

The Greatest Miracle Of All!

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Well, good evening, a very warm welcome to our service this evening from Stornoway Free Church. This is the first time we've been using the church building since the lockdown last year.

There is no audience here apart from my wife and my grandson and Lizzie who's working the camera, hence I'm not wearing a mask because we're all in the same bubble at home. Now next Lord's Day, God willing, the services will resume here when there will be a gathered audience. There will be a service at 11 a.m. That will be a Gaelic service in the seminary building. And in this building there will be an English service at the same time at 11 a.m.

And at 6.30 p.m. we'll also have an English service here in the church. Now we still have to work out the permutations of accommodation, how many we can fit in and so on.

So information about how many we can accommodate will actually be given out throughout the week, later in the week. Once we've been able to work that out. And with the two meter distancing, which we still have to maintain, I think it's likely we'd be able to fit at least 100, between 100 and 130 perhaps in the church here.

[1 : 13] So I do encourage you to come to either of these services if you can at all. It's something we've been longing to see for a year and more, to actually have a gathered church congregation here in the church and in the seminary.

And so with that, let's pray that the Lord will provide for us as we move forward and as we come to take advantage of the increase allowed in numbers since last week.

We're going to begin our worship this evening. Incidentally, let me just thank you as well for joining us online. It's been wonderful seeing how many people have joined us online since we had online services during the lockdown and over the restrictive period.

And we're deeply, deeply grateful to you all, not just locally, but also outwith locality throughout the country and indeed further afield in different parts of the world.

We really appreciate this. It's a huge encouragement to us, especially it has been over the period of the last year or so. So once again, thank you.

[2 : 23] And thank you again for joining us this evening. We're beginning our service tonight by a reading. And our reading is from John's Gospel, chapter 19 and from verse 38.

And we'll read into chapter 20, down as far as verse 10. Gospel of John, chapter 19 and verse 38. After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.

And Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight.

So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden.

And in the garden, a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

[3 : 36] Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going towards the tomb. Both of them were running together. But the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth

which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Then the disciples went back to their own homes. Amen. May God bless to us that reading of his own precious word.

[4 : 52] Now we're going to engage in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord. Our gracious and eternal God, we give thanks for every occasion when we can worship you, whether it is privately on our own or when we join together with others to worship your holy name.

We thank you, O Lord, that it is our great privilege to be able to draw near to you, to give you thanks and to make requests of you, to express our devotion to you, and to seek that you would answer our prayers.

And we come to you tonight, O Lord, with much in our minds and on our hearts. Many things, O Lord, that we are privileged to lay before you, some of them that we cannot easily lay before you publicly, but we give thanks that we are able to bring our own private thoughts, our own private fears, our aspirations, all the things that mark us and our inward thoughts, that we can join together with others in worship and lay these before you.

And we thank you again, O Lord, for all that you are to us, for everything you have been to your people down through history, for the way that you continue to be Lord and God to us, a God in covenant with your people, a God whose covenant promises are secure and made yes and amen in Jesus Christ.

And we thank you tonight for him because he is the new and living way through whom we approach you and through whom we are able to come into your presence in a way that claims his merits, his righteousness, his acceptance to you, so that we too may be accepted in him.

[6 : 35] Lord, we thank you tonight for everything that you have proved yourself to be over these past difficult months. We thank you especially that you are the Lord of your church, the Lord of providence, the Lord of your word.

We pray tonight that we may have our faith settled upon your word, upon the person of the Savior, upon the glory of your being, as you have revealed yourself to us, and upon our own responsibilities in relation to these.

And Lord, we ask your blessing to be with us as we gather together in this way. And even though it be virtually for many of us joining online, we give thanks that we are involved in the same service of worship, that we join together in the same prayers of calling upon your name.

And we give thanks that we give our mind to the same word at these same moments. We ask your blessing to be with us as a congregation, as we seek Lord in this coming week, to move forward with the provision of services again in our church buildings.

We thank you for the providence that makes this possible for us. We pray that that will not only be maintained, but increased for us. We pray that throughout our land, we may see a further decrease of the infection of this COVID virus.

[7 : 57] And we ask your blessing again to be with those who manage it, who seek to manage the needs of our nation at this time, whether through government or health agencies or other forms of expertise.

