

The Church Calendar and The Cross Connections

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Date: 18 August 2024

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[0 : 00] We're going to begin our service by singing to God's praise on Psalm 122 in the Scottish Psalter on page 416. And we're singing the whole Psalm to the tune St. Paul.

Psalm 122 on page 416. I joyed when to the house of God, go up they said to me, Jerusalem within thy gates, our feet shall stand.

The whole of the Psalm to God's praise. I joyed when to the house of God, go up they said to me, Jerusalem within thy gates, our feet shall stand, and leave.

There will spend last the city, is all that we build together.

And to that place the tribes go up, the tribes of God, your fillet.

[1 : 32] To Israel's testimony, to God's name, thanks to pay.

For the throne of God, the throne of God, our throne of heaven, our throne of heaven, our throne of heaven.

Reha, Jezus, Salaam, Deja, Peace and Felicity.

Let them not love me and my peace until prosperity.

Therefore I wish that each may still within thy walls remain.

[2 : 51] And ever may thy father sit, for prosperity we gain.

Now for my friends and brethren saints, peace be in me I'll stay.

And for the house of God our Lord, I'll seek thy good away.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Almighty and most gracious God, we rejoice in the worship of your name.

We give thanks to you for your word that we have sang together. We give thanks to you for the joy that your people have in their hearts.

[4 : 04] As they draw near to you and as they gather in your name, we pray as we do worship you together this evening, that we may have that joy in our own hearts.

A joy that arises from an appreciation of the great God that you are. An appreciation of the way in which you have made known your love to us.

And a deep and personal appreciation of the knowledge that Christ Jesus, your son, died for our sins. And give to us, we pray, a sense of the peace that comes from knowing that our sins are forgiven, that we are acceptable before you and in your presence.

And give to us a sense of that overwhelming presence which speaks of the power of your spirit in the midst of the worshipping people of God, which gives to them a sense of readiness to hear what you have to speak to us.

We rejoice in you as the God who speaks peace through the gospel. We give thanks to you for your word and for the clarity of it, for the way in which it speaks to us of the great God that you are and the kind of sinners that we are and the great Saviour that your son is.

[5 : 36] Your word is like a glass through which we can see you. And we pray tonight that we would discover it anew to be so. That we may come face to face with the great God that you are, speaking to us from it.

Learning about the kind of God that we do worship and the way in which you have made yourself known. Your word is also described as a mirror in which we can see ourselves.

And how we pray tonight, O Lord your God in our worship, that we may begin to see ourselves as you see us. That we may be delivered from being deceived in any way in our hearts to think that we are something that we are not.

But give it to us to learn from your word the kind of people we truly are. That we may come to you with confession of sin, with a deep desire to turn away from our sin to you as the great God and Saviour that you are.

And give it to us, O Lord God, that process of thinking and of behaving in your presence, through which we will embrace Jesus Christ your Son as our Saviour.

[6 : 52] Sense his significance for our salvation today. And begin to experience the joy of his shepherding presence as we journey on through life.

And begin also to grow in anticipation of the day when we shall see him as he is, and when we shall be made like him. And grant us to know together this evening that we truly are your children, who have been saved by you.

That we may understand and appreciate all that your fatherly care means, and that we may live in dependence upon you day by day, O Lord your God.

We pray for your blessing to so reach every heart that has gathered before you to worship you this evening. Give thanks for each person with their own particular burdens and cares and concerns, all with their own anxieties in life, all with their own different experiences.

May you bless each and every heart. May you give us all to know that we are included tonight in the reaching out of your heart to a lost world.

[8 : 04] And may we learn in your presence what it is to go forward from meeting with you, being encouraged and strengthened in our hearts to live for you in this world.

And to do so as we are reminded this morning to live in the world in which we do live, as those who are your people, being witnesses that are faithful to you, that show forth your praises and that speak to a dark world with the light of the gospel, in our conversation, in our behaviour and in our relationships with each other and in our relationships with them.

May you give us to be truly the witnesses of God who are faithful to you. We pray your blessing tonight on all the homes and families of our congregation.

