

# The Lord's Promised Presence

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] I want to extend a very warm welcome to everybody this evening and I trust that we know God's blessing as we seek to worship God and wherever you are we hope that you'll be able to join with us at this time of worship and we give God thanks for being able to make this provision where we can virtually share in the fellowship with other people in their own homes or wherever we're situated we're going to begin with a couple of very short readings of God's word first of all we're going to read in Matthew's gospel and in chapter 28 and we read there verse 16 now the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them and when they saw whom they worshipped him but some doubted and Jesus came and said to them all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age and again in Hebrews chapter 13 we read there keep your life free from love of money and be content with what you have for he has said I will never leave you nor forsake you so we can confidently say the Lord is my helper I will not fear what man can do to me so we're going to bow in prayer let us pray Lord our God we pray to bless us today we give thanks for this opportunity of meeting around your word and we pray that today will be a new day in our experience where we will know that you are the Lord of heaven and earth we give thanks for the way you have set things up so that we are able to meet together that we're doing it virtually just now an amazing way the fellowship of believers is not necessarily confined to walls but that the in a mysterious and wonderful way as we are linked to Christ our head we are also linked to one another as we are the body of Christ and that is a great mystery but we give thanks Lord that as your word shows us these things faith lays hold upon them and believes them and these things help us in life because we realize we're not on our own we're not on our own we're not on our own because you have told us that you are with us to the end of the age you have told us in your word that you will never leave us nor forsake us but we also are assured of having one another that the fellowship in the gospel is real and it is special and it is precious we give thanks Lord for all that we know and all whom we love that are bound in you and we pray for every home and every family as we gather together this evening before you and we pray that your peace will be in our hearts and that your love will surround us and that we might know your help and strength physically and mentally and spiritually and emotionally and socially in all the different areas and aspects of our lives and so often we're finding at the this particular time with regard to the whole social distancing that it can be very difficult and trying and for some people particularly people who have been on their own over a long period it is it is a difficult and a trying time for them and so we pray Lord that you will draw specially close to them and also remember

those who that is a as it were almost a normal experience as they've lost loved ones and they are maybe their isolation is that which goes on not only day and month but year after year and so we we really pray for them and ask that you will draw specially close to them we pray Lord that you will be with us as a nation particularly as lockdown that we begin to maybe move through the different stages and we pray Lord that we won't hurry too much in a way that will cause a second spike it's the last thing we want to see we pray that week by week we will notice an improvement and that there will be fewer and fewer cases and there's so many less deaths and we ask oh Lord that you will be with all those who have lost loved ones and we know at this particular time it is so difficult and even when people aren't passing away because of covid but whether they're in homes and hospitals because of just the lockdown and the way things are loved ones can't be with them it's heartbreaking heartbreaking for those who are so seriously ill and heartbreaking for families but Lord we pray that in the midst of all that is taking place and all that is happening that your presence and your grace will be known we give thanks Lord for all our frontline workers and all those who have kept the country going in all the different roles and in all the different services we pray your protection upon them Lord we give thanks for those who are putting their lives in danger day by day we give thanks Lord for our wonderful nhs and all our carers in homes and in the community all those Lord who are dealing often in a relentless illness and a deadly disease that has wrecked havoc within not only our nation but throughout the nations of this world oh Lord hasten the cure hasten a vaccine hurry it up Lord we pray so that we will be able to see that that we'll be able to get back to a greater degree of normality maybe life will never be the same again and in some ways it might be good for us to appreciate life more and to be able to maybe not be so rushed as we were before but we pray for all those who have lost jobs and those who are hitting real financial difficulties and problems

