

Sunday Evening English

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Date: 21 February 2016

Preacher: Rev F Renwick

[0 : 00] Now let's turn to the passage that we have read in the Gospel according to Luke chapter 23, and we'll read again in verse 42, and he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Now let's, by God's enabling, seek to explore something of this area of Scripture. We can't cover everything, but what I would like is to look at three things.

Verse 40 mentions fear. We want to look at that subject. Verse 41 deals with a justice. We indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong. And thirdly, we want to look at mercy. He said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Effectively, it was a cry for mercy. So we want to explore the fear. We want to explore the justice.

[1 : 29] And we want to explore the mercy. This man, by implication, who cries out to Jesus in the dying embers of his life, remember me, is a man who is afraid.

That's there by implication. The other rebuked him, saying, do you not fear God? The implication is, because I do. And I want us to explore that just for a moment.

I don't think any of us are going to be critical of him for being afraid. Because here is a man, and he is staring death in the face.

Now it is true that not all people who are staring death in the face are afraid. For a fortnight there, I attended seven funerals.

And it does get to you after a while. Particularly when you have funerals that are more or less simply eulogy. And you know what, the word eulogy, it's made up of two words.

[2 : 56] In fact, the word good and the word, the Greek for word. Good words. And the reality is this.

That death is caused by sin. The wages of sin is death. And I don't know why so-called ministers of the gospel can go through all these events and never ever touch on the subject of sin and the cause of death and the answer to it all.

I don't understand it. Because we can stare death in the eye and we need not flinch. Now, let me just qualify that. In and of ourselves, we stare death in the eye and some of us are absolutely terrified.

But if we are in Jesus, let's remind ourselves of this. He is the only individual in the whole of the human race who ever said, I'm going to die.

But I'll master it. I'll conquer the grave. And as I said this morning, when the religious authorities of the day saw that he was gone, they breathed that collective sigh of relief.

[4 : 19] Things will go back to the way they used to be, but they didn't reckon on an empty grave in Israel on the third day. And that's the reason why we are here tonight.

Because there is this phenomenal event that has taken place whereby the grave has been conquered and 40 days thereafter he returns to heaven and he has reigned supreme for the last two millennia, the conqueror of death.

But let's remind ourselves of how his death is described. It's described as the first fruit. What was that? They would take the first sheaves of the harvest and they would offer them up as a sacrifice to God.

But it was always just a symbol of the whole harvest coming behind. Now I want us to pick up on that picture because that's the language that's used of the death of Christ.

He has mastered it. He has conquered it. So too will every one of his believers. They will come forth from the grave one day. Not in exactly the same way as Jesus of Nazareth.

[5 : 33] But they will master it and they will conquer it. That's why we can stare death in the eye and not flinch. Not because of who we are or what we are. But because of who Jesus of Nazareth is and what he has done.

And I don't know why we can have these kind of events and the elephant in the room isn't talked about at all. And if you're not going to talk about the problem well you're not going to be talking about the solution.

But the solution is there for the whole of the human race. But all we want is good words. And that's all we want or should want really is a good saviour.

And that is what we've got. But it gets to you after a while. And I was at a funeral and I met this friend. He's an oldish man. We get on well.

But I felt I have to say something to him and I can't remember how I put it. And this is what he said to me. Never bothers me. Never bothers me. Now it's not the first time we've talked about these things.

[6 : 38] He's told me before. He doesn't believe in this God stuff. He's not into it at all. The interesting thing is that when I'm in his house and we have a blether when I'm about to go he says you'll have a wee word.

Now that's not consistent. Here is the atheist who wants me to have a wee word before I go. But I think he was being honest when he said on that occasion never worries me.

Never worries me. I was at another funeral just recently of a young man who played for one of the top English premierships teams who left behind a four year old and a twenty month old.

And I got to know that he wasn't well and I knew his dad. His dad was a really good worker. But a very, very quiet and reserved man and there's nothing at all wrong with that.

But you know when these things come into a family circle you have to be really careful because some people get angry. And for a minister to arrive in the scene that might be salt in the wound. But what I did was I slipped my telephone number to his dad and I said if he wants to get in touch.

[8 : 02] He was on the phone the next day. And I went to see him and we had a really good talk. We had a really good talk. And he said to me I'm coming to your church on Sunday and I said well I'm not here to get you to my church.

You may not be well enough to come. And as it turned out he wasn't. The doctor had to be called. But this is what this is one of the things he said to me.

What do you do when it's right there staring you in the face? And this is another of his questions. What is it going to be like? And I think it's so important to be honest at moments like these.

And I had to say I don't know what it's going to be like. I simply don't know. But I do know the way you have to face it. You have to face it with your hand in the hand of Jesus of Nazareth.

Because his God come as a man for a specific reason. You are a sinner. You need to flee to him in your sin. And that is the way to face it.

[9 : 16] Some people get afraid. But others don't seem to bat an eyelid. You go to Psalm 72 and there's a believer about to throw the towel in and say I've had enough of believing in God.

I can't take it anymore. And he says I look at people around me and the winds in their sails they don't have a problem. They live easily and they even die easily. And here I am and the word he uses of his own life is this I am plagued every day and I've had enough of it.

And you know it's interesting. When these thoughts were trundling through his mind he kept them to himself. Do you know why? He said I couldn't tell others because I knew I was going to hurt them until I went into the house of God.

And you know we I think probably most of us have Bibles in our own homes. We don't realise how well off we are and days gone by it was only the really rich who could afford a Bible of any shape or form but he went into the house of God and there was the word of God and he read about the latter end of the wicked and it really sobers him up and it's throwing the towel in it's forgotten about.

Absolutely forgotten about but he does latch on to this that there are people who have no time for God who live easily and who die easily.

[10 : 54] And as we explore this fear let's remind ourselves of this there are two ways in which the word fear is used. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the word fear there is used in this sense a reverence for God an acknowledgement of who he is a sense of the awesomeness and the holiness of God that as you're responding with a godly fear that's one meaning of the word fear but then it's used in another way in scripture it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living

God and if you explore the context of these words it's about people falling in judgment into the hands of God there shall be weeping and there shall be gnashing of teeth and that is a fearful thing and I'm asking the question which fear is it that this man is experiencing and I'm suggesting that he experiences both because as we read the other accounts of the crucifixion process we discover that it wasn't just one of these men of these criminals who were railing on

Jesus and scorning him and saying if you are who you say you are do something about this sad sorry predicament that we find ourselves in if you are who you claim to be get us down from these crosses and let's get on our way and let's have us go to our own homes now that word if it's very small it's only two letters but sometimes it's the small things that give you huge insights he doesn't or they don't really believe that Jesus is who he says he is but you know one of these men in the crucifixion process he falls silent and I don't know how long the silence went on for but we do know this much that in the midst of that silence he did some very very profound thinking what all went through his mind

I do not know but maybe he started asking the major questions and what are they the major questions are these what is it all about where have we come from and where do we go to and you know when answering these questions I used to get really nervous about it because you look around the world and there are so many different views there seems to be hundreds and even thousands of them but then when you start thinking about it there aren't all that many views there are only three you can tweak them this way that way or the next way but at the end of the day there are only three questions to the major three answers to the major questions and one is this we just came from nothing we just appeared from nothing and you know when people say that I have to say to them well you know what it takes bags and bags and bags of faith to believe that and I don't have that kind of a faith you know sometimes Christians are accused of being you're these eerie fairy people who believe in this pie in the sky nonsense that's nothing more than fairy tale you're into your faith stuff but I'm not like that I'm a scientist I'm a man of facts and I'm a man of reality and I say to myself who do they think they're kidding because it takes bags and bags and bags of faith to believe that we just appeared from nothing by sheer chance over a long period of time but there's another option and that other option is say this there was eternal matter that it always always existed but the problem with that is this how did it get to become you and me and Mount

Everest and the Pacific Ocean and the moon and all the planets and what I'm basically getting at is this it takes bags and bags of faith again to believe that eternal matter just became this and if you don't go down either of these roads there's only one other option and that other option is this this is a creation there is a creator and we are all part of his handiwork of course it begs another question and the other question is this what's this creator like what's this God like and again there are just so many options so many options but there is one of the beings in the history of the human race who has claimed divinity who just so stands out from every single one of the others and I've already mentioned it and I've already mentioned why he stands out every other

[16 : 48] God and every other human who claim to be God they're in their graves Jesus but not Jesus of Nazareth and let's remember when we're dealing with Jesus again there are only three options the church leadership of the day said no you're just a liar and we've got to get rid of you you're a blasphemer you're not who you say you are and that's why the crucifixion takes place but there were others who thought they were being kinder to Jesus they said no no he's not bad he's just mad he's a lunatic he thinks he's someone he's not and they almost think well that's a gentler way of dealing with Jesus you call him a liar or you call him a lunatic and there's only one other option and that is that he is the Lord he is who he says he is and did this man go through these options as he thinks profoundly and deeply in his crucifixion process