We give thanks to you for parents and for children. We give thanks to you for parents and children who encourage their children to be under the teaching of your word. And we give thanks to you for every way in which our children grow up under the influence of the scriptures.

We give thanks to you for our day schools as well and pray for your blessing to be upon our teachers and upon pupils as they return to comments and enter into another school term or school session.

[9 : 22] We pray your protection for them. We pray your blessing upon them. We pray that you will bestow wisdom upon them in the difficult times in which they teach and learn.

May they know your hand upon them. And may you give to them much light and wisdom and grace in seeking to educate and train our children to live in this world in which we do live.

And praying that our children would grow up fearing your name so that wherever they are called upon in life to work and to serve, that they may do so as those who have come from your presence and to learn what life means in the light of your word.

We do pray for all those who mourn and grieve tonight. There are so many around us whose hearts are heavy and broken, who are filled with grief and sorrow. We pray, O Lord, that you will give comfort to them, that you give to them a sense of your embrace and a sense of knowing that you are the God who is with them and who cares for them and whose compassions and whose mercies are truly great.

We shout to all, we do pray, and bless them, we do ask. We with all also are serious ill and who are under your hand in providence and affliction in any way. May you heal and restore, we do pray.

[10 : 38] And in all the anxiety that does come from serious illness, may you give peace. And may you give your presence and your blessing, O Lord, O God, to give them to know that you are the shepherd who is with them, even in the valley of the shadow of death, that they need fear no evil.

Bless the gospel, we do pray. Bless the gospel of our own congregation. Bless us as we prepare for our communion season. Bless your word and sacrament in the coming days. May we be gathered and led by you and by the power of your spirit to come with a sense of deeply longing to remember the death of your son as our savior.

And may we do so to the honor and glory of your name. And may your word build us up. And may we come to be fed by you and to be built up by you that you may continue to grow and to mature in our faith.

And as we do remember your death, may your spirit also be present with us to reach out and to claim those who are yet unsaved, who do not yet see the preciousness of Jesus Christ as the one who died for their sin.

May your spirit so work to draw them during these days and to bring them to put their trust in your son as their savior. Bless our island communities. Bless our congregations.

[11:58] Bless your word preached today. Bless all those who go out with it. Encourage yourself as we do ask. Bless them in your hand and bless your word through them throughout the whole of this day.

And do so for the good of the nation to which we belong. We pray that you will rescue us and restore us from the path that we have chosen in turning away from you. And bring us back to yourself.

And bring us back to yourself. We do pray and pour of your spirit down into every corner of our land to bring us to that place where we acknowledge you as our God and acknowledge you in all of our ways.

And know what it is to have our paths directed by you. Bless the worldwide needs of so many people. We pray that you will bring relief to those who are in conflict.

We pray that you will relieve those who are oppressed. We pray that you will protect those who are persecuted for their faith. And we pray that you will bring relief and to bring blessing.

[13:01] And pray for the day to come and to hasten when your glory will fill the whole earth. And when we will see that new heavens and that new earth. Where there will be no need.

But where our need will be satisfied. And where we will sit and dwell in your kingdom. Knowing your peace and enjoying so forevermore. We do pray. So bless us as we continue before you now.

We pray that you will bless your word to us as we sing, as we read, as we share in it. May you lead and guide us in all of these areas of our worship together this evening. May you keep from us anything that would distract us in the time that we do spend together.

Bless us and hear us as we pray. And pardon us for we ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. We turn to praise God. And this time we are singing from Sing Psalms and Psalm number 48A.

It's on page 63. Psalm 48A on page 63. And we are singing at verse number 8. Down to verse 14.

[14:06] Down to verse 14. And the tune is Torwood. Psalm 48A at verse number 8. As we have heard, so have we seen, God's city will endure.

The Lord Almighty evermore his city keeps secure. We follow us in the name of God. And the Lord comes with us. To visit those who are intill ou 1600 ■ in the world. Thank you.

As we have heard, so have we seen God's standing will endure.

The Lord Almighty evermore, aesthetic keeps secure.

We will vouch for nature's steadfast love within your hands, O God.

[15:20] For life through me, pure place extends through all the earth, the cross.

All that you do is righteous, Lord, our Zion's joy is great.

