

Do You See Who He Is?

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Date: 28 January 2024

- [0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise. We're going to sing in Psalm 93 on the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 93, the whole of Psalm, page 354.
- The tune is Irish. The Lord doth reign and clothed is he with majesty most bright, his works to show him clothed to be and girt about with might.
- So we'll sing the whole of this Psalm to God's praise. The Lord doth reign and clothed is he with majesty most bright, his works to show him clothed to be and girt about with might.
- The world is all so established that it cannot depart.
- Thy throne is fixed of hope and love from everlasting heart.
- [1 : 39] The floods, O Lord, have lifted up, they lifted up their voice.
- And made a mighty noise.
- But yet the Lord doth is on high, is more of might by far, than the noise of many waters is, our great sea bellows are.
- Thy testimonies, everyone, in faithfulness excel, and holiness forevermore, thy heart becouled as well.
- Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, as we gather in your name this day, we do thank you for your word.
- [3 : 36] We thank you that we can read from it, that we can sing praise to you, that we can lift our voices up to you. And we have been reminded in the psalm that we have sung, that your voice is a mighty voice, greater than all the noise of the waters, the waves, the storms around us.
- We thank you that though we hear these things, that you are one who is more powerful and mightier than all of these things. And we pray today, Lord, that we will know your voice.
- As we read your word, we will see it as your word. As we hear it, Lord, that you would bless it to us all. We thank you that you speak to each and every one of us, the youngest to the oldest, that there are none of us who are left out of worship.
- There is none of us who are left out of this service. But we gather together as one to praise you as our Lord and as our God. And we ask, oh Lord, for your protection over us today.
- We especially think of the winds outside at this time and pray that as we come and go, that you will protect us and keep us. We thank you for all who are there to help us in these times as well.
- [4 : 50] We pray for many who will be out and about in difficult conditions, even maybe at this time. Coast Guard Services, helping people in need, both on land and at sea, helping to protect us during these times.
- And we pray, Lord, your protection over them. We thank you, Lord, to be able to worship you this day, to be worshipping you in this place and with a peace to enjoy it.

And we ask, oh Lord, that you would bless all that is done, both here and in the Sunday school and the tweenies and creche as well, Lord. Protect our young ones, Lord. Be with them each one. Be with us as families and friends and as a congregation together.

May you hear all our prayers and watch over us in Jesus' name as we ask all of these things in his name for the pardon of our sins.

Amen. It's good that there's a number of young people present, and I'm sure many others may be tuning in online as well. So I want to ask you a question.

[5 : 51] Any of the young people here, do you enjoy riddles? Trying to work out what a riddle is trying to say. A riddle is a number of words put together and they maybe don't make sense at first and you're just trying to work out what does it actually mean.

So I want to share a riddle with you and see if you can work this one out. See what it's talking about. And the riddle goes like this. It says, you can't own it, but you can use it.

You can't keep it, but you can spend it. Once you have lost it, you can never get it back. So that's the riddle.

I wonder if anybody knows what it means. You can't own it, but you can use it. You can't keep it, but you can spend it. Once you have lost it, you can never get it back.

Hands up if you know what the answer is. Don't want you to shout out the answer, but there's a few hands going up. Mostly adults though. Any of the young folks, do you know the answer?

[7 : 00] It's time. There's one upstairs there that's got the hand up, right up in the air. It's time. You can't own time, but you can use it. You can't keep it, but you can spend it.

You can spend time on lots of different things. Once you've lost it, you can never get it back. So once the time has gone, you can never get it back. Time is free, but time is priceless.

So important that we use our time wisely. What do you use most of your time on? Hands up if it's sleeping.

I'm sure there's quite a few people who spend a lot of time sleeping. What about eating? Maybe not so much. What about sitting on your phone or tablet or watching television?

Lots of time, I'm sure, spent there, is it? We all spend time doing lots of different things. But the Bible reminds us that just like the riddle there, trying to understand what it means, sometimes that's what the Bible can seem like to ourselves as well.

[8 : 06] It just seems like words that are brought together, sometimes they don't really make sense. But the Bible says in Psalm 90, verse 12, teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Now maybe that sounds like a riddle at first as well. Teach us to number our days so that we may get a heart of wisdom. What does that mean? Well, it means to use our time wisely, to number our days, to see that our days are soon going to go past, past in a blink.

