

God's Invitation and Provision

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Good morning everybody. It's nice to join with you and as we seek to worship God this morning, we pray that we all know God's blessing, great opportunity and privilege that we have of sharing the word of God.

And so as we wait upon the Lord, our prayer is that we will come to know him more and more. So let us bow in prayer. Lord our God, we pray to bless us this day and we give thanks for another day and all the privileges and opportunities and blessings that a new day bring to us.

We pray, Lord, that you will be with us, that you will be with us individually and personally and that we will know you, the risen saviour, as our Lord and saviour.

It's one thing to know about Jesus and to know that he saves sinners, but it's another thing for us personally to come as sinners to you and ask to be saved.

We pray that every single one of us will know the saving power of Jesus within our own souls and that we will never tire hearing of this glorious gospel that is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

[1 : 11] And we pray if there are any listening today who have not yet come to believe in you savingly, that even today, Lord, that the scales will be removed from of their eyes and the blocks that might be closing their ears to the gospel and that today they will hear and that their souls will live.

We give thanks, O Lord, that every day as we come under your word is a new opportunity to meet with you and to hear what you have to say to us. We pray, O Lord, that your word will continue to guide us as we go through life and that we might do not be wise in our own eyes, as your word tells us, but to trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not to our own understanding.

We pray that you will bless us, Lord, with health and with strength in body, mind and soul. We pray to bless us as a congregation and we pray to bless everybody who views the service and we ask, Lord, that you will be with them.

Be with each one, everybody in their own home, in their own family, amongst their loved ones. And what an opportunity and privilege we have where we can bring before you those whom we love and bring before you in prayer so that we are able to tell you our worries and concerns about them.

And we give thanks, Lord, that we have promised in your word that you have an ear that is open to our cry and that you will hear and that you will, you are promised to hear and to bless.

[2 : 45] And we pray then that you will bless your word to us again as we come to it. We pray for every service online today throughout the length and breadth of the land and which will cover throughout this whole world.

We pray, Lord, that wherever people hear the gospel, that there might be a reception and a thrill in their heart. We thank, Lord, for all the agencies at work, all the Bible translation agencies that are seeking to bring the word of God into the language of the people.

We give thanks for all those who distribute your word. We give thanks, Lord, for all the different means available today in the distribution of your word. And we pray that in areas of this world where it is harder for people to get ready access to your word, that the doors will be opened, that windows of opportunity will be given so that people will come to hear and to see and to believe and to know that Jesus Christ is the great head of the church and the great saviour of sinners.

We pray, Lord, to bless us nationally and internationally. We pray, Lord, that you will have mercy upon us as a nation, that you will cleanse us from our sin. We come before you as sinners and we confess our sin.

We let you down so often. We let ourselves down. We let our families down. We let our churches down. We let everybody down because that's what we are.

[4 : 10] But we give thanks, O Lord, that with you there is plenty of forgiveness. And so we ask, Lord, that you will provide a vaccine that it won't be long until a vaccine will be available, one that will be effective against this awful COVID-19, which has caused so much havoc in our own nation and indeed throughout the nations of this world.

Many broken hearts because of it. Our world in many ways changed this year because of this tiny, unseen little enemy that is invading people's lives and bringing so much pain and misery and havoc.

And we pray, Lord, to bless us as a nation. Bless us in every area with health and with strength. We pray, Lord, for us economically. We realize that this is a devastating time for so many people. Many people are going to lose their work or maybe have already lost it. So many people are uncertain how they're going to face paying bills and mortgages. And so many people's lives are just thrown upside down.

Oh, Lord, in the upheaval that is here, we pray that we may cry to you as a nation. Yes, it is important that our leaders will do everything that they can. But we pray, Lord, that we will look to you.

[5 : 35] When we go through the history in the Bible, this is one of the things we discover over and over and over again, that Israel will have been brought to their knees. And it was only when they cried to the Lord that deliverance came.

And we pray that we will cry to you and that you will deliver us, we pray. Bless those who mourn, those whose hearts are sore and sad. Bless each and every one, we ask.

Bless those who are ill and undergoing treatment. We pray again for our health service and for all our carers in communities and in homes. We ask, Lord, that you will bless them.

