibly with our eyes. The word that's used here in the verse is actually to see, In a way that holds conversation, That has a proper type of fellowship, Or communion with, Or an actual relationship that way.

We want to see him in that sense physically. And have conversation with him. And that's important as a theme in John's Gospel. Remember throughout this Gospel, As you follow the teaching of the Gospel, And the framework that John has used for his Gospel.

Chapter 3 has the interview with Nicodemus. Nicodemus came to see Jesus, Who he was. And he met with him. And he had conversation with him.

And it began a change in his life. Chapter 4, You're immediately into another interview, Where the woman of Samaria meets with Jesus at the well. Where she has conversation with him.

Where he reveals himself to her as the promised Messiah. And you go forward like that to chapter 4. In the later part of the chapter, She went back to her own hometown. She told him what had happened to her.

[27 : 24] Many people from that town came out towards where Jesus was. And they eventually ended up saying to the woman, Now we believe, not because of your word, Because we have heard him ourselves.

They came to see him. They came to have conversation with him. And of course, chapter 21, Near the end of the Gospel, You have that great interview with Peter, Following his sorry lapse in denying the Lord.

And there is his restoration. And Jesus meeting with him. His interview with Jesus. And being questioned in terms of his love for Jesus. Do you love me more than these?

And so on. So all the way through the framework of John's Gospel, You have this whole theme of meeting with Jesus, Seeing Jesus in that very personal sense of coming to have interview Or conversation with him.

And that's what these Greeks actually, That's what these words, In the way John records them for us, Are brought out in their meaning. So we would wish to see Jesus. In 1956, I think it was, The Queen, late Queen Elizabeth II, Came to the island here, to Stornoway.

[28 : 34] And visited a number of places, As often of course she did. But if you wanted to see the Queen, You could stand in the crowd, Where she was passing by in the car, Wherever that would be, In the town or in the precinct somewhere.

And you could be, You would be able to say, Yes, I saw her. She passed by and she was quite close to me. But she actually went into a house in Garibust. A small, low cottage.

And she had, if I remember rightly, She had tea and scones, With a lady in that house. And if you asked that lady in the house, Did you see the Queen?

Well her response would be different, To the sight of those who had just seen her passing in the car. Because that lady would be able to say, Yes, I saw her. I actually spoke to her.

She had conversation with me. She came into my home. We shared tea and scones together. That's the seeing, The kind of seeing, The personal fellowship type of seeing, That's so important for us.

[29 : 38] We all see Jesus in that sense in which He's passing before us in the Gospel, In the teaching of the Bible. But what's important for us tonight is, Do we see Him?

How we come to see Him personally, In terms of coming to Him, Having an interview with Him, Him speaking to us, And we speaking to Him, Or placing our trust in Him, And knowing His response through the Scriptures, Coming to hear His promises, Laid on our hearts, Coming to have a conversation with Him every day, Prayerfully.

Is that how you have heard? Is that how you see Jesus tonight? Because that's really what's so important. That personal, intimate, conversation, sight, experience of Jesus.

Well, that's what these Greeks were after, So we would wish to see Jesus. We want to come and speak with Him. And this is the response of Jesus, Where this principle then is brought out of death that leads to life.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, It remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

[30 : 56] Now, He's talking there about the hour that has come. He's applying that principle, first of all, to Himself. So the disciples will carry this with them As He goes onwards in His journey And approaches His death, Followed by His resurrection, Followed by His ascension to glory.

They will bear these things in mind, As we read in this passage. They remembered these things were written and done by Him, And about Him, After He was glorified. They were written about Him, And had seen what He had done.

And these verses, these words came back to them. So here they are, And Jesus is saying to them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. The Son of Man is Himself.

It's Jesus Himself that's speaking about Himself When He speaks about the Son of Man. And it's not just an emphasis on His humanity, On His human nature that's involved in it.

But if you go to the prophecy of Daniel, Where you get that imagery of the Son of Man, The Son of Man there is a divine figure, Who has divine qualities.

[32 : 00] And so you don't just confine it when you come across Jesus saying, The Son of Man by which He means Himself. He doesn't just mean myself as a human being. He means the person that I am.