And once that time has passed, we can't get that time back. So time is precious. Time is important. And we need to number our days, which means we take account of all of our days.

We can think of how many days have gone past. We can count them. How many days ahead? We don't know. We don't have the answer. So the Psalm says, get a heart of wisdom.

Time teaches us that it's going to come to an end at some point. So it's important that we make the best use of our time, not wasting our time. There are things that we have to do, but we should always make time for God.

[9 : 23] Make time for his word. Make time for finding understanding of what he's saying to us in his word. Lord, teach us, Lord, to have a heart of wisdom, because that's what we need for every day, a heart to be wise with the Lord, to make the best use of our time before our time is past.

So may God help us in all the time that we have to listen to him and to seek a heart of wisdom. We're going to say the Lord's prayer together now.

Our Father, we chart 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.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to sing again to God's praise, this time in Psalm 32.

Again, the Scottish Psalter version, Psalm 32, page 244 of the psalm books. Psalm 32, page 244.

[10 : 52] We're going to sing from verse 7 down to verse 11. We're going to sing from verse 7 to 11 on the tune of Spore.

We stand to sing to God's praise. The Lord, O heart, my hiding place, thou shalt from trouble keep me free.

thou wisdoms of deliverance, thou shalt comfort shall compass me.

I will instruct thee and thee teach the way that thou shalt go.

And when my eye upon thee set, I will direction show.

[12 : 33] Then be not like the hearts or mules which do not understand, whose powers as they come near to thee, a bridal must command.

Come to the man that wicked is, his sorrows shall abound, but him that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall come as crown.

yea, yea, righteous in the Lord be glad, in him do ye rejoice, O ye that upright are in heart, for joy lift up your voice.

Let us again come to God in prayer. Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, as we approach your word, we thank you that as we open it up, that we come seeking your help to understand words that can sometimes seem like a riddle to ourselves.

We thank you that you are able by your spirit to reveal to us the many promises and precious, precious promises that there are in your word.

[14 : 53] We thank you that you do not leave us to stumble around your word unable to understand, but that you provide so many things and methods to help us to understand.

We thank you that we have the liberty and freedom to be under the preaching of the gospel. We thank you that we have your word in a language that we can understand. We thank you that in a day of technology, we have so many means to hear your word broken down for us, to hear it read to us, to hear it explained to us even what the very smallest of words might mean in it.

We are a multitude of great hosts of things to help us to understand your word. But we know that the time that we have is precious and that we are to make the most of it.

And we are so easily distracted from your word. We spend so much time maybe on other things. We can waste so much time as it is. But yet, Lord, we thank you that you are able to give us a spirit to hunger and thirst for your word, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and to help us to see and understand all that you are teaching us through your word and how to apply it to our lives and to the world in which we live.

For we can look around us and see so many troubles, even as in the Psalms that we have sung. There is trouble around the psalmist in so many different ways, and yet he is able to say that you are a hiding place for him, that you are a place of deliverance for him.

[16 : 34] And we thank you, Lord, that we know that for ourselves and so many of us. And we pray that together we would all come to know and experience that wonderful deliverance that you offer through your Son, Christ Jesus.

that when we are blind and ignorant to you, that you are the one who is able to open our eyes and to help us to understand and to go on gaining understanding and sharing our understanding with others.

And so we pray you'll bless our time together this day. We pray you'll watch over us in it, that you will guide us by your Spirit in all that we do and all that we say.

That even as we offer up our prayers at this time together, the spoken prayer and the ones uttered from all our hearts, you know every prayer that we offer up at this time.

It's not just one, but many. For many different people and situations, from many different hearts, we offer up our prayer to you. Hearts that are broken, hearts that may be full of joy, and yet hearts that can know the wonderful peace that you are able to give.

[17 : 46] And we ask, O Lord, that together as we pray, that you will remind us that when we come in faith, believing in you, reminding ourselves that you hear our every prayer through the name of Jesus Christ as we come, and that your answer, O Lord, though it may be different to what we ask for, we commit ourselves, Lord, to you who knows best, even the things that we do not understand or cannot comprehend, O Lord, help us to know your presence with us in these things as well, to know your grace in every aspect of our lives.