And you fast and rejoice, as they your judgment celebrate.

Friends, Zion, warm and countertart, you at least it had been.

So bad to children yet unborn, her story you may tell.

[16:42] For God the Lord, who is our God, forever will abide.

He is our God, forever more, and to be yet now kind.

Starting together now to read the Word of God in the New Testament. We're reading in the Gospel of John, and in chapter number 12. John chapter 12, and picking up our reading at verse number 20.

John 12 and verse 20. Let us hear the Word of God. Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

[18:04] And Jesus answered them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.

Then a voice came from heaven. I have glorified it, and will glorify it again. The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, An angel has spoken to him.

[19 : 02] Jesus answered, This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of the world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever.

How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is the Son of Man? So Jesus said to them, The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light.

Lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you are the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.

Amen. This is God's word. We thank you for that. We thank you for that. That reading from it. We return to praise God this time in Psalm number 63 in the Scottish Psalter. On page 295.

[20 : 08] Psalm number 63 at verse 1. To the tune, Bass of Harris. Lord thee, my God, I'll early seek.

My soul to thirst for thee. My flesh longs in a dry parched land, wherein no waters be. We stand to sing from verse 1 to the verse 6 to God's praise.

podcast citrus. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[22 : 34] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

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

Now, as we gather to worship God, we know that the Bible is a unique book. We know that it is a special book. It is the Word of God.

[24 : 34] And as we read through the Bible, we see the marvelous way in which God, in breathing the scriptures out for us, has organized in such a way to give us a step-by-step progression of his purposes for a lost world.

And we see down through the Old Testament that he does so regularly by giving his people promises, promises with regard to the things that he is going to do.

And the more we journey down through the Old Testament, the more we see the promises growing in the sense of more revelation being added to them. So that what we read in Genesis, we understand it far better in Isaiah and so on.

So there is that sense of the promises of God growing in the way in which they reveal more and more to us of what God has purpose to do. And these promises were the words that carried the people of God down to the Old Testament.

When they were faltering, when they were fearing, when they were struggling, the promises of God carried them through these times and their experience and they journeyed on with the strength and with the help of God.

[25 : 50] So the promises of God carry us through and of course that does not change. We live today as the people of God in dependence on the promises of God.

And when things do go wrong for us and we meet with things that we don't expect, then we trust in the promises of God. But along with that, God was helping his people in another way.

And he was doing so through the church calendar. And down through the experience of the people of God in the Old Testament, there were key festivals appointed by God through which they were going to be reminded who they were, where they had come from and what God was going to do.

And we can scan perhaps quickly the church calendar in the Old Testament. And we see there's the feast of the Passover in the springtime. We see there's the day of atonement in September, October.

We see that's followed by the feast of births five days later. Key moments in the church calendar through which the people of God were encouraged. And particularly to remind them where their existence originated from.

[27 : 10] And we gather ourselves around the word of God and we gather in preparation to remember the Lord's death until he come, appointed by God for the same purpose.

So that we live life in the world, engaged with these events in the church calendar to remind us who we are, who God is and what God has done.

And the importance of these events in the church calendar we see in the life of Jesus in the Gospel of John. How did he interact with the people?

He had the habit of being with them in these key events in the church calendar. He was at a wedding in Cana.

He is at the feast of tabernacles or booths in chapter seven. He is at the festival of lights in chapter eight. In this chapter he is at the feast of the Passover.

[28 : 10] He is there with them in their church calendar in these events to reinterpret them and to help them to understand that things are now moving with him.

And that all of these things pointed to him. And I want to bear that in mind this evening as we look at this chapter.

They were going to the Passover to remind them where they had come from. And we are going to remember the Lord's death. And if we do remember anything the way the Bible speaks of remembering, we are in a sense reliving or reenacting what has happened in the past in our minds so that they impact upon where we are in the present.

They were remembering the Exodus, how God had redeemed them. We are going to remember the death of the Lord Jesus and how that is where we find our beginning of salvation.

And in the light of that I want us to think this evening of the church calendar and the cross connections. I want to see in the passage first of all that there is a prompt.

[29 : 27] We live life perhaps depending upon prompts and upon alerts. There are key things that we don't want to forget so we set up our reminders and our alerts and our prompts so that when the time comes we are clearly aware this is where I must be.

This is what I should be doing. And there is something similar to that happening here in the life of the Lord Jesus. And the prompt comes through those who come in verse number 21 and verse number 20 where there are those who come to the feast who are Greeks.

And that is significant because Greeks wouldn't normally come to the feast. They are obviously those who have been converted to the religion of the Jews and who are joining with them in the celebration of the Passover.

And when that is happening it is important for this reason. That God promised down through the Old Testament that the day would come when all the nations of the earth would come into the kingdom of God and enjoy the blessing and the promises of God's salvation.

And here are these Greeks showing to Jesus showing to themselves that God's plan is on Kursh. That his promises are being fulfilled.

[30 : 54] And here are these people coming in to the Passover feast at this crucial time in their life and in the experience of the Lord Jesus.

And when they come they have the particular desire which reminds us that they are completely Jesus focused. So they say we wish to see Jesus.

And tonight if I wish to see anything or desire to see anything I'm deciding that because I've gone through a process. And what I'm seeing is the result of things I've processed in my mind.

And the result of that closes is I want to see Jesus. That's how they were working. That's how they were coming here. They were saying we want to see Jesus.

And tonight for ourselves as we consider preparing ourselves to remember the death of the Lord. We will do so meaningfully if we come like the Greeks came and we come with a sense of the promises of God being fulfilled in us.

[32 : 04] And a sense of the importance of wanting to see Jesus. At the very outset of our sermon this evening it's a simple question.

Who do we want to see? Why do we come to church? Why do we prepare ourselves for the key calendar event of remembering the Lord's death?

Is it something that's just an event that we have to attend? Or are we here like the Greeks who are really deciding to see Jesus?

Because of what we've learned, what we know, what we experience. And all of these things are churning over in our minds and we're flowing into our lives in our conversation with others that we want to see Jesus.

And can you tell us where we can see Jesus? Jesus was precious to them to show that they were part of the purpose of God in the extension and in the building of his kingdom.

[33 : 11] And it is that desire on their part that was a prompt for the Lord Jesus. And when we are saying that we are not suggesting in any way that Jesus did not know what was happening or when it was going to happen.

But he was sensitive to what was happening around him and he was sensitive to what God had sent him to do. And here at the feast of Passover, once he hears that there are those who are seeking him, he immediately recognizes that this is a key moment in his own life.

And we see that whatever happened behind the scenes that we don't know of in verse number 23, Jesus answered them, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Up until this point, Jesus has been saying, My hour has not yet come. And John has been saying, His hour had not yet come. There was a particular moment in the life of the Lord Jesus, significant for him in the service of God and in the purpose for which God sent him into the world.

And now suddenly that moment has come. And all of the build-up has brought him to this very place in this calendar event in the experience of the church and into interacting with those who are around him.

[34 : 44] And suddenly he knows that this is the time. And it wasn't just any time. The time that was significant to the Lord Jesus is the time that is significant for ourselves.

And the hour has now come where the Son of Man is going to be glorified. Who he is and what he is is going to radiate forth from him in such a way that there will be no doubt as to who he is and what he has done.

And when Jesus is saying the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, there are two things that we can think of as we move on. And the first of these is that Jesus sees himself as that figure in Daniel 7, who comes in to God the Ancient of Days and to whom is given glory and a kingdom and dominion.

That's who he sees himself to be. And he sees now the moment has come for him to receive the glory promised to the Son of Man in Daniel 7.

And in bearing that in mind, the other thing that we bear in mind is that when Jesus says that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, it's not a moment, it's a process.

[36 : 07] And it's a process with steps. And the three steps involved in his glorification is that he's going to die for our sins, that he's going to be raised from the dead on the third day, and that he's going to be raised to glory by the power of God the Holy Spirit.

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. He sees himself as the one who came into this world, who was born into Bethlehem as the Son of God, the Jesus who grew up with Mary and Joseph.

He lived his life in serving God and ministering to the people. He lived his life interacting with them at these key moments. And now he sees that the hour has come for his interaction with the Father, for the transaction that must take place through these steps in his experience.