We give thanks for the great work that they've done. And I'm just going to say a wee word to one or two to the young folk.

When you're out for a walk or anything like that, there is one thing sometimes we come across that's really horrible. And it's something that can really spoil a fun day out.

[6 : 41] And that's what I have here. This, as you see, is what we know as the stinging nettle. And that's why I've got a, I put a glove on.

Because if you brush your hand or your legs or even get it on your face on the leaves of the stinging nettle, that's exactly what it does.

It stings. And it's a, it's a really nippy sting. And I'm sure you all remember times when you've tripped or got stung with nettles.

I still remember as a boy falling headlong or being pushed headlong by a big sheep. We had sheep in the field and there was a whole pile of nettles.

And I remember getting pushed. It's only a wee boy. Can't I? I know it was under five. And I can still remember from head to toe I was stinging. And I don't remember, I don't know what it was.

[7 : 39] It's soap or cream or what you're trying to put on it. But I remember it was so sore. But you know, the amazing thing that if you get stung by a nettle, they tell you that what you should put on is a dock leaf.

These are dock leaves. And if you get a dock leaf, I don't know how it works. And I don't know whether scientists will tell you how it works. But somehow or other, it doesn't take the sting away altogether.

But it helps it. So that if you sting the back of your hands, you'd get a dock leaf. And you would put that on where it was stinging. And you'd say to yourself, okay, that's very good.

So if I get stung by nettles, I go and get a dock leaf. Where on earth am I going to get a dock leaf? Well, you know, the amazing thing is this. That the dock leaf grows beside the nettles.

So here's this horrible thing that stings you. But the thing which will help you is growing right beside it. And you know, when I was thinking about that, it's when I was out on my walks, I was seeing these nettles and these dock leaves.

[8 : 50] And I was thinking about this. I'm going to push these over before I end up stinging myself. I'm going to forget about them. When I was out, it got me thinking about how amazing that the cure, or maybe not a cure, but what helps is right beside.

And that's the wonderful thing about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because one of the great things to discover, although it's an awful thing in some ways, it's a very important thing to discover, is that we're sinners.

That we have within us all that, what is wrong. And that we do wrong, and we say wrong things, and we think wrong things, and we're against God.

And you know, the wonderful thing is when we discover that we're sinners, to discover that there's a cure for the sin. And of course the cure for our sin is Jesus.

And this is the wonderful thing, is that Jesus is right beside us. The cure is beside us. We don't have to wait to...

[9 : 58] Imagine if through this lockdown, and we haven't been able to get to church, if in all that time we couldn't pray, we couldn't ask Jesus for anything. But we can.

We can go right here, right now, at any time. And the moment you discover that you're a sinner, the remedy, the cure is there.

And we're able to go right away, and ask Jesus to forgive us, and to cleanse us, to clean us, to pardon us from all our sin.

So isn't that wonderful? The sting and the cure side by side. You make sure that you have discovered the cure of Jesus for the sin of your life, as I need to as well.

We're 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.

[11 : 04] And he does not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. Now we're going to read God's Word from the prophecy of Isaiah, and chapter 55.

Isaiah, chapter 55. Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. And he who has no money, come, buy and eat.

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me, here that your soul may live.

And I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.

[12 : 14] Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall want to you. Because of the Lord, you are God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him.

And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts and your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth.

It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that at which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I send it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace.

[13 : 36] The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress.

Instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle, and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. Amen.

And may God bless to us this reading of his own holy word. And I want us to look at the first verse of this chapter, Isaiah 55, verse 1.

This is a very well-known verse, a great gospel verse. Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. And he who has no money, come, buy and eat.

Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Now, some people think that the Old Testament and the New Testament are two totally different books.

[14 : 40] And while, to a certain extent, there is a difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, they are yet two books that are seamlessly bound together.

And they are two books that are really all about the Lord Jesus Christ. Some people think that the Old Testament is simply about God's laws and judgments and prophecies and that the New Testament is about Jesus and the Gospel.

But that's not understanding the full picture because the whole Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament is built upon the Old Testament.

And we don't really understand the New Testament properly without, first of all, looking at and studying the Old Testament. The Old Testament really is so full of Christ and such a pointer to Christ.

