

The Gathered Church (7) - Gathered for Travel

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

- [0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship now. We're singing firstly today in Psalm 96. Psalm 96, that's in the Scottish Psalter, page 358.
- Sing to the tune of St. Magnus, verses 1 to 6. Sing a new song to the Lord. Sing all the earth to God. To God sing. Bless His name.
- Show still His saving health abroad. Among the heathen nations His glory do declare. And unto all the people show His works that wondrous are.
- If you're able to stand, we'll stand to sing these verses, Psalm 96. Sing a new song to the Lord. Sing all the earth to God.
- To God sing. Bless His name. Sing all the earth to God.
- [1 : 07] Sing all the earth to God. Sing all the earth to God. Sing all the earth to God. Among the heathen nations His glory do declare.
- And unto all the people show His works that wondrous are.
- For Christ the Lord. For Christ the Lord, not greatly be. Is to be magnified.
- Yea, worthy to be feared. Is he above all those beside.
- For all those beside. For all the gods are idols found, Which blinded nations fear.
- [2 : 18] A Seventh the land of the Hajnnej. 100%. A se glass may be imantized. The way of your grave, the Mary masters fear. With■■on most. The Lord by you, the heavens be interweb.
- With honour is the Lord is face, and majesty divine.
- Strength is within his holy place, and there the beauty shines.
- Let's call upon the Lord now in prayer briefly. Our gracious God, we give thanks today that we are gathered here in your name. That we do so under your own promise that you will be with your people as they gather.
- And we thank you that we come together of all ages and all backgrounds, and that we are welcome in your presence. We give thanks, Lord, for the provision you have made for us to enable us to come through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and rose again from the dead, and is today seated at the right hand of glory on high.
- [3 : 42] And we thank you that he reigns over us, and that we expect him to come back to this world at the day that you have appointed. We pray, Lord, today that we may be still in your presence, that we may know your blessing as we come together.
- Bless the children today, we pray. Bless them in all their activities, not only today, but as we anticipate that throughout this week. Lord, we thank you for all our children, for our young families belonging to the congregation.
- For we give thanks to you, O Lord, for the way in which we are so encouraged and so often given to rejoice in seeing so many young lives coming to be taught the things of God.
- Bless them, we pray today, and all who teach them and all who belong to them as parents and relatives. Be with us in all our homes. Grant us your blessing throughout this day.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, I know you're going to be looking at Gideon again today in Sunday School Lessons, and today you're looking at Gideon's victory, or Gideon victorious.

[4 : 50] And in Judges chapter 7, I'm not sure if you're going to be looking at that chapter or not, but Judges chapter 7 records a great victory that Gideon achieved by God's help over the Midianites.

And there's something quite amazing in the chapter as you read through it. And it's this, that Gideon was told by God that he had too many people with him, and he had to reduce that number until eventually he just had 300 out of 24,000 men that he began with.

Now, that's very strange because when you read in verse 12 there, the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the east lay along the valley like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance.

Why would God tell Gideon, you've got too many people, when there were thousands and thousands and thousands of the Midianites and the Amalekites also that they were going to fight against?

Well, the reason was that Gideon was going to manage victory with God's help with the 300, and that was going to give glory to God. It was going to show Gideon that the power, the victory, belonged to God, not to themselves.

[6 : 11] It was God helping them, enabling them, that gave them that victory. And it was showing them that the power that gives us victory belongs to God alone, and obviously from that they were being taught to depend on God and not on themselves, not on anything that they had by way of their own gifts.

And so I want you today, young folks, to pray for God's power in your lives. We all need God's power, and whatever age we are, we need God's power working in our lives today.

And what that means is that we need to pray for God's help and for God's power to work in our lives. It doesn't matter what we're facing. It doesn't matter how much bigger that may seem than ourselves.

It's important that we depend on God to give us the ability. The second thing I want you to remember is that when we are given help by God, we need immediately to thank Him.

It's very interesting here in this chapter that you'll find in verse 15 that after Gideon, you can look at the incident later yourselves, but he went down to the camp of the Amalekites.