And so we pray for your cause, Lord, near and far. We pray for your church, that you will build us up as a people here and far and wide, that you will look down upon us in your great mercy, that you will look down upon our world, O Lord, in mercy, that as we see so much turmoil around us, as we see so many things that we have no influence or control over, as we feel powerless in so many situations, yet, O Lord, remind us of the power that you have.

Mightier than the voice of the waves is our Lord. And we thank you for that, that where there are storms of so many kinds, be they the natural storms we see around us, or the physical storms of life, the storms of war, famine, drought, earthquakes, volcanoes, all of these powerful elements that we see around us.

We thank you that you are mightier than all, and that your voice is able to bring a stop to all of these things, to change all of these things.

And yet, O Lord, in a world in which we live, we look to our own wisdom or wisdom of leaders, leaders who so often have no thought of you. And so we pray for them, Lord, that you will come, a mercy upon them and draw them to yourself, to see that any power they feel they have is nothing compared to yours, and that they would come to put their trust in you, whether that's leaders of our political, in political spheres, whether it's royalty, whether it's leaders in councils, or whether it's leaders in the church.

[20 : 23] We pray, Lord, for you to give us all wisdom, to give us help, to give us direction, to guide our people, to seek the good of our people, to seek your blessing upon us.

And so we pray, Lord, that you will hear all of these prayers in your name. We pray for every home and family here and tuning in online as well. We thank you, Lord, that we are able to pray for one another in very different circumstances.

We pray for those who mourn. We pray your comfort towards them. We pray for those who are unwell, whether it's at home or in hospital or in the care homes we see around us in the town here or further afield.

We pray, Lord, your blessing on each one and families who are concerned for loved ones. We are able to bring our cares to you and we thank you for that.

We pray, Lord, for your spirit to work around us, Lord, for those who are maybe well in health and yet spiritually dead, dead in their trespasses and sins, as your word describes.

[21 : 33] We pray, Lord, to bring life, to bring new life into their hearts and into their souls. We pray, Lord, that you will awaken us to our need of the Lord Jesus, that when we are stumbling and asleep in this world, we pray for you to awaken us, awaken us to our greatest need, the need of deliverance, the need of a savior, and to see of every provision that you have made, that you have provided for us through your son, who gave his life for his people, who rose again for our salvation, who ascended on high to the right hand of God and who will come again.

We thank you for the hope of the gospel and we pray, Lord, that you will revive and stir up that hope in our hearts, that we will hold it as the dearest, most precious thing to us.

Lord, look down upon us, continue with us this day, be with the preaching of your word into the evening as well, Lord, throughout your church today. May your name be glorified.

May your people praise you and may sinners be brought to repentance. We ask all these things, looking to you as the one who is able to do so much more than we ask or imagine.

And hear us in all our prayers, pardon us for all our sins as we confess them on you. And all we ask, we ask in the name of Jesus and for his glory. Amen.

[23 : 04] We're going to read God's word together now in the gospel of Mark. Mark chapter 8. Mark chapter 8.

We'll take up our reading at verse 11. And we're reading down to verse 30. Mark chapter 8.

Mark chapter 8 at verse 11. You notice at the beginning of the chapter, there's the account of Jesus feeding the 4,000. A second time when Jesus had miraculously fed a large crowd of people.

And then following that, we take up our reading at verse 11. The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him.

And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.

[24 : 11] And he left them, got into his boat again, and went to the other side. Now they had forgotten to bring bread. And they had only one loaf with them in the boat.

And he cautioned them saying, watch out, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And they began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.

And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?

Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?

They said to him, twelve. And he said to them, do you not yet understand?

[25 : 18] And they came to Bethsaida, and some people brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village.

And when he had spat on his eyes, and laid his hands on him, he asked him, do you see anything? And he looked up and said, I see men, but they look like trees walking.

Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again, and he opened his eyes. His sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him to his home, saying, do not even enter the village.

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the village of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way, he asked his disciples, who do people say that I am? And they told him, John the Baptist, and others say Elijah, and others one of the prophets.

And he asked them, but who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, you are the Christ. And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

[26 : 29] And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word. Before we turn back to look at this passage, we'll again sing to God's praise in Psalm 146.

In the Sing Psalms version. Psalm 146. We'll sing from verse 5 down to verse 10. Page 191 of the psalm book.