And then we see all the fulfilment in the New Testament. Well, what we've got to remember about the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that this is the great offer of salvation that comes to us.

[15:52] And that's one of the wonderful things that the Bible does is speaks to us about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. Jesus is God's Son that God sent into this world.

The Son of God, the eternal Son of God, sent Him where He came as man into this world to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. And one of the great emphasis of the Bible is that Jesus is the only way of salvation.

There is no other name under heaven given amongst men or women whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus. Now, some people will take umbrage at that and particularly the day that we're living and say, you can't say that.

That's not correct. Well, we have no right to go to the God of heaven and earth and say to the God of heaven and earth, excuse me, you're wrong. Lord, we cannot speak in this language anymore.

The God who made us, our maker, our judge, our sustainer, He is telling us very simply that the only way to Him is through a Son.

[17:02] The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said very clearly, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.

it couldn't be more explicit or plain than that. So that is at the very heart of what this gospel is. Now, some people accuse God of making it difficult for a person to be saved but that is so unfair because God has made all the provision but He has also gone out of His way to tell us the way of salvation. And the thing is, many people choose to neglect or to refuse to listen. They make their choice and say, no, I don't want this or at least I don't want this salvation just now.

And there are so many people, this is one of the funny things, there are so many people who say, there is no God. Don't believe in God until some great tragedy happens. And then straight away they say, what kind of God will allow this?

So the very people are saying there's no God and then say, what kind of God allows this sort of thing to happen? Well, the wonderful thing is that the way of salvation for the New Testament believer and the Old Testament believer was exactly the same.

[18:26] Old Testament believers were saved in trusting in the Messiah, trusting in the Christ who was to come, trusting in the Savior who was to come.

New Testament believers, that's us, we're saved by trusting in the Christ who has come. So the Old Testament believers were exercising faith in the promises of God, what God has revealed.

And God revealed this through the sacrifices, through the laws, through the prophets, through all these things, the coming Savior. That's why it says of the likes of Abraham, that Abraham, Jesus said this, Abraham saw my name.

Abraham was able to rejoice in seeing God's provision of salvation that was to come. So both the Old Testament and New Testament believers are saved in the same way of trusting the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament church were awaiting his coming into this world. We are now waiting his second coming. Now as we know, Isaiah is termed the gospel prophet because his prophecies are full of great gospel invitations and great gospel blessings.

[19:44] And this verse is probably one of the great gospel invitations because the very first verse has the invitation to come. Not once, not twice, but four times.

Four times we read that word come. And so this dispels the notion that sometimes the church is accused or even God is accused of making it hard for people to be saved and that the gospel is something that's hidden away.

It's certainly not hidden away. It couldn't be clearer. And the Lord is showing over and over and over again that this gospel is for everyone because that's what it begins saying.

Come everyone. at the beginning of this chapter. Come everyone. So here there's a universal call goes out in the gospel.

And we've got to remember that because some people think that the gospel is only for those who go to church or were brought up in church or have parents who go to church or grandparents or something like that.

[20 : 52] No, the gospel is for everyone. And the gospel today goes out to everyone. You remember in the parable of the great supper how Jesus said about all those who were invited at first and so many of them refused.

In fact, they all refused and they all began to make excuse. And the master of the feast he said, right, go out into the highways and the hedges. Go out and get the lame and the poor and the blind and the...

In other words, go right down into the alleyways. Go down into the back streets. Go out into the areas of the city that nobody goes to. Go down where all the addicts are.

Go down where those people who are so down in their luck and there's nobody to... No arm reaching out to them. Well, show them that there is a gospel arm reaching out to them, that the love of the saviour is there for them.

Go and compel them to come in. For yet there is room. That's what it says. Yet there is room. And today there is still room. And it doesn't matter who you are, what you have done, where you are in life, what your situation is, there is room for you in the kingdom.

[22 : 05] That is a great invitation. We'll compel, compel them to come in. Yet there is room. So we see it says here, Come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.

thirst. Now, all people in this world thirst, but not everybody is thirsting for the blessing that is spoken of here.