We pray, Lord, for them. We give thanks for the way that they have led us, even though we may at times feel aggrieved and feel we disagree at times with some of the pronouncements or regulations. We give thanks, Lord, that they themselves act in good faith and that they do so in a way that would seek to provide for the well-being of us as a people.

Remember the world in which we live, O Lord. We thank you that in our very small prayers, that we can individually embrace the whole world and set it before you.

For we know that this pandemic has come to be rife throughout the nations of the world. Many of them, O Lord, at this time are caught up in such a virulent increase in the spread of the virus.

[9 : 01] And we know, too, that many nations still lack the necessary vaccines and health care in order to look after those who are ill. Remember, we pray that a great nation of India, when we hear, Lord, in the news of these days, how much that virus has spread throughout that great country, the billions of people that live there.

We bless you, O Lord, for the way that we can lay these things before you. And we pray that you would stem the increase, Lord, in your goodness and your providence. And we pray that you would

provide for them the oxygen that they so badly lack at this time. Help them, Lord, to locate supplies. Grant that we who are well off for these resources may, whatever way we can, seek to give help to them.

And we pray especially, Lord, for those we know ourselves in the nation of India through previous and present ongoing mission activities. We pray especially for the hospital in Lachna Don tonight. Give thanks for the way in which the doctor who had contracted COVID has made improvement in health. We pray that that will continue for him and for the hospital.

[10:19] And we ask that your Lord provide for them. We pray, too, for the nation of Peru, where we know that there are many related to mission activities in the past and others who belong to families that we know and dearly love are living there at the present time.

We ask, Lord, that you would bless them and protect them from the virus, if it please you. And we pray that you would encourage them, strengthen them, help them to keep looking to you and help the nation, O Lord, to look to you as well as they seek a means of recovery from the devastation that COVID has caused.

Lord, we pray that your blessing will continue with us and throughout the world, that human beings may be turned into your ways even through this virus, that we may realize as a people and as human beings that there is none else that we can turn to but to the living God who provides so richly and abundantly for us in Jesus Christ.

So that come what may in terms of our physical or even our mental state, we give thanks that your salvation in him is always secure and that none can actually pluck us from your hand.

We ask your blessing then, O Lord, to continue with us this evening and all who meet tonight in church gatherings of whatever kind, we pray that your blessing will accompany the gospel.

[11:48] Remember our young people as well, O Lord. Remember the youth fellowship later this evening as they meet on Zoom. We pray that you would bless that meeting to them, that you would help us as we look to matters pertaining to the Christian life.

We ask, O Lord, that this will be made precious and valuable to all the young folks. We pray for our families with young children, with infants. We ask that you would bless them.

We pray that you would give to them, O Lord, patience as we have been unable to celebrate the Lord's Supper or administer baptism during these difficult times.

And we ask that you would guide us safely out of these restrictions, O Lord, and enable us again to rejoice in their restoration, for they are so vital to your church and to us as a congregation, for they are themselves means of grace that you have appointed.

We pray, gracious Lord, that you would be pleased to restore them to us whenever you see appropriate. Give us patience meantime to wait upon you.

[12:54] So continue with us here, we pray, and bless all those who have helped us and continue to help us at this time with the provision of online facilities. We thank you for them.

We pray that you would bless us in the locality with those who administer health care here to us.

We pray that you would continue to protect us as a community. We ask that you would bless those who have businesses and who have had such difficult times, Lord, during these past months.

We pray that you would bless those who have lost their employment and who have to look for employment again. Remember them, Lord, we pray. Grant that you would lead them into means by which they may again earn their living.

And so provide for themselves and for families and for children. We pray for those who are especially experiencing hard times economically. We pray for the local food bank and those who make use of it.

We pray, Lord, that you continue to maintain that provision amongst us, even though we would long for the day, Lord, when food banks will no longer be necessary. But we thank you for them.

[14:04] And we thank you for those whose hearts are involved with the administering of them.

And we pray for them. We pray that you bless every other agency in our midst, O Lord, who seek to continue their services at this time.

Remember Hebrides Alpha. Remember, too, Road to Recovery. And all those who are involved in that. Continue, Lord, we pray to watch over us in your protective care, in your guidance, and in sanctifying to us even the most difficult providences in our lives.

Receive our thanks. Cleanse us from our sin. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, children, we've been looking the last couple of weeks at what Peter thought of Jesus.