Psalm 146, verse 5, the tune of Sussex. Blessed is the one who truly looks for help to Jacob's God. Blessed is the one who places all his hope upon the Lord.

And we see in verse 8 there, he says, to the blind the Lord gives sight. We'll sing these verses 5 to 10 to God's praise.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Blessed is the one who truly looks for help to Jacob's God.

[27 : 36] Blessed is the one who places all his hope upon the Lord. the Lord.

He who made the earth and heaven and the seas with all their store, he who keeps his every promise, who is faithful evermore.

He delivers from oppression and releases the hungry's plight. He releases those who prison to the blind the Lord his sight.

Those who up the down he raises, our delights in righteousness.

He protects and cares for strangers, waitrose and the fatherless.

[29 : 09] he frustrates the wicked purpose, so the Lord who endless days brings to heavenly generation.

Praise your God, those high on praise. We can turn back to our reading in Mark's Gospel, chapter 8.

And we're focusing on most of what we read, really, but we're seeing the account of the man who was blind, having his sight restored.

And the question then that comes after that as he's speaking with his disciples, as he's asking them, you know, who do people say that I am? And then he asks a great question, but what about you?

Who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am? We face questions, I'm sure, every day.

[30 : 30] We're asked different questions. Some are simple questions that are maybe easier to answer that don't really challenge us deeply. We are asked questions maybe very often during the day, what time is it?

What do you want for your dinner? These kinds of everyday questions that we hear all the time. But there may be days when we're caught out by a question, when we're asked a question that we hadn't really expected or anticipated, we'd perhaps never really thought about it before, but we're challenged by it and we wonder what kind of answer should we give?

Somebody might come and ask you, you know, what gives you real joy in life? You think, well, it's not really a question. I've thought about a lot, but I could probably think of a number of different answers to give.

Or you might be asked another question from someone, what keeps you awake at night? And you think to yourself, well, that's not really any of your business. that's kind of probing a little bit too deep.

What keeps me awake at night is none of your concern. It's something that's very private to myself. Our life is full of different questions, some simple ones, some maybe more deeply probing, and some probing right into our hearts.

[31 : 49] And as you read through this chapter, chapter 8 of Mark's gospel, you find that at different points, Jesus is asking questions, asking questions of different people in different circumstances, but questions that are probing them into their hearts, asking them, you know, where are you?

What do you see as your greatest need in life? If you glance with me to verse 12 there, the Pharisees were demanding a sign from him, what's the question that Jesus asks of them?

He sighed deeply in his spirit and said, why does this generation seek a sign? Why does this generation seek a sign? It's almost like he's saying, you have just seen and heard of the feeding of the 4,000 in a miraculous way, and this is on top of other things that the Lord has already done, and he's saying, you're still asking to see more.

Have you not seen enough and heard enough of me? Why does this generation seek a sign? Is that a question that you've asked of God?

Show me a sign, then I'll believe. Give me something that I can see for myself, and then I'll believe. When Jesus is saying to ourselves, why as a generation are we asking for more?

[33 : 17] When he's already revealed and shown to us so much of who he is, remembering this is before the greatest sign of all that Jesus would give, as he gave his life on the cross, and as he rose from the grave, as he ascended to heaven, do we need any more?

And after the response to the Pharisees there, why do you, this generation, seek for a sign, he's then talking to his disciples, and the question, a very probing question, he asks them there in verse 21, do you not yet understand?

Do you not yet understand? And then as you continue down into verse 27 onwards, he's asking these two questions, who do people say that I am?

In verse 27, and then a more probing and challenging question for them in verse 29, but who do you say that I am?

Who do you say that I am? And in order to see the account of the man who was blind, and to understand the healing of the man who was blind, we have to see both what comes before it and what comes after it, because that helps us to see what Jesus was doing as he healed this man who was blind.

[34 : 54] They have become maybe complacent in some ways, the disciples, they've been seeing many miracles, and they're just going on as if this is the way it's always going to be.

We see there's a little conflict with the Pharisees as they're asking for a sign there's confusion then among the disciples as he's talking to them about being aware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod in verse 15.

There's all of these things going on, and then you come into this account of the blind man being healed, and it's showing us that understanding takes time.

So as we think of the question that comes, who do you say that I am? It's a question we'll all have an answer to, but it'll be in different degrees of understanding.