[7 : 22] He was told a dream had taken place. One of these men of the Amalekites had had a dream, and another one was telling the story, the meaning of the dream. And it was going to be a victory for Gideon and for his people.

And as soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped. Isn't that important? As soon as he heard what that dream meant and realized that it meant victory for them, he worshipped the Lord.

And for us too, that's important. We're here today to worship God, and you young lives, you children as well are part of that. And we're here to give thanks to God as well as to pray to God for His help.

So remember, pray for His power in your life. And always give Him thanks. Whatever He gives you at any time, give Him the thanks.

Give Him the glory just as Gideon did. Well, let's say the Lord's prayer again together. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

[8 : 28] Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. We're going to sing some more verses now, this time in Psalm 119.

In the same Psalms, page 159, verses 33 to 40. And the tune is Finart. 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. That section of Psalm 119. That section of Psalm 119. To God's praise. Teach me to follow your decrees, then I will keep them to the end.

With this sight of that dear pure law with all my heart to it attend.

[9 : 57] We feed me in your commandment's path.

For then, O Lord, delight thy mind. They provide my heart to the Lord's new laws.

Come, selfish King, descend my life. Oh, God, my heart to the Lord's new laws.

Oh, God, my heart to the Lord's new laws. Come, selfish King, descend my heart to the Lord's new laws.

Give life according to your word. To lead your servant, keep your place.

[11 : 03] So that you may be here, O Lord's new laws. Be good from me, the shame I get.

Your laws accept and unrighteousness. O how I long for your redeeming.

Please bear me in your righteousness. A reading of God's word today is from the book of Numbers.

The book of Numbers. And we're reading in chapter 10. We'll begin reading at verse 11.

So Numbers chapter 10 at verse 11. In the second year and the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony.

[12 : 23] And the people of Israel set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai. And the clouds settled down in the wilderness of Paran. They set out for the first time at the command of the Lord by Moses.

The standard of the camp of the people of Judah set out first by their companies. And over their company was Nashon, the son of Amminadab. And over the company of the tribe of the people of Issachar was Nethanel, the son of Zuar.

And over the company of the tribe of the people of Zebulun was Eliab, the son of Helon. And when the tabernacle was taken down, the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, who carried the tabernacle, set out.

And the standard of the camp of Rehuban set out by their companies. And over their company was Elisur, the son of Shedur. And over the company of the tribe of the people of Simeon was Shelamiel, the son of Zerushaddai.

And over the company of the tribe of the people of Gad was Elisaph, the son of Deuel. Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things. And the tabernacle was set up before their arrival.

[13 : 33] And the standard of the camp of the people of Ephraim set out by their companies. And over their company was Elisamah, the son of Ammihud. And over the company of the tribe of the people of Manasseh was Gamaliel, the son of Pedasur.

And over the company of the tribe of the people of Benjamin was Abaddon, the son of Gedeoni. Then the standard of the camp of the people of Dan, acting as the rear guard of all the camps, set out by their companies.

And over their company was Ahiezer, the son of Amishaddai. And over the company of the tribe of the people of Asher was Pagiell, the son of Ochran. And over the company of the tribe of the people of Naphtali was Ahira, the son of Inan.

This was the order of the march of the people of Israel by their companies when they set out. And Moses said to Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you.

Come with us. We will do good to you. For the Lord has promised good to Israel. But he said to him, I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred.

[14 : 48] And he said, Please do not leave us. For you know where we would camp in the wilderness. And you will serve as eyes for us. And if you do go with us, whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same will we do to you.

So they set out from the mount of the Lord for three days' journey. And the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them for three days' journey to seek out a resting place for them.

And the cloud of the Lord was over them by day whenever they set out from the camp. And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered.

And let those who hate you flee before you. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, to the ten thousands of Israel.

Amen. May God bless to us reading that portion of his word. Let's join together again in prayer. Lord, our God, these words that we have read cause us to reflect upon our need for your guidance.

[15 : 56] And the need for order in the way that we set about our lives. And we give thanks that you are the God of order and of guidance. That you are the one who gives counsel to your people, even as they travel through on their journey through this world.