Tonight I want to ask the question, what did Thomas think of Jesus? And if we remain in the chapter that we read, towards the end of that chapter, that's chapter 20 of John, at verse 28, we find that Thomas says to Jesus, my Lord and my God.

Now, Jesus came after He had risen from the dead into this group of assembled disciples. You might say that was a small gathering of the church at the time. And He got into their midst.

[15:23] He came into their midst, even though they were within a locked room. Jesus had that ability after the resurrection to do so. And when He came into their midst, eight days before this, He announced to them, peace be unto you.

And Thomas wasn't actually there. We don't know why he wasn't there, but whatever reason, he wasn't there. He missed out on this wonderful experience of meeting with Jesus, having risen from the dead, with the risen Jesus.

And that itself reminds us of how important it is to be where Jesus promises to be through His Word. Like tonight, Jesus promises to be where His Word is read and proclaimed, where His people are gathered to worship Him.

And so it's important for us that we also come to experience what these disciples experienced, Jesus pronouncing peace to us through the gospel. This is the peace that He Himself brought about through His death and resurrection.

And although Thomas was absent the first time, we read here that eight days later, the disciples were again inside, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood amongst them.

[16:42] And again, He said the same thing, peace be with you. Then He said to Thomas especially, reach out your hand, put your finger here, and see my hands, put out your hand and place it in my side.

Do not disbelieve, but believe. Now there's a wonderful thing there that Jesus particularly focused on Thomas.

And although Thomas was absent, and although Jesus was absent when Thomas said, unless I see His hands, the mark of the nails, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, place my hand into His side, I will never believe, Jesus wasn't present in the room at that time.

But He knew what Thomas had said. And so for us, He's such a great Savior that He knows exactly what we need and how we need to be spoken to by Him at every single moment of our life.

And when Jesus here invited Thomas to actually reach out and put His finger into the mark of the nails on His hand, and when He said, then, don't continue to disbelieve, but believe, Jesus, Thomas answered Him, my Lord and my God.

[17:59] And that's a really, really important confession. Because Thomas was saying that Jesus was both Lord and God. Lord in the sense of being in charge of everything, even death itself, He was now risen from the dead.

And also God. He had always been God, but here is Thomas saying, this is still God. Jesus is still what He was before, but now He's risen from the dead.

So Jesus is confessed here as my Lord and my God. But you notice that little word, my, is so important. Thomas said, my Lord and my God.

And I hope for all you young folk tonight that that's how you're also able to look upon and describe Jesus for yourselves. Because even if you know that Jesus is the Lord of many other people, what's really important for me and for you tonight is that you can say and I can say, He's my Lord and He's my God.

He's my Savior. He belongs to me and I belong to Him. Because we have a personal living relationship together. So tonight, think about this opinion that Thomas had about Jesus.

[19:19] What did Thomas think of Jesus? He thought of Him as His Lord and His God. And so tonight, too, I hope that that's what you all think about Jesus, too.

Now we're going to say the Lord's Prayer as we do at this time, so we'll say the Lord's Prayer again together. 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.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Now if you please turn back with me to John 20 to look at this passage verses 1 to 10 this evening, we've been looking at some of the miracles of Jesus over the past 12 weeks or so, and we're continuing that this evening with this passage.

[20 : 23] The burial of Jesus was a very important event. Maybe sometimes we kind of skip over that a little as if it isn't really all that important as his death and the resurrection which followed it.

But it is itself an aspect of the basis of our faith because Jesus went through all the phases of human experience including the separation of his soul and body with his body being buried in the sepulcher until he rose from the dead on the third day.

And that's why you find in the likes of 1 Corinthians 15 that the burial of Jesus is mentioned specifically along with his death and resurrection where Paul is saying I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received.

And everything that was of first importance includes the burial. He says that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

When you turn to the likes of the catechism the confession of faith catechism shorter catechism 27 wherein Christ's humiliation consists.

[21 : 43] The answer is Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born and that in a low condition made under the law undergoing the miseries of this life the wrath of God and the cursed death of the cross in being buried and continuing under the power of death for a time.

So being buried is itself a very very significant aspect of the Lord's action the Lord's provision of salvation what happened in Jesus' own experience in order to provide us with the salvation that we have in him.