None of us here will ever fully understand who he is. Not this side of eternity, but we should always be longing to understand more of who he is.

[36 : 01] And that should give us a certain sense of help in our situation as well if we think, well I'm not a believer, I don't know enough. He's challenging us to say, well who is he?

Do you see him as the Christ? Because that is the starting point of any understanding of him. And it's not that you'll have all the answers to be able to profess his name, but to understand just who he is and understanding comes over a period of time.

What's your answer to the question then? Who do you say that he is? Who do you say that Jesus is today? We'll all have an answer.

Some will confess Jesus is Lord. Others will confess Jesus is my Lord. Others will say, well Jesus was just a good man.

Others will say Jesus is nothing. He's just a made up story. How do you answer that question then?

[37 : 12] Who do you say that I am? Well, three things we want to take from this passage today. First of all, we see understanding takes time.

So when you're looking at the account of the blind man being given his sight, it might seem just like a little aside in between the teaching that he's been given to the disciples beforehand and then these great questions that he's asking them as they went on their way to the village of Caesarea Philippi.

Another healing is just maybe a little aside. As you're going through Mark's gospel, you see there's a number of different miracles that happen, and especially healings.

You see it again and again throughout the gospel of Mark. So is this just another healing? Do we just become complacent and think very little of it? Or do we see that here he is really teaching his disciples and teaching us how we come to understand the Lord more and more?

If you look at verse 17 and 18, they're Jesus aware of what they're speaking about. He says to them in verse 17, why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread?

[38 : 32] Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Three questions he asks them in a row there. Three questions.

Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Is this really a big issue considering just what you've just seen, the feeding of the 4,000? Do you not yet perceive or understand?

Do you not understand who I am? Are your hearts still hardened? That's a searching question.

And that's the basis of Jesus' healing, this man at Bethsaida. This question, do you not yet understand? We might feel as if we can see things clearly in this world, but more and more as we look to the scripture, we see there are so many things that we don't understand.

And when you look at this miracle, the man's sight wasn't restored immediately. He goes from complete blindness to seeing people as trees walking to then seeing clearly.

[39 : 51] And you think to yourself, why that? why didn't Jesus just heal him instantly? He's done it before. He could do it here. It's not the fact that he couldn't do it, but he's making a point.

And the point is around this question, do you not yet understand? He laid his hands on him and asked him, do you see anything in verse 23?

And he looked up and said, I see men, but they look like trees walking. His vision is still blurred. And it's only at the second time of Jesus touching his eyes that he's able to see clearly.

I'm sure like myself, many of you have been to the opticians. I remember when I first got glasses when I was young, I couldn't believe the difference when I put on the glasses.

I mean, I thought my eyes were just like everybody else's, but I was half blind. And putting on my glasses as I went out from the optician was just eye opening, literally, because I could see so many things I had never been able to see clearly before.

[40 : 56] And now every time you go back to the optician, they always start by putting in different lenses and they're asking which one's clear, number one or number two, and they're working their way through a process, helping you to have a clear vision.

And in so doing, they're showing that your eyes are not good, the vision is not good until it's aided. And that's what Jesus is reminding us of here as well.

Understanding takes time. The man wasn't healed immediately. He was seeing just bloody, as it were, at first, and then seeing clearly.

And for ourselves, as we are called to come to an understanding of God, there are things that may seem like riddles at first, things that we don't understand, that aren't clear to us.

Which is why we need to spend our time studying God's word, and in a relationship with God, using our time wisely, praying to God to help us to understand, and to share together in that search for knowledge and understanding, in our fellowship, in our Bible studies, in all that we're doing, helping one another along the way.

[42 : 17] Because understanding takes time, and different people are at different stages of understanding, sharing knowledge with one another to help one another along the way.

So it takes time. The second thing we see here is that understanding takes faith. Understanding takes faith.

Theologian Augustine once said, Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.

Again, that sounds maybe like a little riddle. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.

understand. It's not a case of coming to a point where you understand everything, therefore, you can believe. But you can believe in God without fully understanding.

[43 : 27] And the more that you believe in God, the more you understand the different things. Our relationship with the Lord is about faith and trusting him.

And those who do not believe in God, they lack that. There's no faith. And that's why they will mock and belittle Jesus, because they will base their understanding on what can be seen and what can be proved.