Lord, we bless you that like Moses, we too can say that you have given us an account of what the journey will involve and where we are going to as we come to trust in you and look forward to that eternity you promised to your people.

We thank you today, Lord, that we gather as a joint company of people whose will it is that we should know you and that you should reveal yourself again to us.

So, Lord, bless us. So, Lord, bless to us your word, we pray. And enable us as we look upon this passage together that we will do so conscious of our need to truly belong to the company of your believing people.

To belong to those who are traveling in their own way by faith and relying upon the Lord himself and not on anything with which you may have endowed us.

[17 : 05] So, bless us, we pray, as a congregation today. Oh, Lord, we thank you for all the encouragement you give us. We thank you for the many activities that we already heard of and read through as we anticipate in this coming week.

The various types of meetings and of worship services that we engage in as a people. And we thank you, Lord, that you enable us to have the resources that we have for these activities and events.

And we thank you for them. We thank you, Lord, that you continue to provide for us against our need. We bless you that your promise is that you will at all times look to the need of your people.

And we pray for the confidence that your servant Paul had long ago when he could say of himself that he was confident that God would supply all the need of the Philippian church according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

So, help us, we pray, today as we worship you. And help us by your Holy Spirit, Lord, to lay to heart the things that you teach us in your word. Bless us, we pray, as a congregation continue to bestow upon us the blessings of the gospel, the blessings of your Holy Spirit, so that we may progress spiritually and morally and grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[18 : 29] O Lord, our God, we today give thanks that the promise you give to your church in all ages is that you will never depart from them, that you will never forsake them, even in the difficulties of life.

Yet we acknowledge, Lord, that we, by our own sin, cause the times that you face may be hidden from us. And we will not have the comfort that we ought to have in our hearts.

We know that it is our sin that causes such times in our lives. Lord, we ask that whenever we are conscious of being at a distance from you, whenever we are conscious that in our hearts we have backslidden, that we have become cold, that our love is not as it once was and should be.

Lord, help us, we pray, to return to you. Enable us to heed your voice and your appeal to us in the word. And Lord, help us today, if that be our condition, that we may be drawn by your Holy Spirit again, that we may come to appreciate anew the warmth and the benefit of fellowship with you.

Bless any today, we pray, who are still unsaved, and who have not come to rest upon the Lord Jesus Christ for time and for eternity.

[19 : 49] Bless them, we pray, under your word today. Be near to them, Lord, to open their hearts and give them the mind and the wherewithal to embrace you as you offer yourself in your word to us.

And we pray that we may know of many during our own days here and elsewhere coming to know the Lord. Bless, we pray again, those who have particular needs in our midst today.

Again, we remember those who mourn the passing of loved ones. We know in this past week, O Lord, again, we've had two funerals, two families involved in times of sorrow and loss.

We pray for them and we pray that you would bless them even in the times that they find most acutely the pain of departure from loved ones. Gracious one, we ask that you would be pleased to bestow your comfort upon them.

And remember all others who reflect upon times gone by and people who are no longer with them in this world. O Lord, in all our bereavements and our sorrows, be our comforter, we pray.

[20 : 56] Be our God to guide us and to counsel us that we may be able to say with the psalmist long ago that you hold us by your right hand and that you guide us with your counsel.

And afterwards that you will receive us to your glory. Bless the world in which we live in these troublous days, O Lord. We pray especially for places where there is violence and war, terror, famine, neglect.

Be pleased we pray in all these places in the world to remember them who suffer adversity at this time. Be with the situation in the Middle East. Lord, we ask that through your blessing, even though it may seem to us hardly possible, bring about, we pray, a lasting peace between the warring peoples.

Remember the situation also in Ukraine. Again, we continue to pray for your people there. We ask, O Lord, that you would bring deliverance from the oppression and from the violence that is carried out against your people there.

Lord, we ask that you would bless your church there. Bless those who continue faithful to you. Be pleased in all other places of the world, Lord, to create peace where there is strife and war.

[22 : 12] Make us thankful that we have such a level of peace and security in our own circumstances. But bless us, we pray, as a nation, as a people.