The God-man that I now am. Anyway, He's saying, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And it's interesting in John. This, of course, is not an hour on the clock as such.

What John means by the hour is the fulfillment of the promises that were made long before this. The hour that was always anticipated in the program of God.

The hour of redemption. The hour of the Son of Man, the Messiah coming, And accomplishing the work that was given Him to do. That hour, He says, has come. It's here. It's now in the history of the world arrived.

That the Son of Man should be glorified. And it's interesting that John, when he speaks about Jesus being glorified, It's as if he includes the death and resurrection and ascension of glory into glory of Jesus all in one.

[33 : 07] So, although these events themselves are indeed separate events or individual events, They're not separate in the sense in which you can just leave them separated from each other.

There's an intimate connection. Indeed, John regards that in his gospel as one indivisible process, Beginning with Christ's entry into the world, Ending with His ascension back to glory, To be with the Father, as he says in chapter 17.

So that here is what he's saying, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, To die, to rise from the dead, and to ascend to heaven.

The hour has come. And then he says, For except a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, It remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Now you go forward to verse 32 or so in the chapter, And you'll see a little bit of expansion on that, Where you find Jesus saying, Now as a judgment of this world, I, when I am lifted up from the earth, Will draw all people to myself.

[34 : 20] He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. Now that really means the inevitability of his death. It was inevitable that he would die, Because that's the purpose for which he came.

To die, followed by being raised from the dead, And ascending to glory. That was the purpose of his time in the world. That was really the crux of the issue, if you like.

And here he's saying, The hour has come for the necessity of his death. Now that's what's really built into the reference to the grain of wheat. Unless the grain of wheat dies, he says, it remains alone.

And so Jesus is saying, It is necessary that this comes about. And because that is so with the grain of seed, It's also necessary for me.

For the Son of Man to be glorified. For the Son of Man to die. To be raised from the dead, to ascend then to glory. In other words, he's emphasizing the necessity of the death of Jesus.

[35 : 28] Why would God send his Son into the world, If it wasn't absolutely necessary for him to come to die? Of course, the life of Jesus is inspirational.

And some people have that view of the ministry of Jesus, And even of the death of Jesus, That it is inspirational. That because it's set out that way in the scriptures, People are inspired to follow that.

And therefore that leads them into a Christian life. And therefore that's really the whole purpose of the gospel. Well, the purpose of the gospel, of course, Is that you and I will come to live a Christian life. We will come to be saved.

But to be saved required far more than for us to be given a supreme example. There is the matter of our sin to be dealt with.

And our sin is not dealt with, At least not adequately and properly, In the eyes of God, And in the demands of God, Our sin, our lostness, Our unrighteousness, all of that.

[36 : 31] It is not dealt with by God providing an example, But God providing an atonement. God providing us with the means by which he himself, Is reconciled to us.

We to him. The death of Christ, The cross of Christ, The meaning of the cross being his death. In other words, When you think about the death of Jesus, When you think about the necessity of the death of Jesus, You immediately go to the gravity and the reality and the gravity, The seriousness of our sin.

And when you think of the seriousness of our sin, And the way the Bible speaks of it, Then you are inevitably led to the necessity of the death of Jesus.

Let me just take you to one passage in Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 9 and at verse 11, Where the writer is saying here how the death of Jesus, As it comes to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices, Which themselves could never take away sin.

Here he is in verse 11 of chapter 9, When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, Then through the greater and more perfect tent, Not made with hands, that is not of this creation, He entered once for all into the holy places, Not by means of the blood of goats and calves, But by means of his own blood, Thus securing an eternal redemption.

[38 : 07] For if the sprinkling of defiled persons With the blood of goats and bulls, And with the ashes of a heifer sacrifices, For the purification of the flesh. How much more will the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God, Purify our conscience from dead works, To serve the living God.

And later on in verse 22, He says under the law, Almost everything is purified with blood, And without the shedding of blood, There is no forgiveness of sins.

It was necessary, from that point of view, that Jesus died. That he died the death of the cross. We are saved through the death of Christ.

And it's this death, this type of death. Not just an example of a good life, Though that is, of course, the case with him. But the death that atoned for our sins. The death that brought about reconciliation with God.