Lord be with them we pray because there's going to be a lot of fallout from this and so we ask that you will be gracious and that you will be merciful to us nationally and internationally be with our leaders in Edinburgh and here in the council and down in Westminster we commit them to your care we pray Lord that you will grant them the wisdom from above even if they don't look to you we pray Lord that you will still guide them and direct them in the right way we ask Lord that you'll be with our young as they go back to school some of them going back and others preparing to go back we pray for our teachers they've uh have done a great work a lot of it done virtually some of them uh in it with classes all the time and Lord we commit that great work to your care and keeping and so we ask that you be with us now as we come to your word may we hear it afresh may we appreciate it and if there's anybody listening today who doesn't know you personally as Jesus as the savior and as lord of their lives we ask that even this evening that they will close in with you and find that peace that peace that is only found in Jesus Christ we pray for Lord that you will bless the nations of this world and where there is poverty we pray that you will bring resources in where there is famine that you will bring in food where there is drought that you'll bring in water where there's persecution that you will lift that persecution off because it's the most awful thing to be living your life where an oppression is placed upon each and every day lord grant freedom in this world have mercy then upon us and cleanse us from our sin in Jesus name we ask all amen and i'm just going to say a wee word to to any of the young people who are listening in today i've as you know the the behind us here we have a field filled with sheep and lambs and the other morning uh i was up just the back of seven and i went through to this room that i record in here which looks out directly onto the field with the sheep and the lambs and there's a wee patch it's a field of grass and always there's grass and there's rushes but there's a patch quite a bit quite a big patch not too big maybe the size of two rooms where we had piled up gos and we burnt it and now there's not a trace of any of the gos left but there's this big black patch of earth the grass will grow there again but just now that's what it is just this black patch of earth and for some reason the lambs love to go and lie in it and they've all had lovely grass around there but every evening there's a squad of them maybe a dozen 15 or they come and they they lie down there and i don't know people maybe scientists or people who know these things would be able to to maybe the earth is warmer than the grass i've never looked i should maybe go and look and discover whether that's true or not but they lie on the earth but anyway the other morning i got up just there was the back of seven and i came through and i was looking out and there were three or four of the lambs lying on the earth and there were two or three of them and they were just standing nearby they were nibbling away and there were two or three of the lambs and they were as they were lying there they were doing their slow chew they were enjoying their chewing away but there was this little lamb and a plastic bag or some kind of bag had blown over and it was on the earth and this little lamb was trying to eat the bag so i knocked the window and of course nothing happened so i i i went down and i went over to the wall and i didn't want because all the sheep were lying around didn't want to send the whole field of sheep running so it was just very close by and i said little lamb stop eating that bag it's

not good for you little lamb looked at me and all the other little lambs that were around there they just looked at me the ones who were chewing stopped the ones who were nibbling in the grass they stopped they were all just staring looking there were three sheep lying there but they seemed in a lazy mood they were just looking and sort of saying i'm not going to move just now so the little lamb was looking at me staring at me and i was staring i did and then all of a sudden he just put his head down again and started nibbling at it and started then to pull it and again said little lamb stop that that bag lambs don't eat bags look look at all the grass go and eat the grass that's what the grass is there for for you to eat it that might be your mum go and give her a poke and say i need some milk the milk is there the grass is there everything you need is there bags are not for little lambs they're not good for you and he just stared at me and stared at me and do you know what he did then he just put down his head and started again at it and that time i went hey get it and of course the lamb shut away but so did all the other lambs that are close by and so did the sheep and you know i was thinking to myself that little lamb is so like ourselves because god has given us everything and god has said to us he's given us a book the bible which tells us a way to live and he tells us things that are good for us and he tells that there are things that are not good for us sadly because of what's within our own heart because of that what we call sin within us we often like the things that aren't good for us and sometimes we say there's no harm in that i can do this even though god says it's not good but god tells us it's not good for our reason because god sees the end of what will happen if we keep going on and on and on down that way and so god comes to us and he says no don't be doing that that's wrong you're doing the wrong thing and sometimes we stop and sometimes we listen to god but sometimes like the little lamb we stop listening and we go back to doing what is wrong because there's something in us which says i want to do this but we knew you you know i know it's not good for a little lamb to eat a bag wouldn't be good for and equally it's not good for us to be doing some of the things that are wrong even although sometimes we might like to do them so we need to ask god every day lord help me help me to follow what your word says help me more and more every day to move away from the things which your word tells me are wrong and to do the things which your word tells me are right and help me lord to trust my life in you so that when i do that i will know that i'm doing the right thing i'm going to say the lord's prayer our father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name 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 he does not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever amen we're going to read some words from matthew's gospel again we go to matthew's gospel and this time we're going to read from matthew chapter 18 matthew chapter 18 excuse me and we're going to read from verse 10