For we know, Lord, that there is much evidence every day we live of a departure from you and from your ways and from your values, from your commands. Turn us, we pray, to yourself as a people.

And to that end, bless those who are ruling over us. And grant them, Lord, that they may trust in you, that they may look to you and realize their accountability to you. And that they may come by your grace to rule wisely and to exercise wisdom and judgment.

Hear us now, we pray, and continue with us here, pardoning all our sin, washing us freely, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Let's sing once again before we turn to Numbers chapter 10.

We're singing this time Psalm 84. 84, that's on page 112. Sing to Tune Ottawa, verses 1 to 7.

[23 : 18] How delightful are your dwellings, O Almighty Lord, to me! For your courts my soul is yearning, in your house I long to be.

Heart and flesh cry out aloud, for the true and living God. And verse 5 to 7, which speaks about the journey, as we'll see in Numbers.

We're thinking today of God's people, ourselves being gathered together for travel, on a journey on into eternity. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, those who have a pilgrim's mind.

Pools from autumn rains refresh them, springs and bakers veil they find. Strength increasing, Zionward, they go on their way to God. So we'll sing these verses, Psalm 84, to God's praise.

Amen. Ro Your force my soul is bearing, in your hearts I long to thee.

[24 : 40] I can pledge thy love for the true and living love.

Even sorrows find their dwellings, and thus follow hills and airs.

Near here, altar, Lord Almighty, where the offspring may have rest.

Blessed are those who strengthens in you, those who have a wilderness mind.

Who strong autumn waves refresh their strings and make us live behind.

[26 : 08] Strength and peace inside of the world, they go on their way to God.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Please turn with me now to Numbers chapter 10. And today we're looking at verses 29 to 32.

And Moses said to Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you.

Come with us, and we will do good to you, for the Lord has promised good to Israel. But he said to him, I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred. And he said, please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us.

And if you do go with us, whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same we will do to you. Well, as we continue to look at the theme of the gathered church, gathered for various reasons, gathered in different circumstances, today we're looking at the gathered church in terms of the church on a journey or the church traveling onwards.

[27 : 34] And we'll see something of what comes across in this part of the book of Numbers, these verses we've read especially. Because Numbers really is about this journey of the people of Israel on towards the promised land of Canaan, as the Lord had promised to them, and as Moses here said to Chobab.

In fact, that's in the Hebrew text, which is what the Old Testament was written in. This book is not called Numbers. That came about by it being translated firstly into Greek and then all the other various languages into which it was translated.

But the book that we know is the book of Numbers. The title in the Hebrew text is In the Wilderness. In the Wilderness. Because it's talking, telling about this journey of the people in the wilderness, through the wilderness, on towards the land that God had promised them.

God had said to them through Moses in Exodus chapter 8 that he had heard their groanings. He was coming out. He had come down to rescue them out of the hand of the Egyptians, to take them out of that land, and to take them into a land that flows with milk and honey.

Where God takes us out of, He also takes us into. He doesn't take us out of our state of being lost, our deadness and sin. He doesn't take us out of that without taking us into its wonderful replacement in the salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[29 : 08] We are either in one or the other today. And the Lord is teaching us here the importance of traveling together with the mind of pilgrims on towards the land that God has promised His people.

Now, not all the people of Israel would actually enter the land of Canaan. Sadly, many, many of them died in the wilderness. And when you go to the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, Hebrews actually tells us that the reason so many of them fell in the wilderness was due to their unbelief.

Their unbelief, their lack of faith. The word that God sent to them was not actually received by them in faith. And because of unbelief, they did not enter into the land of Canaan.

In other words, it's the same that you find with the church throughout all the generations, throughout all the time of history and on to the end of the world. There will always be a mixed multitude.

There will always be people who have received the word of the Lord believingly, and therefore are in a relationship with himself where they are saved, where they are secure in Christ.

[30 : 21] And there are others who have not come to place their trust in the Lord, who are traveling with those who believe, with those who come to trust, whose place in the church is valued, but who have not yet come to place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive Him as their Savior.