The death that actually propitiated the wrath of God. Unpopular though that view is. In today's theology. But that's what the Bible sets out for us at the heart of Christ's death, And of God's provision.

[39 : 33] The seed needed to die. Before the following crop could emerge. The Jesus who came to give himself to the death of the cross.

From that point of view needed to die. For the crop of salvation, of righteousness. To become ours. And what a thought that is.

What a thought that is. When you and I look at ourselves and realize. When God brings home to us the seriousness of our sin. Our rebellion against him.

Our unworthiness of the least of his mercies. What a thought it is that he would send his own son into the world. To die this death of the cross.

So that we could have through that death. An emerging crop of life. For us to participate in and enjoy. And have forever as eternal life.

[40 : 33] Except. The grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies. It remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. But then you see the image removes.

Principle remains the same. But he now goes on to speak about his disciples or his followers. Whoever loves his life loses it. And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it.

For eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. Now notice what he's saying here. Whoever loves his life loses it or will lose it.

Whoever hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. Now what does he mean by that? What does Jesus mean by whoever loves his life loses it? It seems to be a bit of a contradiction, doesn't it?

Well, I think it's something that you could explain by way of or bring light on it by way of Paul's words in Philippians chapter 3 and verses 17 to 18.

[41 : 41] Because there's the apostle being given his testimony here in chapter 3 and verse from the beginning there in verses 17. He says, And that's exactly the same as what Jesus is saying here in John chapter 12.

Mind set on earthly things is loving your life in a way that just has your life directed by the things of this world. You're attached and so absorbed.

People are absorbed and so attached to the present things, to the material things, to the financial things, to the present world things, that eternal life doesn't come into their reckoning, doesn't come into their mindset at all.

As Paul said in Philippians 3, they mind earthly things, they're earthed, they're firmly grounded in the present only. But he says, But he says, our citizenship is in heaven.

The mindset that is attached not to this world but to Jesus and to the unseen things of eternal life. You have the same thing exactly pretty much in Mark chapter 8.

[43 : 18] Remember that passage, Mark chapter 8, verses 34 to 37. It's the same imagery really pretty much that Jesus is using there. He said, Jesus is saying exactly the same thing in principle.

You hold on to life as you have it, as it is naturally, as it is in your lostness, in your sinfulness, in your estrangement from God. Hold on to that. Live for that.

Live for this world only. And you'll lose it. You'll never have eternal life. But in John he went on to say, Whoever hates his life in this world.

Now that doesn't mean in an absolute way that you come to hate yourself. This is the language that really expresses things by way of contrasts. And what he's saying is, The opposite of loving your life, The opposite of being so attached to and absorbed by the things of this world, Is that you actually abase yourself.

That you give yourself to a higher purpose. That you give yourself to Jesus especially. And to the pleasing of God. And in that sense, Whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

[44 : 50] Same thing as Mark chapter 8 there. Again, it's just virtually exactly the same. Whoever, Where he talks there about, If anyone would come after me, Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

You know, In those days, If you saw somebody who was sentenced to be crucified, Very often you'd find that person carrying the bar of the cross, The cross piece that would be attached to the cross, And would carry that as far as possible to the place of crucifixion.

And you would say, Looking at that person, You wouldn't need to ask where he was going, Or what was going to happen to him. You'd be able to say, Looking at that person's going to die. That person's going to be crucified.

That person's going to face a horrible death. But it's shown in carrying his cross. Carrying the bar of the cross. And what Jesus is doing is spiritualizing that and saying, In a spiritual sense, You need to die to yourself.

You need to die to every urge within yourself. You need to die to your sinful self. You need to die to that selfishness that we have naturally in ourselves, That wants to please ourselves rather than please God.

[46 : 04] We need to deny ourselves and follow him. And take up our cross in that sense. And it's tied to Jesus himself and what he was committed to, isn't it?

He didn't come into this world to elevate himself, if you like, Or to stand above the prospect of being a servant. He came as a servant and he came to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

He lived a life of self-denial or self-abasement, if you like. Ever since he came into the world, it was a downward path for him.

Until eventually it reached the self-abasement of giving himself willingly to the death of the cross. And that's why he's saying, It's the same for my followers.