And yet, so much of what the Bible teaches us are things that are as yet unseen. And that can only be seen through faith.

When you look at the man who was blind, he couldn't see, yet as Jesus comes to him, in verse 23, he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village.

You don't read there that he took the man by the hand and led him away, kicking and screaming, because he didn't know who he was with, didn't know where he was going to be taken, didn't know what he was going to do with him.

[44 : 40] There is an element of faith in this blind man. Jesus has taken him by the hand and he's not resisting. He's allowing him to lead him along the way.

And again, there's an element of that for ourselves too, where when Jesus is calling us, we are to put our hand in his and allow him to lead us along the way, trusting him that he will show us the way and help us to understand.

And that is what faith is about. Trusting the Lord in all the ways ahead for us. The disciples too have been blind themselves.

They've been blind at different points in their lives. They haven't understood everything and it has taken faith to go on. You think of the disciples when they were first called, when they were called to leave everything behind, the fishermen were told to leave your nets and come and follow me, Jesus said.

What did they do? They didn't say, well, I've got so many questions to ask before I go. They left and they went immediately. They were faithful to the call of God and trusted him that he would be with them on the way.

[46 : 00] There were various challenges along the way. In John's Gospel, chapter 6, towards the end of that chapter, you read of a time when Jesus had a large crowd gathered around him and were hearing his teaching.

It says that many found it difficult to understand and they turned away. They had no faith to go forward. Jesus asked the disciples a question there.

Will you also go away? And the response was to whom else can we go? For you have the words of eternal life.

There's faith there. And that's what we see here as well when they're asked these probing questions. Who do others say that I am?

They start to say, well, some say that you're John the Baptist. Others say you're Elijah and others the prophets. there needs to be faith to give the answer that they give.

[47 : 05] And when you think about it, they're standing out from the crowd. And both these occasions in the Gospel of John and here in the Gospel of Mark, the disciples are in a small number by themselves.

And the easy way out would be just to turn away. We don't understand these things. They make no sense to us. We'll just go away like everybody else. But faith, even though they don't fully understand at this point, faith keeps them looking to Jesus.

Faith is what leads them, Peter, to reply, you are the Christ. You are the Christ. You are the Messiah.

You are the one we have been hearing is to come. You are the one we are supposed to be looking for. You are the Christ. And when you think of that question for yourself today, who do you say that he is?

Do you have faith to answer, you are the Christ? Do you have faith to answer, to whom else can I go?

[48 : 22] Because you alone have the words of eternal life. There is nowhere else we can go, but we need faith. The missionary Adoniram Judson, he was in Burma in the early 1800s, what is now Myanmar, and he went there to preach the gospel to those who were blind and ignorant to God in that place.

men and he did not go well at first. And he ended up in prison, chained up in prison. And he was in prison with a number of other fellow prisoners.

And he was sharing about the Lord and what he had come to this place to do with those who were in prison with him. But he was mocked by some. And one day, one other prisoner asked him, looking at him sitting there in a prison cell with this large weight of chain around his legs so that he couldn't move, he asked him, Dr.

Judson, what do you think now of the prospects of preaching to the heathen here? Well, what was the response of Dr.

Judson? His instant reply was the prospects are just as bright as the promises of God. He had faith that God would help him to proclaim the gospel.

[49 : 58] And that's exactly what he was doing even in that prison at that very moment. He was preaching to the heathen about the promises of God.

He had faith. faith. Do you have faith? Do I have faith in all that God is calling us to do? In all that God wants us to do as a people for him?

Do we have faith? Do we believe in that response of Peter? You are the Christ. You are the one who is able to provide and help us in all our needs.

Thirdly and finally we see here understanding takes grace. Whether we are looking at the blind man here or the Pharisees or the disciples we see God's grace in so many ways to them all.

What he could do that he doesn't. What we probably wouldn't do ourselves that he does. he shows so much grace towards them.

[51 : 10] When you look at the blind man when he's taken by the hand when he's touched on his eyes both times when he's spoken to by Jesus it's showing the love and grace of the Lord to someone who would by others just cast away put away as a burden on society.

he shows grace. How many times does he show grace to the disciples? You maybe think to yourself all those disciples who are so close to Jesus what a privilege they had what an understanding they had and yet so often you find Jesus asking them do you not yet understand?