So we remember that that's the case today as we look at this passage, that the way we're traveling together, it's important for us to remember that traveling together in that sense doesn't guarantee automatically that we will enter into heaven.

We need to have Jesus for ourselves. We need to receive Jesus as He's offered to us in the gospel. We need to have Him as our King and as our Lord.

So let's look at these verses as we see them setting out, the traveling together of the people. They set out from the mount of the Lord for three days' journey.

Now Moses gives Hobab, first of all, an explanation before he gives them the invitation to actually come to travel with them.

[31 : 32] He gave them, first of all, the explanation of their journey, where they were going to, where they were journeying on to. And then having given them that explanation, he gave them this invitation, come with us and we will do good to you.

And then after the explanation and the invitation, when Hobab refused and preferred to go back to his own people, he then exhorted him, please come with us.

And he explained to him, any good that the Lord will do, all the good the Lord will do to us, we will also do to you. So you have these three things, this explanation, this invitation, and this exhortation, all built into this short passage describing the travels that Moses anticipated towards the promised land.

So it's important that he began with, we note that he began with this explanation of the journey. We are traveling, we are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you.

He began with that statement. That's really, in a sense, what we do with the gospel as well. We don't just come and look at the invitations without something of what lies behind it, without something of the statements of the truth of God, as he gives it to us, on which the invitation is built.

[32 : 59] We don't just appeal to people in preaching the gospel so that all you have is just a set of appeals or maybe some nice stories or illustrations, good though these are, and important though the appeal is.

Every time you come in the Bible to God's appeal, to come to himself, to follow him, to trust in him, and so on, you always come to find certain truths along with that, certain truths on which the invitation and the appeal is based.

And it's the same here. In summary, you find Moses here saying, we are traveling to this place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you. He's saying, here is a place the Lord has actually assured us that he's giving us this place, that he's made it ours, and we're on the way to it.

So on the basis of that truth, he's then inviting him to come and join them. And you notice, he is saying, we're traveling to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you, or I'm giving it to you.

It's really a matter of the Lord's gift to them, so that the main feature in the passage really, and through the whole of this book of Numbers, though it's describing the journey of the people of Israel, the main feature of it is the Lord's presence with them, the Lord's guidance, the Lord being their God as he goes before them, as represented here by the ark being with them, being in their midst, and the cloud that's over them by day, and all that's associated with that, the Lord is with them, the Lord is guiding them, the Lord is in their midst, and it's that Lord who has given them this land that they're traveling towards.

[34 : 43] You see, salvation, the journey of salvation, the journey through this world onto the promised land of Canaan, we didn't devise that journey. It's not something that we invent.

It's not something that's arisen out of our own idea. It's not something that's just grown in people's minds and gradually built up momentum over the years until we're at the stage that we're at today.

This is actually the same for us. Salvation is God's deliverance from sin and setting us on a journey that terminates in heaven, and it's the Lord's doing. It's the Lord's doing.

From beginning to end. You know, we're so used, aren't we, in the world in which we live, the circumstances, the situation we have in the world.

We're often told that we don't really have a monopoly of the truth as Christians, that we need to actually listen and give due place to other faiths so-called, that we need to combine together all the accumulated wisdom of pagan writers, of other faiths, of other religions, and that is as you put them all together in a multi-faith, including even the likes of secularists or scientific discoveries, that then you're in a position to ask, well, where can I get the truth amongst all of that?