They're not in the world to please themselves. They're not in this world to bring great acclaim to themselves. They're in this world to follow me.

[47 : 11] That where I am, he will be also. If anyone serves me, he must follow me. What does he mean by that? Well, he certainly includes in that the kind of self-denial that you see in the life of Jesus himself.

That's a great challenge for us, isn't it, tonight? To really put all of this to ourselves. But these are the terms of Jesus himself. Because you see, if you go back to Mark chapter 8 again, the context for Matthew in Mark chapter 8 is important, especially verses 32 and 33 of that chapter, where you see the context there is that Jesus came to reveal to his disciples that he would be rejected, suffer many things and be rejected.

He calls himself again the Son of Man and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed. And after three days rise again, what did Peter do? He took him aside. He thought he knew better.

He didn't want this to happen. Turning aside, he took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him. Imagine the apostle Peter, there he is, rebuking Jesus.

These are the words of Mark. A very strong word there used by Mark, because this is essentially what Peter did. He took Jesus aside and said, Put that out of your mind.

[48 : 38] That's not going to happen to you. That's inappropriate. What kind of language is that? But then you see Jesus turned and rebuked Peter and said, Get behind me, Satan.

You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. You see, Satan was in the incident. Satan was in the very words that Peter used. What Peter was doing was trying to deflect Jesus from the cross, from the path of suffering, from the path of obedience, from the path of dying, the death that he had come to die in the world.

That's why Jesus said to him, Get behind me, Satan. This was Satan's attempt to bypass the cross, or at least for Jesus, to bypass the cross. Take an easier path.

Just like he had said in the temptations in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. Here is it in a different form coming through one of his disciples. And you see, Jesus is saying here in John, If anyone serves me, he must follow me.

And where I am, there will my servant be also. And you'll find that all the way through the New Testament and the epistles of Paul and of Peter. It's not just the reality of suffering as a disciple of Christ, but in many ways the necessity of it.

[49 : 57] As Paul himself said, it was through many tribulations that we must enter into the kingdom of God. As Peter wrote in his first epistle especially, he wrote more than once about the situation that his readers were in, scattered throughout these places.

And he was trying to draw their minds to the benefits, the necessity of their Christian suffering for Jesus. That glory comes eventually to God through all of that.

Well, he's saying this in regard to discipleship for us as well. That just as it is for Jesus, so it must be for us. And that's to be our daily resolve, isn't it?

When you get up in the morning, what's the first thing you say to yourself? Well, I wish I could say of myself that I always say every morning, today I must die to sin. Sadly, I don't.

But I should. Because that's really what the Christian life at his heart is about. Dying to self. Dying to the pleasing of self.

[51 : 07] Dying to the aggrandizing of self. Dying to God. Dying to God. Dying to worldliness. Dying to worldly priorities. Dying to worldly priorities.

And instead, dying to sin. Dying to selfishness. Dying to self-righteousness. Dying to the pleasing of myself. And instead, pleasing God.

Living a godly life. Living a God pleasing life. God-pleasing life. Well, there's the crux of the Christian life.

There's the principle of the seed dying in order to bring forth life. Think of self as a seed that's planted in the ground. Unless self dies, you don't get the proper godliness, righteousness growing in your life.

The seed must die before the crop follows. And he says at the end here, where I am, there will my servant be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

[52 : 14] What a way to crown that little bit of teaching at that point, before he went on with what remains in the chapter. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

What's he saying? He's saying there's again a parallel with my own life. Because when Jesus prayed in John 17, you remember this is exactly what he prayed.

Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son. That the Son also may glorify you. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world was. Here's Jesus saying, the work you gave me is finished.

The cross in his mind is accomplished. And what is the consequence of that? Well, the consequence of the promise of the Father to him to be exalted follows on.

[53 : 14] And here is Jesus here saying to the disciples, If anyone serves me, he must follow me. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Just as Christ, having finished his life in this world, his death, his resurrection, all of that now comes to flow into his glorification, to his exaltation and glorification.

And the Father's honor is bestowed upon him. It's that selfless life. The life that dies to self.

That comes to be honored ultimately, especially in the ultimate crowning of that life with eternal life in heaven. But it means before that there is the self-denial and the selfless service.