This is a specific thing that is spoken of here. Now, the thirsting, a lot of people today thirst for only what the world can give. There is thirsting for the world's power and the world's fame, the world's fortune, for academic attainments, for hedonistic lifestyle, for the 101 different things that people might be thirsting for.

But you see, while we have many, many good things in this life that we can enjoy and be engaged in, we've got to remember that our eternal security and our happiness can only be found in the Lord Jesus.

While all these things are great and useful and pleasurable and beneficial, with regard to our eternal security, we have to go deeper and further to find something that really gives us a guaranteed future.

[23 : 33] And you see, God has made us for deeper pleasure and deeper satisfaction that is found in any of the surface things in the world. And it is only when we come to Jesus that the jigsaw is finally brought together.

Until we come to Jesus, there are always missing pieces. When we come to Jesus, it's like the missing pieces are found. And here we are, there is this sense of identity, of purpose, of realising who you are, where you're going, who you belong to.

All these things are so important and so essential in life. And so we have to remember that, it was in the famous words of Augustine, thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee.

So we see the first invitation is to water. Now there's two basic things that water do. Water does plenty of things, but two basic things water does. Water, as we know that it cleanses and water quenches thirst.

It does both these things. When you're thirsty, you might prefer the flavour of lots of other drinks, but when you're really, really thirsty, there's only one thing really in your mind, I need a drink of water.

[24 : 53] I want a glass of water. If I could find even a flowing stream, maybe it's not so safe nowadays, but when I was young, I need a drink to give the running water when you were thirsty of the streams. Just to get that, and then this sense of satisfaction.

when you're really thirsty, and you say, oh man, I needed that. That is good. And you know, that's in a sense how it is when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

The song says, I still haven't found what I'm looking for. Well, you know, when you come to Jesus, you don't need to sing that line anymore, because you have found the one you're looking for.

and that is Jesus, because he satisfies the deepest needs of our heart. And again, water cleanses. That's one of the great things, you know.

Back in the day, I used to play football and all that, and there might be pouring rain, and the ground is pretty muddy, and when you're finished, sometimes you are black from head to foot.

[25 : 57] And yet, you weren't in the shower a minute, when it's all gone. It's all washed away. And you know, when we come to Jesus, that's what Jesus does.

We come with all our filth, and with all the dirt that is part and parcel of our life, all the pollution of our sin, and he washes it. He washes away all that, and he washes away the guilt.

Guilt is an awful thing to be carrying around with you. It really messes up our heads, our hearts.

Jesus, that's what he does. He washes even the guilt of our sin away from us.

And despite sin remaining within us, because we have been cleansed by Christ, God the Father looks at us through the perfect finished work of his Son, and he says, clean.

Even although there's remaining sin, God the Father looks at us through his Son, and because his Son is perfect and clean, then he pronounces us, if we are in Christ, as clean as well.

[27 : 07] But then our text tells us, and it says, come, he who has no money, come, buy, and eat. Now at first reading, you'd almost say to you, that's daft. Who can you buy when you have no money to come and to buy something to eat?

And particularly when you'd come and buy wine and milk, because we know some milk costs a bit, but some wines are incredibly expensive. And you're to come without, you haven't got any money, but you're still to come and buy.

And so when it says that without money, it is speaking to us of poverty, and that's a condition that we are in spiritually. We have nothing. We're bankrupt. We have nothing that we can bring before God and say to God, God, you know, I deserve salvation.

Because I did this, that and the next thing. I deserve to be saved because I went to church. I deserve to be saved because of the parents that I've had. I deserve, no, you don't, you nothing, you haven't anything that deserves salvation.

Not a thing that you can bring. Nothing in my hand I bring. You have nothing. So that's the way we come. We're coming really with nothing. But we're told that we are to buy wine and milk.

[28 : 23] Now, the Bible tells us in Psalm 104 that wine gladdens the heart. And wine is one of the blessings that God has given to us. Now, as we know only too well, many of the blessings God has given to us can be terribly abused.

And probably there are a few things that are more abused than wine. However, it has been, and that's what it says, wine that gladdens the heart. In Psalm 104, listing some of the things that God has provided.

But, wine is spoken of in Scripture in that way, of something that, speaking of joy, it's symbolic for joy, the joy of the Holy Spirit.