see that you do not despise one of these little ones for i tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my father who is in heaven what do you think if a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray does he not leave the 99 on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray and if he finds it truly i say to you he rejoices over it more than over the 99 that never went astray so it is not the will of my father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish if your brother sins against you go and tell him his fault between you and him alone if he listens to you you have gained your brother but if he does not listen take one or two others along with you that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses if he refuses to listen to them tell it to the church and if he refuses to listen even to the church let him be to you as a gentile and a tax collector truly i say to you whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven again i say to you if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask it will be done for them by my father in heaven for where two or three are gathered in my name there am i among them and i want us to think in particular of these words in verse 20 matthew 18 verse 20 for where two or three are gathered in my name there am i among them now one of the things that we have so missed in the lockdown is the gathering together in church we miss one another uh it's we just we long to be in contact one just to see one another and it's one of the things that we missed incredibly we're very thankful that we're able to meet like this virtually but it's not the same now i know that there might be a temptation when the lockdown is lifted and once again we're able to get back to church i don't know when that will be and how things will be but gradually it'll be a process will be worked through but it's very important that we do get back because there might be the temptation afterwards to say well you know the this virtual church is so much easier and yes in many ways it is because you don't have to maybe rush on a sunday morning to to get ready and get all the family ready you can just sit together on the couch and the chairs and watch and you don't have to go out it's a terrible day it's windy and it's wet here you are in the comfort of your own home so there's a there can be a real i suppose temptation to say oh well this is the way i wanted to be from now on and while it's wonderful that we have this it's not the real thing because we need to be together god has made us for himself and he's made us for one another we need one another iron sharpens iron the fellowship of god's people is really important so god wants us to be meeting one with another he loves his church to be together he loves his church to be one together to be pooling together to be in unity and to be in harmony you will find that the apostle paul so often in his writings he's stressing the importance of the unity and the togetherness of the church and in this section the lord is showing the importance of us getting

[ 18 : 58 ] along quietly together but also of when anything does go wrong of sorting it out quickly and quietly and he sets a great example for us now of course we know that not everything can be dealt with in this way so if something's really big you know it might we can't do it but in the normal run of life if somebody does something wrong to you says very simply go and see that person don't go off and start telling everybody under the sun oh this person did this go and see that person and tell what that person tell to that person him or her what they've done and maybe they didn't realize what they did was wrong against you but if they say sorry and they genuinely mean that then that's the end of the matter and they sort of sort it out but if they don't listen then you get two or three folk with you and they go and if they don't listen if he still she doesn't listen then it's then you take it to the church see jesus is very keen that that we're always working together in unity and in harmony and so that's what this little section is about but jesus at the end of it he says that here we are makes this great statement for where two or three are gathered in my name there am i among them and this verse has been a great comfort and inspiration to people down through the years where as few as two or three are gathered in my name i'm there in the midst and that is certainly very true in the circumstances we're going in today sometimes you'll be on your own sometimes it'll be just two of you sometimes there'll be a few of you but they're little small gatherings but jesus says it doesn't matter how small that's what he's really saying it's not literally just two or three just what he's trying to highlight is it doesn't matter how small the gathering is in my name i will be there with you and it's a wonderful realization that and we need to be reminded of it over and over again is that that the lord jesus promises always to be with us through the spirit and that's why we read both in matthew at the end of matthew lo i am with you always not sometimes not most of the times not just by day and sometimes in the night but always always there's no point when i'm not there i'm with you always to the end of the age that's why it says in hebrews that i will never leave you never at no point ever no matter what the circumstances are no matter what you do even when you're disobedient to me when you're against me when you're sinning against me even when you're maybe like peter denying jesus with oaths and curses jesus was still present with peter at no point i will he says i will never leave you i will never forsake you so that's part of the great comfort as christians that we have is this the special sense of the lord's presence but the lord gives us added sense of his presence when his people come together to worship and we've got to remember that there's something special about that god wants his people to come together to worship it's important it's important for him and it's important for us and while we are in our homes just now because of circumstances and god acknowledges this and the provision is made for us here when that lockdown is over we still must try and go to god's house because remember what it tells us in the book of psalms god loves the gates of zion more than all the dwellings of jacob in other words what the lord is saying that he loves his house and the worship in his house whether it was in