Let me just tell you briefly about a certain man in the Second World War who was an officer, a flying officer, actually in the New Zealand Air Force.

And one day in August 1943, he was flying a Liberator aircraft, which he had never flown for that purpose before. And he spotted a U-boat that had surfaced.

[54 : 28] So he began his attack. And this is the report of it. The official report of it is in the following terms. And one day in August 1943, Flying Officer Trigg, Adam Trigg, of the Royal New Zealand Air Force, undertook as captain and pilot a patrol in a Liberator aircraft, although he had not previously made any operational sorties of that type of aircraft.

After searching for eight hours, a surfaced U-boat was sighted. Flying Officer Trigg immediately prepared to attack. During the approach, the aircraft received many hits from the submarine's anti-aircraft guns, and it burst into flames.

Which quickly enveloped the tail. There could have been no hesitation or doubt in Trigg's mind, because he maintained his course, in spite of the already precarious condition of his aircraft, and executed a masterly attack.

Skimming over the U-boat at less than 50 feet, with anti-aircraft guns firing into his opened bomb doors, Flying Officer Trigg dropped his bombs on and around the U-boat, where they exploded with devastating effect.

A short distance further on, the Liberator crashed into the sea with her captain, gallant captain and crew.

[55 : 51] A very poignant story, but there is the highest military award. It was given posthumously to Flying Officer Trigg.

And a wonderful detail about that is that it was at the instigation and insistence of the captain of that U-boat who survived that he was awarded that the flying officer who was killed in trying to sink the U-boat was actually awarded the Victoria Cross for his conspicuous bravery.

What does that have to do with our sermon tonight? Well, that was the highest military award that could be given, and there's a much higher award given to the faithful servants of God.

The Apostle Paul himself knew it, and as he wrote to Timothy, one of the last things he wrote was in the following terms, I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day.

[57 : 09] And not to me only, but to all those who love his appearing. And if you love the Lord tonight, and there's no reason why you shouldn't, you will love his appearing.

You will love the day on which he arrives to bestow the highest accolades that anyone can receive, the crown of eternal life, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory.

If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Is this not how it is with you tonight? Is your concern not to see Jesus and be with Jesus?

to have your life safely deposited in the hands of Jesus, to come to him, to be drawn to him, to love him, to serve him, and finally to be awarded that accolade of eternal glory in heaven with him.

Is that not why we're here? To glorify our Savior, to serve him while we're in this world, and to look forward to being with him for the whole of eternity in the next.

[58 : 34] Let's pray. Our gracious God, we find it still such a mystery that you came into this world and that you came to die that death of the cross for your people.

Yet, Lord, we know that though there is much of mystery in it, yet we are thankful and grateful and express our thankfulness to you for it. We can never put into words, O Lord, what it means to your people that you have done this for them.

But we give thanks that it has pleased you to do so. We give thanks that your will is accomplished through it. And we give thanks tonight, O Lord, for that offer of life eternal which comes to us through the gospel.

And so bless us, we pray, as once more we hear your voice. And bring us, we pray, into that company of your people who look forward to that appearance of Jesus who comes with the crown of victory to give to his people.

We ask this in his name and for his sake. Amen. Well, our final psalm this evening is Psalm 30. Psalm number 30.

[59 : 49] We're singing from the Sing Psalms version. That's on page 34 to the tune St. Andrew. And verses 1 to 5.

O Lord, I will exalt your name for you have rescued me. You did not let my foes rejoice and gloat triumphantly. Lord God, in need I cried to you and you restored my health.

O Lord, you brought me from the grave and saved my soul from death. all the way through to these four verses to verse 5. O Lord, I will exalt your name.

O Lord, I will exalt your name. O Lord, I will exalt your name.

O Lord, I will exalt your name. Lord God, in need I cry to you. You did, O let my foes rejoice, and gloat triumphantly.

[61 : 02] Lord God in need I cry to you, and you restore my health.

O Lord, do God, give up the grave, and save my soul from death.

You holy ones, sing to the Lord.

Sing out with joyful voice. When you the old days who remain, then grace in man rejoiced.

He is found, dergad, can open us, like long which finger stays.

[62 : 32] Though tears may pass throughout the night, join us with warming grace.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen.