

Retirement of Rev James Maciver - Service of Thanksgiving

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Date: 28 June 2024

[0 : 00] I will extend a very warm welcome to everybody this evening as we come to what is a wonderful occasion in many ways and yet it's sad also that we're marking the retirement of Reverend James McKeever and giving thanks for his ministry here and also throughout the church.

So there'll be one or two announcements given at the end so we're going to begin our service singing to God's praise from Psalm 48a verses 8 to 14 that's in Sing Psalms Psalm 48a verses 8 to 14.

As we have heard so have we seen God's city will endure the Lord Almighty evermore his city keeps secure we contemplate your steadfast love within your house oh God for like your name your praise extends through all the earth abroad all that you do is righteous Lord Mount Zion's joy is great and Judah's towns rejoice as they your judgments celebrate round Zion walk and count her towers view every citadel so that the children yet unborn her story you may tell for God the Lord who is our God forever will abide he is our God forevermore and to the end our guide we'll stand to sing Psalm 48a verses 8 to 14.

As we have heard so have we seen As we have heard so have we seen As we have heard so have we seen God's city God's city God's city God's city God's city God's city God's city God's city the Lord almighty God's city God's city Thank you.

Thank you.

[3 : 14] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. is there and the glory that has been given to you and the way that the church triumphant praises and exalts the Lord. We would find it as we are here so difficult to fully comprehend and understand. But we give thanks Lord that in Jesus Christ one day that will be our portion and lot us well. We pray that you will bless us as we wait upon you tonight in the singing of your word, in the reading of your word, in the preaching of it. And we give thanks Lord for the occasion which brings us together here. And we give thanks Lord for your servant James's ministry here and throughout the church over the years. We give thanks Lord for the abilities that you gave him and he'd be the first to recognize that whatever abilities he had they were given by you. And so we give thanks Lord for the great administrative ability he had, the pastoring wisdom that he had, the teaching skills that he was given where he was able to bring us into pastures new even although sometimes it was the truth that we were familiar with. We always got a new insight, a new understanding. And so we pray

[6 : 45] Lord that you will bless him and Donna as they enter into a new sphere, a new way, a new time in their lives. And we pray that you will bless them with many years of retirement, with health and with strength, and that they will know the abundance of your joy, the abundance of your grace, and the supreme filling of their hearts with your love. And we give thanks Lord for all that they brought to this congregation. And we give thanks Lord for such a faithful ministry, such a dedicated ministry, such a committed ministry. And we give thanks Lord that he touched our hearts and we will prayerfully remember him and Donna. We also pray for the family. We pray for Kershna and Andy and their family. We pray Lord for Ian and Annas and their family and we pray for Ali and Eli. Ask Lord that you will bless them all and that you will guide them and keep them, protect them and lead them in the right way.

We give thanks Lord for your providence that brought Calamurdo and Joanne here and pray your blessing upon them. And ask Lord that as we are now entering into a vacancy, we pray your

blessing upon the intermoderator Colin McLeod. And pray Lord your guidance and your wisdom and direction.

Grant us the patience and the faith to look to you and to wait upon you so that we will be clear in the way forward. We are aware that you are far keener that we would know your will than we sometimes are to find it. And so we pray Lord that we might wait upon you and learn to do that. We ask that you will be with us then and also as we will soon make our way through to the hall. We give thanks for the wonderful provision that has been made there. We give thanks for all the willing hearts and willing hands that were involved in the preparation and all that takes place in this. Lord we give thanks Lord that you are the God who equips your church with so many different gifts and different abilities.

and it's wonderful to see people working happily and in unity together. Lord we again give thanks Lord for James service not just here but to the courts of this of the church at large to East Kilbride and to Knock. And we give thanks Lord for the impact that these ministries had and the lasting good that it brought. And so we pray that James and Donna will remain in our hearts and remain in our prayers.

And we ask now that as we come to your word that you will bless this word to us. We pray that you will have mercy upon us and you will guide us and you will keep us. We remember also the induction tonight taking place in Greyfriars. We pray for Ian McCritchie and ask Lord that as he will begin a new ministry there. That he will know the power of your spirit upon him and that he will be blessed your goodness and mercy accompanying him all the days of his life. And that he will know the fruit for his labor because we know that no labor in the Lord is in vain. Watch over us then we pray. Cleanse us from our every sin. In Jesus name we ask all. Amen.

[10:31] Calamurda is going to bring the word of God. He's going to read from Joshua to us. We'll turn to reading God's word. We're going to read in Joshua and chapter 3.

Joshua chapter 3. We're going to read the whole of this chapter. Let's hear the word of God. Then Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim and they came to the Jordan. He and all the people of Israel and lodged there before they passed over. At the end of three days the officers went through the camp and commanded the people. As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priests then you shall set out from your place and follow it. Yet there shall be a distance between you and it about two thousand cubits in length.

Do not come near it in order that you may know the way you shall go for you have not passed this way before. Then Joshua said to the people consecrate yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. And Joshua said to the priests take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people. So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. The Lord said to Joshua today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel that they might that they may know that as I was with Moses so I will be with you. And as for you command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant when you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan you shall stand still in the Jordan.

And Joshua said to the people of Israel come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God. And Joshua said here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perisites, the Gergashites, the Amorites and the Jebusites. Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel from each tribe a man and when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord the Lord of all the earth shall rest in the waters of the Jordan the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap. So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest. The waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away at Adam the city that is beside Sarathon and those flowing down towards the sea of the Arabah the salt sea were completely cut off and the people passed over opposite Jericho. Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan. Amen and may God bless that reading from his word.

[14:32] Let's turn again to this chapter that we're reading that we've been reading chapter 3 and verse 4 that's what I want us to focus on tonight. It tells us here yet there shall be a distance between you and it about 200 cubits in length. That's the ark. Do not come near it in order that you may know the way you shall go for you have not passed this way before.

As we know tonight is a very significant night for the congregation here and also for James and for Donna.

It's a night where we as a congregation bid farewell to them and it's going to be hard for us to imagine what it's going to be like without James' masterful and calm and yet strong leadership. We will miss so much his teaching, his preaching, his pastoring because he has brought us into the word of God in a wonderful way and we've all been enriched. Every single one of us has learned under his ministry and some have come to faith under his ministry.

But it's a feature of this world that all good things come to an end. Not a feature of the world to come but a feature of the world that we're living in.

[16:06] And when we come to this book, the book of Joshua, we find that the great prophet Moses has died. That's how the chapter opens. Moses, my servant, is now dead.

Therefore, arise and lead this people over the Jordan into the land of promise. And we are thankful that for James, he has come to the three score years and ten in good health and in good strength. Because the older people here will be aware that it's been different. There were three successive ministries here where your minister, they passed away while still in office.

Kenneth McRae, Murdo McCritchie and Murdo Alec MacLeod. Three successive ministries. So that was a time of great sadness. And although we're sad tonight with the parting, with James and Donna leaving us, we're also extremely grateful and thankful for health and strength and for Donna's recovering health.

But the focus that we have here is how God's work continues, irrespective of who is leading. Moses is dead, but God's work doesn't stop.

[17:30] And Joshua is now the one who has been assigned to lead Israel into the land of promise. And I think one of the features of the book of Joshua is where we see so much of having to discover the mind and the will of God.

That God makes it very clear to them that the only way of true success, the only way where they're going to prosper is by waiting upon him and getting their timetable from him, their strategies from him, their plans from him, and waiting at every stage for the command from God.

And there's a lot of lessons in that for all of us, not just as a congregation, but also individually as well, that we always get our timetable from the Lord. It's a journey of faith.

And a journey of faith involves waiting upon the Lord. And that's very difficult because we live particularly in the age that we live in, we live in the age of the instant.

Everything is instant. We expect the instant. We expect things to happen right away. And people get frustrated if it doesn't happen right away. But that's not often.

[18:47] It's not the way that God works. God works very often in a different way. And we know that sometimes God works before we ask. Sometimes God works while we're asking.

Sometimes God works immediately after we've asked. Sometimes God appears not to be working very, very slowly.

Sometimes it appears as if God is not working at all. And there are even times when it appears to us that God is working against himself. But that's because our vision and our understanding is so limited.

And we so often just are so involved in our own wee life and what we have here that we fail to see that God is a big picture.

And a great view of everything at hand. And so God is teaching the importance of waiting upon him.

[19:51] And one of the things that we learn as we wait upon the Lord is patience. One of the most necessary graces. And in some ways the most difficult to achieve, to reach.

Because there is a natural impatience in all of us. So here we find that under God's command, Joshua and all Israel make their way to the Jordan River, to the banks of the Jordan.

And we find that the Jordan is in full spate. We find that in verse 15. It tells us there that, and as soon as the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest.

And that's when it was. The water, it was almost as if the Jordan was in full spate at that time. And so God has brought the nation of Israel to this river that is flowing, that is overflowing, that is

flooding.

And Israel are wondering, how are we going to cross? Now I'm sure immediately when they came there they would say, which is natural, when we face a problem or a difficulty, there is a natural optimism.

[21 : 09] That we'll find a way. But you and I know the longer that we stand facing the issue, the problem, the more difficult it becomes.

And that's what God is doing. He's bringing Israel to look on this raging torrent of water day after day after day. And that's what faith does, the journey of faith.

It brings us to face the impossible. Where at the end we're shut in, as it were, and shut up to God alone. And that's what God often does. He brings us to the end of ourselves.

Where we can no longer look to our own resources or depend on our own wisdom or our own strength. Because as long as we can do that, we're very slow to ask God.

But God so often brings us to the point where there's no one else we can go to. And we have to say, Lord, help. I'm stuck here. I don't know what to do.

[22 : 07] And so it's important that we understand that God's strategy is primarily a spiritual one. Because you'll find that in verse 5, we find, Then Joshua said to the people, Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

Now here's the nation of Israel, and they're just about to go into battle against the nations in the promised land. And you'd expect the command to be, right, get out your shields, get out your swords, put on your armor, flex your muscles, get ready for fight.

No. It's consecrate yourselves. Because the journey is spiritual. Because the journey is spiritual.

And we've always got to remember that. Every day of our life, the journey is spiritual.

And even though James is now retiring, the journey is still spiritual. Although it will be different. That doesn't change the main emphasis, the main purpose of life.

And our journey in this vacancy is also spiritual. If we forget that, we've lost our way. So God is saying to Israel, before you move, consecrate yourselves.

[23 : 28] And we find that what now takes center stage in the crossing is the Ark, the Ark of the Covenant, which, of course, was kept in the most holy place, the Holy of Holies.

And it would be worth looking. We're not going to do that tonight. We don't have time looking at the Ark, what was in it and all. But it was, the Ark, of course, symbolized the presence of God. And on the Ark, there were hooks where staves were put through in order that the priests could carry the Ark.

And the priests were going to walk to the water. And the moment they put their feet into the water, the waters of the Jordan were going to stop.

And Israel were going to pass over. And that's why the Lord says to them, you have not passed this way before. Because everything was changing. The old order was giving way to a new order.

You see, in the past, as they went through the wilderness, these 40 years, it was a great pillar of cloud that led them by day, the pillar of fire by night to give them light and warmth.

[24 : 35] But it symbolized the presence of God. But no longer was the pillar of cloud going to be there. It was the Ark of the Covenant that was going to lead. Also, for 40 years, they had been fed by manna from heaven.

The manna was going to cease. And they were going to now eat of the produce of the land. It was all going to be different. But you'll notice the key, which is so important, that as the people were to cross over, you find that the Ark was to be carried at a distance of about 200 cubits in length away from them.

It was a way ahead. Why? So that all the people could look at the Ark. People weren't taking, what do I do by following the person in front of them?

They were all focused on the Ark. When the Ark moved, they moved. When the Ark stopped, they stopped. So it is for ourselves.

Our eyes must be upon the Christ of the covenant. And we are to follow him. And so it will be also for James as well as he enters into retirement.

[25 : 49] As James comes to hang up his collar, so to speak, after 37 years of wonderful service, his days of service aren't over.

He'll still be preaching. He'll still be teaching. He'll still be visiting. He'll still be involved. But it will be different. Because a lot of the response he sheds, a lot of the responsibilities, a lot of the worries

that are part and partial of ministry.

But although we're into what we term retirement, it isn't a retirement from battle. It isn't a retirement from service. It's a retirement from the pastoral work of a congregation.

And so James will need the very same leading. It's the Lord who led him to this point of retirement. And I'm sure James looked for the Lord's mind and will in.

Because it's something we do. When do I retire? When? We're always looking to the Lord for whatever. And so as James comes to this point, as a congregation, let us assure him and Donna and the family that we will continue to remember them in prayer.