I think he did to some extent at any rate because I think he got to the stage where he had this fear that was a terror because it makes him do things it's amazing what some people do when their backs are to the wall and his back right now is to the wall now I'm going to suggest that it doesn't stay with a fear that is terror it moves on to a fear that is the reverence of God because it goes on to speak about the issue of justice and it's there in the verse 41 we indeed justly for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds but this man has done nothing a wrong it's interesting the man who in a blind panic earlier is desperate to get down of that cross who when he does a bit of reflecting is basically saying

I'm getting what I deserve and what's operating in the life of this man is the influences of grace and you know what it's like when proud human beings are in a predicament very often we will do anything and everything to get off the hook when we've been found guilty of something it's our environment or there's this mitigating circumstance or that mitigating circumstance and it's not as bad as it really appears to everybody and we try to dress it up and we try to make ourselves look as best we can ducking and diving and running from the realities and the truth but there's none of that here now we are getting what we deserve here is a man who has taken a good hard look at himself and the law of the land

Roman Jewish has caught up with him he has no argument with what is happening but I think there's another law that he's aware of that has caught up with him as well and it's not Jewish and it's not Roman it's divine and it's eternal and again he has no argument with it you know sometimes you hear people and they say that they've read the Bible and they read there about this condemnation that God has passed on all how dare God condemn me and they are ready to do battle with God and their way out of it so often is it's fairytale nonsense I don't need to deal with it I'll just set it aside but this man his hands are up his soul is unveiled and he's coming clean with God and we are getting the just reward of our deeds and you know it is a tremendous release when a human being stops running and stops trying to defend the indefensible and comes to God as he or she really is and there's an honest interaction action it can be such a release and when you savor what God does for sinners it's not just a release it's a ban to the soul it's just a ban to the soul and he's looking at this other man in the middle cross this man this man has done nothing amiss so why is he being crucified why is he being crucified

I want to come back to that on my third point because in the midst of this man looking at justice and coming clean with God he utters these words that we find in verse 42 he said Jesus remember me when you come into your a kingdom you know in the day of the crucifixion there were many around Calvary and you know what they were saying look at him behold the man what does that mean I think it means this he's so pathetic he is so wretched he is so degraded this man who had so many aspirations this man who had so many dreams and they're all in smithereens he thought he was a somebody he thought he was a someone but the reality has hit home look at him he is just a man a poor pathetic man on the edge of death and that's it but that's not what this man sees this man sees a king and this man sees a kingdom and he says to this

[24 : 21] Jesus here I am the law of God has caught up with me I have no arguments whatsoever but you know what I'm asking you to remember me and what is it that sinners want from Jesus more than anything else it is mercy that is what he is pleading to Jesus for and of course Jesus has options what would you say if Jesus had said this to him why should I remember you because you've lived out every day that you've had in this world in rebellion against me a few short moments ago you were still in rebellion you were scorning me you were ridiculing me you were there with your ifs and your ifs and your ifs why should I would you be critical of Jesus for saying that or would you criticize

Jesus if he said this to this man what can you do for me what distance shore can you go to mission for me you know what the answer to that is I can't go anywhere I'm nailed to these pieces of wood he can't even go to his own home to visit his own people the bottom line is this here is a man who can do nothing nothing at all for Jesus of Nazareth so what if Jesus had said why should I you can do nothing for me well we got to qualify that he can't go to distant shores he can't even go to his own friends and workmates but he can do one thing and he's doing it he's exercising faith he's not just a man he is a king and he's not interested in earthly kingship this criminal nor was Jesus of Nazareth they tried to make him a king at the beginning of this ministry and he disappeared out of their sight he wasn't remotely interested and that doesn't mean that he wasn't a king his kingship is not of a political nature his kingship is of a heavenly and a divine nature and this man has picked up on and he believes in him and he's saying to this eternal heavenly king will you remember me will you have mercy on me when you come into your kingdom and what is it that Jesus says to him well here's the astonishing thing he says to him today you will be with me in paradise and paradise is just another name for heaven and I want to take us back to where we were when we were exploring that passage in

Romans it is justification by faith and that is it you know a believer wants to obey the law of God but a believer wants to obey the law of God as an expression for thanks of thanks for already being gloriously saved on the basis of faith and nothing else and it is so important to make that distinction

you come to Jesus and you cry out to him like this man you may be the greatest sinner in the world but if you come in faith crying out to him remember me remember me remember me that's it his gift salvation on the basis of your faith secures your soul for time and for eternity I know there are days I do it myself when I just think this is just too good to be true and I've got to pinch myself and I've got to say to this roving imagination of mine you've got to give way to the words of the revelation of God as he tells us such things from the pages of scripture here is a man who is saying to Jesus of Nazareth I can't give you anything I can't do anything for you all I can do is cry out from the depths of my need I believe who you are so will you remember me when you come into your kingdom and Jesus says yes yes I will and today you will be with me in paradise now what does that mean well you know this man had a body and a soul and at the moment of his death