the tabernacle or in the temple and now in the present age in the church that is the seat where his honor is the place that he loves to come where his presence is coming in a special way and so that's why it's incumbent upon us to make our way to where god has promised in a very special way to come and there is something wonderful in the when we come to church we come together to worship to praise to acknowledge god as our god we come in dependence upon him we come to pray and as we said to praise and to listen and god has given us in his wisdom he's given us the reading and the preaching of his word this is a way that people come to faith it's a way that we are built up in the faith so god in his wisdom has set this for us and that's why he loves to be at the gates of zion more than anything else and so we see here that it tells us very simply in our text for where two or three are gathered in my name there am i among them now you'll notice that there is a specific qualification given gathered in my name because there can be lots of religious gatherings that aren't in the name of jesus and the lord doesn't promise his presence there he promises his presence where the gathering is in his name so what does it mean in the name of jesus well a name as we know is what we're identified by when i was born i was given the name kennethian that is how i am identified that is what i answer to that is that is who i am you have been given your name and that is who you are it's our identification but for the hebrew the name yes it identified but it did more than that the name described the character and when we come to look at who jesus is we see that the very name of jesus tells us who he is and what he has done and when we think of jesus we must always think of him in in in in the in this particular way who he is and what he has done so we're told remember the angel came at the time of his birth or before his birth and told mary his name shall be called jesus for he shall save his people from their sins that's who he is and what he has done and so he is the savior it's a it's a it's a it's a most beautiful title that was given to him he's the savior the savior of this world savior of sinners and that's who jesus is he has come that's what he's come to do to save this is the work that the father gave him to do it is it was a difficult work it was a work that cost him his life but it is a work that he loves doing this is this is his great work that's why jesus said i have come he used to say that quite often i have come that's why i came i have come to seek and to save that which is lost those who are lost and you know it's an awful thing to be lost when you're lost you don't you don't know where you are you don't know how to get from where you are to where you need to go and sometimes when we're lost we don't know that we're lost until we're maybe a way a good way along the wrong route but what jesus has come to do is to get us back to god because we've gone away from god

and we're lost from god and we can't make our own way back and that's why jesus said i am the way back to god i am the truth i'm telling you the truth i'm life i bring you life so that your life will be lived in fullness with me as i bring you back to god my father so this is a wonderful work that jesus does and he's able to do that today he's able to do that for you you might be saying today and saying to you or tonight and you're saying to yourself you know i know people are saved i hear about people being saved but i don't know that i can be saved of course you can there's lots of people tonight who once said you know i don't think i'll be ever saved i don't think i can be saved some people think that they're too bad to be saved they say oh all after what after all i've done there's not a chance no the lord is able to save do you know what he says he's able to save to the uttermost to the most far far away hopeless case i'm able to save today if you looked in the thief on the cross that man who was standing beside jesus and a wee while in the earlier part of that crucifixion that man was mocking jesus on the cross but then there came a point when he recognized who jesus was he was given to see lord he says remember me when you come into your kingdom and jesus said today you'll be with me in paradise talk of a short prayer a recognition an understanding of who was beside him a recognition that he needed help and saving jesus said yep i'll save you to the uttermost so he's able to save you as well so we have to ask the question save from what well we're told he shall save us from our sins and of course sin is that which lies at the very heart of every single one of us sin very simply is missing the mark i'm sure that catechism would tell us that sin is any transgression or lack of conformity to the law of god or any transgression against the law of god very simply it is missing the mark god has set standards and there they are and we try to adhere to these standards and we can't we're missing all the time we just can't do it and it's because of our total inability to save ourselves doesn't matter the reformation we try in our own life or all the resolutions we try to pass it doesn't work it might help it might make our life a little better but we still can't make ourselves right with god jesus said i've come to do that i've come to deal with that with your sin to save you from your sin because your sin and my sin it condemns us we're condemned in the sight of god because of our sin jesus said i've come to deal with that so that i take that condemnation on myself that's what he did on the cross and all he says to us is i just want you to believe and accept and accept me for what i have done in order that your life will now be accepted by god on behalf of what i did so he saves us from our sin and he saves us too that's what happens about when he didn't just save us from that he has saved us into a new life a life of peace and of love and of grace a life of fulfillment a life of joy i guess there's a struggle in the christian life but you're brought on to a new dimension where you see things differently there's a spiritual beat about your heart and you're able to see things you're able to see the hand of god at work and things that you couldn't see before and so there's this this is what jesus does saving is a wonderful thing many a person has been saved from drowning people have been saved from burning buildings from burning cars