- [36 : 02] Is it really as I put all of that together that I come to some idea or semblance of where the truth lies? No, God is saying, I have given you my truth. I have given you my word.
- I have given you this revelation of myself. I have given you this explanation of where the world came from, who created it, what is it like, why is it in a state it's in?
- I have given you this record of my Son coming into the world, of His death on the cross, of His resurrection from the dead, of His ascension to glory, of His return on the last day. You have all of that.
- That's the truth. We're not traveling together without knowing where we're going. We're not traveling on a journey, on a path, on a road that we've devised for ourselves.
- We're not actually traveling in what's just an accumulation of different ideas that began with different philosophies of human beings. It's exactly as Moses put it here.
- [37 : 02] We are on this journey. We're setting out for the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you. And you see, there's a definite terminus as well, isn't there, for these people.
- And Moses is reminding Hobab here, this is where they're going to. He's not just saying, we're on a journey. I'm not sure where it's going to end. He's saying, we are on this journey to this place of which the Lord said, I'm giving it to you.
- There's a definite terminus in view. And so you don't go along with current ideas, really, that says that you can't really be certain about what the truth is or can't really be certain about things in the future.
- Life is evolving. We are evolving with it as we go on in our human experience. Uncertainties, but life evolves as you go on.
- So you can't really be sure where it's going to terminate at all. No, that's not what God is saying. You're on a journey to eternity. And when you get to eternity, there's only two possibilities, two realities, two certainties.
- [38 : 15] The eternity of the lost or the eternity of the saved. And the eternity of the saved is this place that the Lord has promised to His people and Christ has prepared for them as He taught His disciples in the Gospel of John in chapter 14, that wonderful chapter that we so often read, especially at times of loss, of bereavement, of sorrow.
- Don't let your hearts be troubled. I'm going to prepare a place for you. If that were not the case, would I have told you so?
- It's the same as Moses here saying to Hobab, we are traveling. We're setting out for this place of which the Lord said, I'm giving it to you. You remember in Hebrews, chapter 11, that great list of people who lived by faith.
- And in the middle of that, we have a statement that fits in with the point we've just made that life's journey, while it is full of uncertainties in terms of what will happen to us on the journey, that's in God's hands, but we know where the journey ends and we know what the journey is about.
- Here in the middle of this, chapter 11 of Hebrews, at verse 13, you find a little summary and then it moves on to a list of further names.
- [39 : 37] And the summary goes like this. These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.
- For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. And if they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.
- But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God.

Why? For He has prepared for them a city. It's been prepared. It's ready. Partly occupied already by those who have gone before us.

But Moses is saying, we are traveling to this place. That's the reality of the gospel. That's what the gospel is setting out for you and for me today.

[40 : 43] That God has prepared an inheritance, an eternal dwelling place for His people. And so, the invitation is based on that.

Come with us and we will do good to you. So, that's the second thing. The explanation is followed by this invitation. Come with us. Following the explanation, you have this invitation.

Hobab's here with them at Mount Sinai. Hobab, or Rael, as he's also called, Moses' father-in-law. He wasn't a Hebrew. He belonged to the place that he mentions himself to his father's house, his kindred, the Midianite.

And he knew the wilderness very well, as we'll see. But he is invited here to stay with them, to join with them, to travel with them now.

And that's really exactly what we do in the gospel. That's exactly how we set about not just the preaching of the gospel, but our evangelism, which presents the gospel to the world.

[41 : 49] It doesn't just say statement-wise, we are traveling as Christians, we're traveling to a certain place, a terminus that God has prepared for us.

We also say, will you come with us? Please join us. Come with us and we will do good to you out of whatever good the Lord will do to us.

And that's the promise. We will do good to you. We will do good to you for the Lord has promised good to Israel.

In other words, despite what you often hear to be the case that our interest really in being the church together, that our interest is just self-interest, that we're not really interested in people at all to an extent.

All we're interested in is preserving what we have, preserving the church, preserving our own interests in it. that's not what we're saying. This is so important that people actually see that our interest in them, that our interest in them as people we invite to join with us on the journey is not self-interest, that it's genuine.

[43 : 00] It's something that has the best motives in it. That, of course, means that our own conduct, our own behavior, how people see us is important. because sadly, some of the time, we don't accompany the invitation by the kind of conduct that would really draw people to study and to listen to the statements we make about our traveling on to the place that God has provided for us.

But we have the best motives. We have the best intentions for people to come and become travelers with us on the way to eternity.

Christianity has always had its share of hypocrites, charlatans, people who are not genuine, people who have simply attached themselves for whatever reason to the church visibly.

But we're concerned with genuine love, genuine intentions, genuine motives, genuine compassion, genuine concern. As we come to say to people through reaching out with the gospel, come and join us.

Come with us because it's good that we have promised by the Lord. Here is one of the definite things you can say to people as you pray that God will bless them and bless His word to them.