[30 : 06] I'm not sure what they did with his body the place of crucifixion in Aramaic was called Golgotha and that literally means the place of a skull and there are two views as to why it got called the place of a skull some people think that the land was in the shape of a skull but there's another view and that is that there were literally bones lying around even skulls how could that be this was the place of anathema this is the place of curse cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree you know just two days I read about I think his name was Robert Black that serial murderer who murdered the hog girl in Portobello and Susan Maxwell and various others but he died in the last fortnight there wasn't a single relative or even person apart from what the state provided at his funeral they cremated him and not a single person wanted his ashes you see some people become so degraded and so depraved nobody wants to know and so the state will scatter his ashes somewhere far out at sea that's what sin does amongst the human race and

I don't know whether this man had any decency or dignity in his death or not maybe he was just left and maybe his bones did appear at the place called Golgotha but the important thing is this Jesus said today thou shalt be with me in paradise what does that mean well it wasn't his body what was it then the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately enter into glory and for the last two thousand years he has been savoring the blessedness of immediate fellowship with no sin to mar it with none other than Jesus of Nazareth the man that he cried out to on the cross of

Calvary but that's not at all this Jesus will come to this planet earth once again and whatever that man's bones or dust or whatever you want to call it is by the amazing workings of this eternal God it will be gathered together it will be reconstituted it won't be the same body as he had whilst he was in this world there will be a huge change will take place and then eternity for him will be body and soul interacting with a body and soul Jesus of Nazareth gloriously saved because he believed who Jesus was and in the depths of his need and in the depths of his depravity he cried out to him Jesus will you remember me will you remember me and the challenge of this area of scripture for every single one of us is this will you cry the cry of belief will you call out to Jesus to remember you in all of life's decisions there is nothing quite like this decision and my hope and prayer is this that you too will cry the cry but there's someone here and they're saying yeah but if you knew who I was and if you knew my record you would realize I can't well I want to take you to the passage of scripture that we've just been exploring and I want to ask you why not why not if he can save this man on the basis of faith and repentance he can save you as well on the basis of faith and repentance you cry this

Jesus fails nobody who cries out to him Lord remember me may God grant we would cry the cry each and every one of us amen let's pray oh Lord our God we thank you that you are the kind of God who's revealed to us on the pages of scripture not in our wildest dreams could we imagine this kind of God that we don't need to dream we don't need to imagine these are truths and realities revealed to the human race by yourself and we pray that this night we would not only believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved but that we would bow all over again in worship in adoration and in adulation and all we ask is in

[36 : 10] Christ's name Amen Now let's conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm number 130 in the Scottish Psalter Psalm 130 at the beginning of the song Lord from the depths to thee I cried my voice Lord do thou hear and to my supplications voice give an attentive ear it's one of these songs that begins in the depths but it doesn't stay there listen to the end and plenty as redemption is ever found with him and from all his iniquities he Israel shall redeem we'll sing the whole song to God's praise Lord from the depths to thee I cry for from the death to thee

I cry my voice Lord do thou hear unto my song he Christ or what younger within who are in he thataton might want to cie to around I'm ready with thee, but yet with thee, for new passes, but near the mayest thee.

I wait for God, my soul of faith, my hope is in His Word.

O'er than may thou our morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord.

I say, Lord, I lay down to watch, the morning light to see.

[39 : 16] Let Israel open the Lord, for with His mercies be.

And when the earth's redemption is never found within.

And from all His iniquities, Israel shall redeem.

Just a couple of quick intimations which I ought to have given at the beginning. The Youth Fellowship meets afterwards next door in the hall. It's a question and answer session with Fahy.

And there is a question box. And if any person wishes to put a question in, it's an anonymous question box. So as many of the young people as can, please go to the hall afterwards.

[40 : 40] It's upstairs. And the service is tomorrow. There's the early morning prayer meeting at 8.

And then Reverend Dr. Ian D. Campbell conducts both services. The 11 at Gaelic and the English at 7.

11, Gaelic in the seminary and English again in the seminary at half past 7. I would just like to take this opportunity to thank you, Minister, for inviting me along.

It was good to be among you. And I trust that you will know the Lord's blessing. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest on and abide with each and every one, both now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. I'll see you next time.