Now all four gospels actually state on the first day of the week with regard to this incident. Why is that important? It's important because we now regard the first day of the week as the Lord's day or the Christian Sabbath but it's important theologically because this really begins a new phase not only in the experience of Jesus himself but also in the outworking of salvation or redemption. this is a step beyond what has gone before if you think of the Old Testament then the step forward and upward in the New Testament with the coming of Christ the incarnation and then again the death of Jesus and the burial of Jesus here is the next step and it's another upward step a step that actually takes us into the wonder of his resurrection from the dead.

It's for himself a great experience an additional experience in his own experience personally but it is also for our redemption such a critical event as we'll see later on in our study this evening.

[23 : 32] In the scheme of salvation the resurrection of the Lord from the dead is absolutely essential for us to understand salvation properly and what it is.

We might ask the question what is the greatest miracle of Jesus? We've looked at 12 miracles of Jesus so far some of them involving raising people from the dead Jairus' daughter the young man of the widow of Nain who was being carried to his burial what is the greatest miracle of Jesus in the life of Jesus?

Well it is actually this one the greatest miracle of all is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead because that is really so obviously as we understand it to have been a physical resurrection again we'll mention that in a moment but it is as the resurrection of Jesus the son of God in our nature from the dead it is itself against all the natural processes that we associate with our human beings because when we die our body is buried returns to the dust and we have no capacity ourselves to actually raise ourselves from the dead it takes a working miracle of divine power and it is in Jesus himself that you find this power of the resurrection as he came from the dead back to life in human terms as well as of course divine so two things I want to look at this evening in relation to this greatest miracle first of all here is a foundational fact for our faith a foundational fact for our faith now the arrangement as you see of the clothes in the sepulchre here is very very detailed in the description that John gives us it says here that they went in and when they looked into the tomb stooping in verse 5 he saw the linen cloths lying there he did not go in then Peter came he saw the linen cloths lying there and the face cloth which had been on Jesus head not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself in other words the body of Jesus as was the custom had the main part of the body shrouded in the linen cloths and a separate cloth covered the head and so when they looked into the tomb this is what they actually saw but the word folded there that's the translation that's given us here the linen cloths the face cloth folded in a place by itself somewhat misleading perhaps because literally that word really means to be in a rounded shape and that

really gives you a clue as to what happened because as we'll see in a moment when they looked at these clothes and the way that they were laid out they believed they believed that this in fact this resurrection of Jesus had taken place so as the clothes covered his body in his state of being the dead body of Jesus in the tomb in the resurrection he rose out of those clothes and left them behind as they had been on his body and that's why they retained something of that shape even though they had collapsed from what they had been compared to what they had been around his body but in any case this was compelling evidence for them that Jesus had actually risen from the dead you find that in verse 8 there when they went in he saw the other disciple he saw and believed this is what he actually saw saw these clothes and he believed this led him to believe that Christ had indeed risen from the dead and when you contrast back in chapter 11 the raising of Lazarus from the dead by Jesus himself you can see the difference between that and what we see in this passage about Jesus himself rising from the dead chapter 11 and verse 44 where Jesus called Lazarus out another tremendous miracle of Jesus calling Lazarus who'd been dead for four days called him out from the tomb

Lazarus come out and he came out but he was still bound hand and feet with the linen strips and his face was wrapped with the cloth and Jesus said to those who were there unbind him and let him go there's nothing like that in the resurrection of Jesus because Jesus rose out of the grave clothes to leave them behind forever Lazarus came out still with the grave clothes because he came back to life this side of the resurrection this side of death it wasn't a resurrection it was a bringing back to life and he would have had again to have died whenever it was that Lazarus came to die in other words your faith tonight and our faith the Christian faith the faith of every true believer rests upon facts this is a passage that tells us these are the facts this is what they saw this is what they actually were met with as they looked into the tomb and as verse 8 said he saw and believed your faith tonight as a Christian rests upon facts now we keep repeating this and it's so important that we keep reminding ourselves of this the Bible nowhere discourages us repeating things that are foundational importance