[44 : 28] We have to say to them, the Lord has promised good to Israel. We don't have any doubts about that. Even if people find it difficult to understand, this is the reality of it, that God for us today has promised good as we travel on together, as He gathers us together, especially as we come to place our trust in Him.

It is good, good, good that the Lord has promised. As the psalmist put it, how great is the goodness which you keep in store for them that fear you, for those who honor you, for those who trust in you.

you see, for you as a Christian today, and for us together, as we join together here, is God's assurance to us.

He isn't just inviting us to come and meaningfully be part of His traveling people, and inviting us to place our trust in Him, our confidence in Him, to believe in Him, to receive Him, all of what's included in that.

God, but He's saying, everything that's going before you as a Christian is good. Everything.

[45 : 42] The goodness of God, even at the most difficult of times, even those incidents where we're hurt, where the providence of God is challenging, where we would prefer it to be some other way, we would prefer that the way we're traveling on is just too hard, we'd prefer it to be easier.

Why does it have to be this hard? Why does it have to hurt so badly? Why can't it just be a little bit easier, a little bit less challenging? Well, because the Lord is assuring us that He knows what He's doing.

And He knows what He's doing because He's the good God. He's good and He does good. Millions of people today are thanking God. That the troubles that came their way in the providence and the appointment of God were a framework or a means by the blessing of God out of which so much good came flowing into their lives.

And so He's assuring us today, as the Lord has promised good, He's assuring us that when we have our place along with His people, then we will do good to each other out of the good that the Lord has done and is doing to us.

In other words, Moses is saying, Hobab, you will share in the goodness of God to us if you come and travel with us. Genuinely, this will be your experience.

[47 : 22] The explanation invitation is based upon that. But let me just pause and pose the question today. We're all here together as the gathered church at worship.

We're all here together as people who are traveling on through time on into eternity. We all have different experiences in that journey, but we're in it together.

Here is the important question though. What is your relationship with the Lord as we travel on together as a people? Is it indeed your expectation that the Lord will continue to do you good?

Is it goodness that's waiting for you when your life is over in this world? Will the goodness of God then be a goodness that you will enjoy for all eternity because that's what heaven is about?

Enjoying the goodness of God. Or are you still not saved? In a relationship with God that assures you of the place you are going to and that it's yours in Christ, please don't journey along with God's people and miss out on the core issue, the eternal life.

[48 : 50] life. And if you're here today and not saved, surely this is giving you pause for thought, that you're traveling in the company of people who know the promise of God, the promise that you know yourself in the gospel.

And we say to you today, you come with us spiritually, you come with us intentionally, you come with us believingly and trustingly in the Lord, and goodness will be the result.

God's goodness will be shared as we travel together. And thirdly, there's an exhortation that follows on the invitation and the previous explanation.

because Hobab said, I will not go, I will depart to my own land and to my kindred. And then Moses said, as he exhorted him, please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us.

And if you do go with us, whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same we will do to you. In other words, Moses is pleading with him, please don't go back, please stay with us, because you are gifted in a particular way to help us on our journey through the wilderness.

[50 : 14] You will be eyes for us, you know the wilderness, you're experienced in the wilderness, you know the place as we seek a resting place for us, you know where we should stop, where we should go, where we should avoid, you will be as eyes to us.

In other words, Moses knows the gift that Hobab has. And that's an important feature of the appeal the Lord sets out in the gospel, that he knows that each one of us is gifted in a particular way, in such a way that would actually add that gift, whatever it is, to the overall equipment of the church as it travels on through time.

And whatever gift you have today may be very, very different from anybody else's gift. God has given you that gift to use it, to be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer only, as James put it.

And that gift is not for you to just hold on to for yourself. It's to use in the accumulation of gifts that the Lord has given to His people, so that as you travel with them, as we travel together, whatever way the Lord has endowed us and gifted us, maybe it's working with young folks, maybe it's working with older folks, maybe it's looking after a creche, maybe it's in reaching out to people and speaking to them.