Do you not realize who I am? And you think of Peter himself who was so often the spoke person for the disciples whether it was will you also go away and he replies to whom else shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life or here as Peter answers in chapter 8 the question who do you say that I am? He says you are the Christ you think to yourself oh to be as holy as Peter to have the faith of Peter such deep answers that he has where else can we go because you are the words of eternal life or you are the Christ the Messiah there's a depth to these answers that we maybe don't have and we think oh well we'll never be like Peter with that understanding and yet how much grace did the Lord have to show to Peter you think he had all that understanding and yet when it came to the crucifixion or just before the crucifixion what did he do when he was asked three times do you not know this man are you not with this man he denied him three times three times when he was asked are you with him or do he had all these deep answers and yet he didn't fully understand who he was and he denied him three times but what did

Jesus do he restored him he showed grace to him and how many times have you been shown grace in your own life how many times has the Lord been gracious to you when there are times when you feel so close to the Lord so you get all the understanding and the next minute you're falling into a sin again and the Lord is gracious because we don't fully understand and we fall and stumble along the way and yet the Lord is gracious to us and the Lord is still asking us these searching questions that we might come and understand more and more of who he is and what he is able to do for us grace as the hymn says has brought us to a certain point and grace will see us home because grace is what is able to keep us we don't fully understand we don't fully see and have all the answers but by faith and by grace we go on

[54 : 53] Richard Baxter another theologian who wrote many books he tells a story in one of his books about the building of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and he recounts how during the construction of that bridge the construction works had fallen way behind schedule and the problem was that the workers were so afraid because a number of workers had fallen from a great height and fallen to their death and so it was leaving people afraid the work was slow and sometimes at a stop and people were trying to work out engineers administrators they were all trying to find an answer to this until the solution that they came up with was to hang a net under the span of the whole bridge a net that if anyone would fall off the net would catch them it cost a lot and they were thinking can we afford to do this but they went ahead and they did it and what they found was that the work progressed so much quicker and ended up ahead of schedule because there was the security of knowing that underneath was a net that would catch them and that's a reminder to ourselves as well of the great price that the

Lord has paid for us we don't fully understand we maybe don't have all the answers but when we're asked the question who do you say that I am the question that Jesus asked of the disciples the question that Jesus asks of ourselves today who do you say that I am how do you respond how do we find peace with God faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of God and the more that we're hearing from the word of God we pray that the more the Lord will be opening our eyes just like the blind man in stages we may only be seeing trees men like trees walking as he describes seeing blurry but oh to have our eyes opened even to that stage is progress because the

Lord is working and it's not to be afraid to go on but to have faith to go forward and to rejoice that over time he is able to help us to see and to see clearly that we would rejoice in the hope of the glory of God John Calvin he said faith is not a distant view but a warm embrace of Christ and that's what we want not just a vision of the Lord that is a distant view when we feel far away but by faith receiving a warm embrace of the Lord Jesus Christ as he takes us by the hand as he opens our eyes to follow him along the way may the Lord give us faith and open our eyes to see him clearly let us pray our father in heaven we thank you for your word and we pray you will bless it to us that we will have understanding

Lord more and more that we will have our eyes opened more and more to our precious saviour and to fix our eyes on him we pray Lord that you will help us in our understanding help us even in our lack of understanding that we can come to you with all of these things hear our prayers Lord and continue with us pardoning sin in Jesus name Amen we're going to conclude by singing in Psalm 57 in the Sing Psalms version page 75 Psalm 57 page 75 we'll sing from verse 9 down to the end of the psalm the tune is Dennis among the nations Lord to you I will give praise among the peoples of the earth my songs of you I'll raise we'll sing these three stanzas to

God's praise among the nations Lord to you I will will give praise among the peoples of the earth my songs of you I'll raise great is your steadfast love which reaches to the sky your constant faithfulness

[60 : 58] O Lord that stands to heaven high above the highest heavens O God exalted he and over all the earth below display your majesty after the benediction I'll go to the door to my left and just a reminder those downstairs can use the two exits down below here and upstairs use the exit to the back of the bottom of the stairs we'll close with the benediction now may grace mercy and peace from

God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forever more Amen Thank you