Peter shows us that in his first epistle he reminds them of things they already knew but he knew that he needed to remind them and we need to remind ourselves of this because there is a species of theology and we usually call it liberal theology that doesn't really believe that Jesus physically rose from the dead that doesn't believe in what we normally call the supernatural in terms of working miracles as the Bible describes them and what that sort of view says is that the early church having buried the Lord Jesus remembered his teaching they loved him so much they wanted to retain him in their thoughts and pass on these thoughts and these teachings to those who were coming after them so they actually then created these stories about him in which those teachings are encapsulated what do you say to that as a Christian well I say to that and you say to that as a Christian that actually destroys the trustworthiness of the Bible not only that but it destroys the whole doctrine of the divine Jesus because one of the reasons behind that sort of idea is a reluctance to accept of the divineness of Jesus and the godhood of Jesus and therefore a reluctance to accept his resurrection from the dead and therefore consequently a reluctance to accept a miracle as we understand it the resurrection was verified by these individuals and they weren't the sort of people who would then make up a story and create a narrative in order to keep the teachings of Jesus alive what is it that lay behind the advance we'll see it referred to it in a moment of the apostolic church of the early church of the New Testament would they have actually gone out as they did and experienced what they experienced of persecution and still kept on believing the same things if they knew in their heart of hearts that all they had been doing was preserving a memory no they knew that they had actually met with the risen Jesus that he was alive that he was alive from the dead that death was behind him that he was the risen savior the exalted savior that's why we believe as they did that this is a foundational fact for our faith foundational for our trusting in Jesus and indeed you could say the resurrection is actually verified by faith itself somebody who doesn't have the faith that God gives to his people finds it impossible of course to understand that faith can actually spiritually see things and believe things that the word of God that the Bible sets out for you faith in the words of Hebrews 11 is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen there it is your faith is itself as a God given gift where God has opened your eyes and your mind to believe the things that he has revealed that itself for you personally is a verification and a proof in its own right that Jesus is alive from the dead that's who you pray to that's who you want to continue to bless your life that's who you believe is sitting on the throne of the universe that's who you believe is the king and head of the church that's the one you believe is

directing all the course of history in the words of revelation opening the scrolls of history until the end of time dead people don't do that and Jesus as he lives just as first

[32 : 57] Peter reminds us Peter of course took so much from his experiences of meeting with Jesus and in first Peter chapter 1 verses 3 to 4 remember he said blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has begotten us to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead he has begotten us he has brought us alive again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead so the first thing about it is this greatest miracle of all is a foundational fact for our faith secondly that are here comforting facts for our living by faith we often refer to the empty tomb but of course as we've seen it's not quite so the clothes that were in the tomb belong to death and Jesus left them behind because he left death behind when he rose from the dead these clothes were not appropriate to the risen

Jesus because he was now living beyond death and above death and in charge of death he's the risen one death is no longer relevant in his own experience and so we find this living this risen Jesus these comforting facts for our living by faith are firstly for our present needs and I'm just going to mention three or four or five maybe of these circumstances for which the risen Jesus and our relationship with him is so crucial so precious first of all for our present needs in terms of our times of grief and the world has had so much grief it always has but in the past year even more so many of our own people as well have at times of if not the loss of loved ones certainly dealing with illness anxiety all of these things and you look here at verse 16 here is

Mary not yet realizing that Jesus was the one she assumed was the gardener and here in verse 16 Jesus said to her Mary she turned and said to him in Arabic which means master he said in verse 15 why are you weeping whom are you seeking now he wasn't accusing her when he said those questions what he was doing was guiding her into the reality of who he was the reality of his resurrection so that she would grasp that it was himself not the gardener not some other individual but the same Jesus she had known before he died before his body was buried it's the same Jesus now but he's risen from the dead and now she meets him and in her grief this is where she finds her solace her answer her comfort and all the way through scripture that is what you find that this risen Jesus is the one you go to with your tears he introduces you to the father as you come to know the lord he continues to introduce you to the father but he himself deals with you in such a way as to wipe away your tears if you have and all of us will have whatever measure of grief we have tonight whatever anxieties we have whatever things cause us to weep well let

Jesus dry your eyes let Jesus dry your eyes take your weeping to him just as Mary here was dealt with by the risen Jesus he is the only one who can successfully and adequately deal with our grief uphold us in our grief answer our grief comfort us in our grief bring us meaning into our grief so let Jesus dry your tears but there's also no present needs for our fears here are the disciples in verse 20 and you find that the disciples here they actually were inside the doors for fear of the Jews verse 19 for fear Jesus came and stood amongst them and said peace be with you we all have fears many different types of fears and whether it's fear of people as the disciples had here fear of illness fear of death itself fear of the future all different kinds of fears but it's the same