dragged from burning planes so to be saved people have been saved by others doing first aid on them it's a wonderful thing to save anybody well that's what what Jesus has come to do to save to save us and we're going to remember is that he's today he's our living savior he's alive forevermore this is not something that he did in the past but he is still doing today i am alive forevermore that's what Jesus said i am the living one i was dead but i am now alive forevermore and the work that he when he said i have come to seek and to save that which was lost what he said then he is still saying today so he's a living savior who is able to save you today to bring life into your life but he he's not only a a a living savior but he's also a willing savior and that makes a that's a wonderful thing he's willing to save and if you go to him and say oh lord my life has been a bit messed up will you save me the lord is not going to say oh you're somebody else i'm too busy oh not him not her no he's just he's delighted it's it's what he came to do there is no greater joy it tells us this is a joy that was set before him this is why he endured the cross in order to save so he's willing he loves to save will you go to him tonight and say lord save me i don't know what all it means but will you save me and he will anybody who comes truly to him and really asks him he will and he's also a personal savior because although the lord has saved millions Jesus has saved millions but he has saved you saved me it's personal it's as if there was nobody else but you there's a beautiful version of the bible which says that he tasted death for everyone for every single person that he died he tasted their day it was like he took it individually personally upon them as if it was just you and him and he's saying i'm dying in your place i'm taking your sin on my behalf on on me i am going to make you right before god it's personal that's that's the wonder of this and the other name that Jesus was given the angel again said there were the two names Jesus who saved us from our sin and also Emmanuel God with us isn't that beautiful imagine the condescension of God not just looking down upon us but God coming to live with us God coming to be with us and to share with us and to help us and we're going to remember that whatever situation that we are in that he is there with us and we have to ask him sometimes we're aware of his presence sometimes we aren't but we're going to say lord in whatever situation i'm in please please will you help me because he is always there and he's there to strengthen us when we're weak he's there to help us when we're in difficulty he's there to aid us in our struggles maybe with temptation he's there to give us grace when we're maybe not dealing with things very well he's there to give us joy in our heart when we're down he's there to give us his peace when we're anxious he's there to be with us at all times and you know when the lord is with us anything can happen there's an awesome example in the bible remember when Daniel's three friends they were thrown into the burning

fiery furnace and nebuchadnezzar went to watch them burn because he's oh i'm gonna watch these guys burn anyway i could imagine nebuchadnezzar kind of rubbing his eyes as he's looking into the burning fiery furnace because the three men who were thrown in bound and he expected just to see them burn up they're walking about but it's not three he's seen but four and he asked the question did we not put in three yes how come there are four and of course the fourth was the presence of the lord had come in a very wonderful way and made himself known in that situation and he kept these men alive so that they came out as they went in now the lord is not we're not to expect something as dramatic as that when the lord is present but we've always got to remember that anything is possible the presence of christ is such a blessing because when we even just take it very simply where we are here this evening two things in conclusion he's there in our midst as a shepherd to look after us to feed us to protect us to nourish us to give us something for our souls he's there as a great physician a great doctor he knows exactly the remedy he knows and he has a provision and you know if you had some incurable or it appeared to be incurable disease and someone said you know i can sort that it would be madness to say nah nah i'm all right just leave me alone and that's what actually a hundred people do with the offer of jesus jesus is saying look i can help you the disease of sin is going to kill you but i can i am able to help you and i hope tonight nobody will turn away and say leave me alone or i'll look i'll think about it another time you know a lot of people are afraid of what it will be to become a christian that it's the uncertainty they're comfortable you i remember it well you're comfortable in your life and you think this is kind of the unknown not too sure well the unbelief of your own heart and the whisper of the devil will tell you you lose out being a christian you don't it doesn't mean that your life is plain sailing but it takes life to another level and there's a fulfillment and there's an understanding and there's a purpose and there's an identity when you become a christian that you cannot get when you're not so tonight as jesus is present with you don't just let him go but ask him at this particular time lord jesus come into my heart and into my life we're now going to conclude our service singing to god's praise and this time from psalm 84 psalm 84 and this is from the scottish sorter psalm 84 and we're going to sing from verse 8 to the end lord god of hosts my prayer here o jacob's god gilead see god our shield look on the face of thine anointed dear for in thy courts one day excels a thousand a rather in my god's house will i keep a door than dwell in tents or sin and so on to the end of the psalm psalm 84 verses 8 to the end lord god of hosts my prayer here this way

[ 39 : 11 ] O church, God's pocket here, She covers you, We'll come the face Of thy hand, Thy church here.

For in thy course One day excels A person rather than.

Thy walls as hell, Thy deep adore, And dwell in tents of sin.

For our God the Lord, Our sun and shield, Feel grace and glory care, And dwell with all, The good from them, That have rightly to live.

O thou, that thou art, The Lord of hosts, That man is truly blessed, That holy spirit with■■■, And now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.