Not all of us are gifted that way, but we're gifted in some way or other. And as Moses says to Hobab, you know, we can really use your gifts. So, the gospel, so the preaching of the gospel, so the voice of God's people, if you like, and the voice of God Himself is saying to you and to me today, we can use your gifts.

[52 : 04] We need you. We need you to be part of this gathered church together as we travel onwards together, serving the Lord, the service that we owe to God and the service that we give in return for all that He has done for us.

Well, the church is not so much about what you get from it. It's much more indeed about what you give. We all get so much from being together.

We all get so much individually from that. We serve each other, but we give, in a sense, more than we actually receive. And, you know, the gifts that God has given to His church, while they vary, yet accumulatively, they all fit together in God's way.

And serving the Lord through using these gifts is so important. Let me just conclude by a quotation from a book by Sinclair Ferguson, a book called Devoted to God's Church.

Please read through it. It's a wonderful book. And in describing the service we owe to God, he gives certain principles, negatives and positives together.

[53 : 29] And I'll finish with that. He says, service to God, first of all, it's not a matter of others recognizing our gifts, but it is a matter of us recognizing others' needs.

It's not a matter of others recognizing our gifts, it is a matter of us recognizing the needs of others. Secondly, it's not a matter of doing things for others at our own convenience, it is a matter of our helping others when they are inconvenienced.

It's not a matter of doing things for others at our own convenience, without putting ourselves out, but he says it is a matter of our helping others when they are inconvenienced.

And thirdly, he says, it's not a matter of feeling that we have special gifts, but it is a matter of us seeing that others have very special needs. And fourthly, it's not an optional extra for a member of the church.

Service to God is not an optional extra, he says. It's written into the definition of being a member of the church, or you might say even being a Christian.

[54 : 44] It's written into the definition of that. As we travel together that each of us will say of ourselves, saving the Lord, saving the church, it's not an optional extra.

It's a delight, as well as a responsibility, because all that the Lord has done for us, calls upon us to do as much as we can for him.

We are traveling to the place of which the Lord has said, I will give it to you. Come with us. We will do good to you, for the Lord has spoken good concerning his people.

Whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same we will do to you, as God has promised. Let's pray. Almighty God, we give thanks that you are the God that keeps company with your people and that has set them on the journey which you yourself is also on with them.

Your presence, Lord, is promised to your people. We pray that your presence will be out portioned daily. We ask that you would enable us, Lord, as we look at the ways in which you have gifted us.

[56 : 08] Help us, we pray, to use these to your service and to your glory in your service. and we give thanks, O Lord, that while we don't boast about our gifts, why we would never see ourselves as better than others or better endowed, we ask, Lord, that you would help us in true gratitude and humble service to extend all that we can by way of our using our gifts to the furtherance of your church.

Lord, help us, we pray, as we consider the wonderful truth about your people and their traveling, and the invitation that you send to us through the gospel.

Help us to know that you are also exhorting us through that gospel to cast our lot in with your people and to come to serve you while we have the opportunity.

Hear us now, we pray, and receive us graciously for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're singing finally in Psalm 107. Psalm 107, this time it's in the Scottish Psalter.

June is Newington, we're singing verses 1 to 8. Praise God, for he is good, for still his mercy's lasting be.

[57 : 25] Let God's redeemed say so whom he from the enemies handed free and gathered them out of the lands from north, south, east, and west. They strayed in deserts pathless way, no city found to rest.

For thirst and hunger in them fainted their soul. When straits them press, they cry unto the Lord, and he them frees from their distress. Them also in a way to walk, that right is he did guide, that they might to a city go, wherein they might abide.

Oh, that men to the Lord would give praise for his goodness then, and for his works of wonder done unto the sons of men. To the tune Newington these verses.

Amen. Thank you.

And gather them out of the lands from north, south, east and west.

[58 : 53] This great desert's pathless way, no city come to rest.

For thirst and hunger in their face, their soul west, west and west.

They cry out to the Lord and He, then preach from their distress.

Then also in our way to walk, that righteous be denied.

That they might do a city, O where they might abide.

[60 : 07] O that men to the Lord would give praise for His goodness name.

And for His works of wonder, O where they might be.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. 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. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.