Jesus who is able to deal with our grief that can deal with our fears and you know this is really exactly what he's saying to you and to me tonight through the gospel peace be to you he's really effectively saying look I have been through death I have been through the valley of the shadow of death I died I know what it's like to die I know what it's like to have my body laid in the grave I know what it's like to face death I know what it's like to have violent opposition against me and he's saying here peace be to you take what I have procured what I have purchased what I have created for you because the peace of Jesus is created exactly against our fears and our griefs so let him dry your tears but also draw your strength from him to meet with your fears and then as we saw with Thomas when we spoke to the children your doubts thirdly because again we all have doubts and the doubts that arise from within our own hearts are often grasped by our soul's enemy the devil and we'll actually take those and play on them and say things like well how can you be a

[39 : 03] Christian you have so many doubts why have you got these doubts look at what the Bible is saying don't you believe the Bible why are you going about with these doubts isn't Jesus everything to you and yet you know we're still most of us still go about with doubts Robbie Duncan one of the great free church fathers says in one of his statements in his writings there is no doubt in faith itself but there may be many doubts in the believer in other words faith when you define faith itself faith actually faith in its essence faith in itself and its substance if you like it's something which

believes believes in Jesus believes in his word and while there's no doubt he said there are no doubts in faith itself it may be surrounded by many doubts in the believer where do you take your doubts you take them to this risen

Jesus here is Thomas with his doubts here is Thomas with his reluctance to believe that Jesus was risen from the dead and here is Jesus inviting him come on Thomas put your finger here and see my hands put out your hand place it in my side do not believe disbelieve but believe Thomas said my Lord and my God your doubts tonight take them to the cross take them to the marks of Christ's death and suffering take them to where they have been answered for abundantly in the sufferings and death of Jesus himself and let this word of scripture be your consolation to counter your doubts you believe that Jesus died you believe he rose from the dead you believe he was buried you believe he's now alive forevermore you believe his word that he says whatever it is he says to you you accept that and so move on that basis on with your life bury your doubts I say this as one who has doubts myself bury your doubts in the grave of

Jesus bury your doubts before his risen person let the grandeur of his risen person answer the need of your soul and the doubts of your heart and then of course our failures as well here is Peter in this passage and you go forward to chapter 21 the interview with Jesus the questioning that Jesus put him through about his love Simon son of Jonah do you love me yes Lord yes Lord yes third time and he was grieved because three times he had asked him this and said Lord you know everything you know that I love you we all have our measure of failures some of them are unknown to the world but we know that our Lord knows we know that we fail him we know that we've let him down what do you do with that you take it again to the risen

Jesus you meet with him you say to him Lord I know that this is what I've done Lord I know I'm not deserving of any more mercy from you of any restoration from you but Lord you know that I love you you appeal to his own superior knowledge and you say Lord whatever people may think of me whatever people may conclude from what I've done what they see in me you know that I love you and that's really the reality of it for Peter and it's the risen Jesus that meets that we could go on and say it's the same for our evangelism chapter 21 again and verse 6 where Jesus says cast the net on the right side you will find the fish there and that's what happened you can follow that through for yourselves there's the risen Jesus inviting them to catch the fish and of course he had said he was going to make them fishers of men this is an anticipation of the way that they as the church after his ascension would go out into the world with the gospel and catch people in the gospel net and make disciples of all nations so this risen Jesus the comforting facts are for our living by faith our present needs but also our own death faith looks into this grave of Jesus and sees these clothes and sees whose they are and why they're left there and faith concludes he's not going to leave me when I come to die seeing my trust is in him as the risen Christ he will go with me he will fulfill psalm 23 verse 4 for me though I walk to the shadow the valley of the shadow of death

I will fear no evil for you are with me your rod and your staff comfort me you're with me yourself David was saying and then there's that remarkable passage in Genesis 46 where Jacob is anticipating and preparing to go back to Egypt and God meets him just before he begins that final stage of the journey he says don't be afraid to go to Egypt for I will make a few there there in the midst of Egypt in the darkness of Egypt in the paganism of Egypt in the violent oppressions of Egypt there I will make you a great nation not only that he said I myself will go down with you that's a remarkable statement God there saying to Jacob don't be afraid to go to that pagan darkness of Egypt I won't actually take you to the border and leave you I will go there with you I'll be there with you myself and I will take you back up again and that's really you might say the language of resurrection as well taking him back up again was back to the land of