And you know, when you become a Christian, that's one of the things that takes place. A joy comes in your heart. Jesus himself said, that in me, you might have joy.

It's deep rooted. A joy in knowing that your sin is forgiven. That all, that a joy that you know that you're saved, that you have a place in heaven. A joy in knowing the peace of God in your heart.

[29 : 36] All these things. But not only are we to come to buy wine, also, we're toward milk. Now, while water, as we said, washes and cleanses and refreshes, and wine gladdens the heart, milk is that which nourishes.

You look at a newborn baby, that's their staple diet, milk. And the recifers, you look at a baby growing, it just shows a nourishment that is found in milk.

And that's where the Bible tells us that, as Peter says, we are as newborn babes who desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow.

And so that's what happens when a person comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They begin to develop and to grow and to mature and to go on and become stronger in the Christian faith, till they go on leaving the milk behind to take out the meat.

so we're to come and to buy and to the wine and the milk. But then it tells us here, it says that it is without money and without price.

[30 : 52] And I believe that this is speaking ultimately about the freeness of the gospel. And it is speaking about the pricelessness of the gospel. Because the gospel of Jesus Christ is a gift.

As we said, there's nothing we can do or bring that will guarantee us salvation. It is his grace towards us. His great mercy, grace and undeserved favour he gives to because he loves to give. That's a wonderful thing. It's a gift. And you don't do anything to earn a gift. A gift is given freely. You don't have to do, this is a wonderful thing about our salvation. We don't have to do something incredible.

We don't have to walk to Jerusalem or row the Atlantic or climb Everest or make some pilgrimage somewhere. As we're saying to the young people, where you are, you're only a prayer away from salvation.

That's all. One prayer away. Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. That's all. These were tiny prayers, but they were powerful and they were answered.

[32 : 01] Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Today, you will be with me in paradise. That prayer was answered right away. And so that's a wonderful thing.

And you see, it's free. The salvation is free because it's been already paid for. In fact, it's a priceless treasure. You see, as we said, we don't have the wherewithal to pay for it.

But God the Father demands payment. And he says, there is no salvation without payment. But we can't pay. And Jesus said, well, I'll pay.

And Jesus paid with his own life. Jesus went in our place and he took our sin upon himself. And so salvation is being saved from our sin and saved to everlasting life.

Saved from hell, saved to heaven. Saved from death, saved to life. And that's what Jesus has done. And it's a priceless gift.

[33 : 06] It is the greatest gift that this world has ever known. You cannot put a price on it. It is priceless. And I pray today that you will know this Jesus yourself.

That you will know Jesus, the Son of God, as your own Savior. Because today he is inviting you. As I said, it's a four-fold invitation to come. Come, come, come, come.

It's not something hidden or obscure. It's for you. And I would urge you today, Lord, will you help me? Because right up till now, I've never made that step.

I've never come to that place where I understand just what's involved. Take away the scales from all my eyes. help me to see, help me to hear, help me to believe, so that I may commit and trust my life to you.

Let us pray. Lord, we pray to bless us, giving thanks for all that you give to us and lead us in the way of truth. We thank you, Lord, for this word, and we pray that you will bless it to our souls.

[34 : 15] Forgive us our sins, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing from the Scottish Psalter and Psalm number 23, the 23rd Psalm from the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm number 23. The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want. He makes me down to lie.

In pastures green he leadeth me the quiet waters by. My soul he doth restore again, and me to walk doth make within the paths of righteousness, even for his own name's sake.

Down to the last verse. Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me, and in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be.

The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want. He revakes me now to lie.

[35 : 23] In pastures he leadeth me, the quiet waters high.

My soul he doth restore again, and me to walk to walk down me, within the paths of righteousness, in forest open state.

the heart is open state. Yea, though I walk in depths are filled, yet will I fear not live, for thou art with me me and thy road hast found me come for still.

My deep love has furnished filled, my deep love hast furnished in presence of my foes, my head thou hast with oil anoint, and my heart hast with oil anoint, and my life of over clothes.

Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me, and in God's house all ever and in God's forever more my wearing place shall be.

[37 : 52] 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.

Amen.