[27 : 10] Because I remember when I retired myself, it was one thing I asked you to do was to continue to remember us in prayer. You see, as a minister, there's a lot of pressures, but there's a lot of privileges.

And one of the great privileges is that you're kind of at the center of people's prayers. And you can't put a price on that. So I ask you tonight to commit to remembering in prayer James and Donna and the family as they take their leave from us.

And I cannot let this occasion pass without also just on behalf of the congregation thanking James for his dedicated, committed, faithful work amongst us.

And I have to add that he was a dream to work with. He's unflappable. Maybe Donna says differently. I don't know. But he seems he has this calmness, a strong calmness about him.

And he brings that. And I'm sure we've all been aware of it. And there's a kind of a quiet authority, not in a bullish way, but in a quiet way. And we're going to miss that incredibly.

[28 : 27] But it's not only us as a congregation that have to give James thanks, but the whole church at large. Because there were times when James was Presbytery Clark.

There were times when James was Assembly Clark. And there were times when he was both at the same time. He was both Presbytery Clark and Assembly Clark.

While still pastoring, while still preaching. I remember one time speaking to him when he was Assembly Clark and Presbytery Clark. And I was asking, how do you do it?

I thought about it for a long time afterwards. And I just said, I could not do that. He had a tremendous capacity for work. So the church owes a great debt to you, James, for your service over all the years.

So let us assure you that we will remember you in our prayers. And it's wonderful, a great blessing to see children, children, children, to see the generations.

[29 : 38] And little Isaiah James, who was born just so recently. Just kind of wonder if you paid James and Marianne a few quid to name them Isaiah James, to get James in with the same name as Isaiah.

Because that's quite wonderful in the one breath. One, the great prophet. Mind you, you weren't too bad a prophet yourself. But let us assure you of our prayers in all the days to come.

Now, as I say, this is just a brief, very brief word that we're having here. And we'll very shortly be making our way through to the hall afterwards. But we're going to now sing to God's praise from Psalm 126.

And I think this is a very fitting psalm for any preacher of the word. Because there's no doubt that there are times in the ministry when it is tears. There's no doubt when we feel overwhelmed by everything.

But we see here in Psalm 126 from the Scottish Psalter, When Zion's bondage God turned back, as men had dreamed were we. Then filled with laughter was our mouth, our tongue with melody.

[30 : 59] They among the heathens said, The Lord great things for them hath wrought. The Lord hath done great things for us, whence joy to us is brought. We'll sing the whole psalm.

And if you take your seats, just whenever we finish singing. When Zion's bondage God turned back. When Zion's bondage God turned back, As men that dreamed were we, Then filled with laughter was our mouth, our tongue with melody.

We among the heathens said the Lord, Great things for them hath wrought.

The Lord hath done great things for us, whence joy to us is brought.

On streams of water in the sun, our bondage Lord recall.

[32 : 32] Than hope and she is brought. This no Public Harmony alone i'm just gonna a very brief prayer and i'm also going to ask a blessing on the food which we're going to enjoy next door afterwards and i'll also say that the live stream which is taking which is on going on just now will

stop when this service is over and after about 15 20 minutes it'll pick up again i'm saying that for those who may be watching on live stream just now it'll pick up again in the hall in about 15 20 minutes on the same channel the youtube just go to stormy free church and it'll pick up again in about 15 to 20 minutes in the hall let us pray lord our god we give thanks for being able to reflect upon your word and to sing your word and we pray that you will bless us as we go through to the hall next door we give thanks for these times where we can have fellowship and friendship where we're able to reminisce where we're able to enjoy the the provisions that have been made we give thanks for people's kindness give thanks for all the love that is involved and we pray your blessing upon each and every one and tonight as we as a congregation again express our gratitude and our thanks for the ministry of james and donna here we know that what we say will be echoed by the congregations of knock and iskel bride as well and so we pray that you'll be with us and that you'll bless all that is set out before us giving you the glory and the thanks for everything take away from us our every sin in jesus name we ask it amen now in going out if you i know this may take a little but we'll do so as quickly as possible james and donna are going to go to the door here to my left the door that leads through to the hall and they will shake hands with you there so we'll ask them to go to the door and guys don't spend too long hugging donna because we we don't have we don't have too long so if you james and donna if you can go to the door and then we'll make our way out that way so they get an opportunity to shake hands with you okay okay