[45 : 16] Canaan but you can tell it's got that element of resurrection emphasis in it as well and of course that takes you forward not only for our present needs and for our death but for our own resurrection think about Revelation chapter 7 from verse 9 after this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands new clothes new state new bodies that's what awaits the people of God the other side of the resurrection raised with new clothes the clothes that are symbolized there as covered with the purity of holiness in

Christ and new bodies the resurrection body with no vestige of sin left as they are raised from the graves and new clothes new state of being forever with the Lord Philippians chapter 3 your member

says this but our citizenship is in heaven this is after Paul had described those who are firmly grounded in this world and in the appetites of this world but we he says we who are in Christ we Christians our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a savior the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself therefore my brothers whom I love and long for my joy and crown stand firm thus in the

Lord my beloved later on this evening we're going to be thinking in the youth fellowship of the relation between doctrine and practice and there's a wonderful example of it there is the doctrine the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ the Savior the doctrine of the resurrection of his people the doctrine of his coming his subjecting all things to himself but you see he extracts from that teaching for the present therefore who my brothers stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved we're not studying doctrine for its own sake we don't look at these great teachings we're not even looking at this greatest miracle of all people just so that we can give ourselves some intellectual exercises we are doing it so that we can relate it to our present life to our service for God to our love of Jesus to everything that we owe him as we work it through in our lives

I'm going to finish with a quotation on that passage in Philippians by one of my favorite commentators there not only on Philippians but also Isaiah and other parts of the Bible that's Alec Motier it's called the message of Philippians this is what he is saying in all this he said Paul himself affords us a superb example when he looked up and saw the reigning Lord Jesus enthroned at the pinnacle of heaven chapter 2 verses 9 to 11 this is all to do with Philippians when he looked back he saw the Christ of Calvary the bearer of our curse the author of righteousness when he looked forward he saw the returning savior chapter 3 verse 20 when he looked into his own heart he found perfect satisfaction in the Lord Jesus Christ chapter 3 verses 7 to 12 but when he looked to Christ himself he saw riches stored up which he had only begun to possess in experience more of Christ to know and gain more of his fellowship to enjoy more of his likeness to display more of his will to learn and do from from that greatest miracle of all we extract what is most essential for our practical Christian living let's pray Lord we thank you for your word for its richness for the way that it itself shows us how to apply it to our own lives we thank you that you are our great teacher through the Holy Spirit we pray Lord that you would teach us this evening what we have looked at and read and thought about and proclaimed from your word laid upon our hearts we pray for we desire daily to grow more and more into the likeness of Christ we thank you tonight that you are risen from the dead that you are exalted to glory that you are sitting at the right hand of the majesty on high that you are the one your people expect to return to this world to bring the course of history to an end to usher in your eternal kingdom which will be without end grant us faith we pray increase our faith we pray multiply in our own hearts the thoughts that give glory to you and receive our thanks for giving all our sin for Jesus sake amen we are going to sing this evening from psalm 16 that's in the old scottish psalter version i sing to tune saint leonard again i'm not wearing a visor because i don't have anybody here who's not in the vicinity at least within the bubble in my own home so i'm able to sing without a visor thankfully so psalm 16 at verse 8 before me still the lord i said since it is so that he doth ever stand at my right hand i shall not move it be on to verse 11 these words that new testament picks up with regard to the resurrection of christ in particular but it follows through into the resurrection of his people in him as well before me still the lord i said before me still the lord i said saith it is so that he doth ever stand at my right hand i shall not move it be because of this my heart is glad and joy shall be expressed even by my glory and my flesh in confidence shall rest because my soul in grave to dwell shall not be left by thee nor wilt thou give thine holy one corruption to see thou thou wilt me show

[53 : 36] the path of life of joy snarish full store before thy face at thy right hand are pleasures ever more now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and ever more amen thank you once again for joining with us this evening and do please wait on details throughout the week near the end of the week of how we're going to go setting about these services and the numbers and so on for next Lord's Day thank you