Jesus is moved by the people. He is moved by what the people are doing. And Jesus interestingly says in John chapter 17 that as he prays for the Father to glorify him as the Savior, the mediator, the Savior of his people, Jesus goes on to say that he is glorified in his people.

And Jesus is engaging with them and engaging with God and looking to the glory with which God is going to glorify him and recognizing that his people are going to be glorified, he's going to be glorified in his people.

[37 : 51] The prompt. And of course you and I thinking about remembering the Lord's death and you and I preparing for that. Of course Jesus is not going to die a second time.

He's not going to be crucified as a once for all sacrifice. But nevertheless we are engaging with the Lord Jesus who has commanded us to do this in remembrance of him until his return.

And all of our thought processes and all of our activities and all of our preparation to remember the Lord's death, we need to remember the fact that Jesus Christ our Savior who is glorified at God's right hand, that he is interested in what we are doing and saying.

And that he is interested in the sense of watching out for our obedience to his command to remember his death. And it's not a prompt as I said for him to be crucified again, but there is a prompt in the sense in which Jesus is engaging and preparing to be with his people and preparing to reflect his interest in them and his care for them.

The prompt. The prompt. If tonight your desire is to see Jesus, who knows what the desire of Jesus is for you?

[39 : 20] Who knows what he will bring to you through remembering his death until his return? The prompt. The event in the church calendar.

The realization in the mind of Jesus as to who he is and what he is doing. And your own self-consciousness as you do prepare to remember the death of the Lord.

The prompt. Secondly, there is a proclamation. That's what we expect. The gospel is preached.

And Jesus goes on to proclaim that gospel as we read on in verse number 24. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. He is using a kind of parable. He is taking a grain of wheat, a seed of wheat, a kernel of wheat.

[40 : 30] He is using that to go and illustrate the way in which he is himself going to die in order to save his people. And I'm not a gardener, but seeds are important.

We don't see the real life in the seed. It's closed and it's covered. But we believe there is in the seed that kernel which carries with it the potential for life and for fruit bearing.

It's covered over. And it's covered over and needs to be placed in the earth in the right conditions so that it will bear fruit. And Jesus is using that to go and explain what glorification is going to mean.

And when you read on through the rest of the section, there is something that emerges which is an insight into what Jesus is thinking and an insight into who Jesus thinks he is.

And when Jesus is using the idea of grain or seed, we think of the promises of God. And we spoke earlier of the way in which God had given his people his promises.

[41 : 50] And these promises carried them down through the ages. And the first promise that we have in the Bible is to do with the seed of the woman.

And when Jesus is using this parable, we see that he is recognizing himself to be and proclaiming himself to be that very seed which God promised in Genesis 3, chapter number 15.

And from there we see the seed that we have promised to Abraham. And from there we see the seed that we have promised to Abraham in Genesis 12 and Genesis 15. There is that sense of the seed of God and the promised seed down through the generations of the Old Testament.

And Jesus now recognizes himself and proclaims himself to be that very same seed. The parable.

If the grain is pregnant with life, the parable is pregnant with meaning. And the meaning is that Jesus is saying, I am that seed of the woman who is coming to bruise the head of the serpent.

[43 : 05] I am that seed of the woman who is coming to fulfill the purposes of God. And let's stop and think about that.

I take the grain of wheat, the seed of the wheat. It's full of potential for life. We cannot see it. We look at it and we can maybe discount it unless we understand what it is and what it contains.

Then it will be of no value. And here we see Jesus at this church calendar event preparing for the Passover. And we see that he sees himself as the seed.

And because of who he is, when he says that, it fills the parable with so much potential for life. That our minds cannot begin to imagine what that will be.

And we know that in all that is hidden under his ordinariness in Jerusalem and in Galilee, behind that visible ordinariness, there is the fact that he is the son of God with the power of an indestructible life.

[44 : 18] And whatever he does, it's going to have lasting and important and transforming consequences. And we could say that should excite our faith.

And we could also say or ask how exciting this must have been for Jesus. That all that God has said is suddenly closing in upon him.

And in this very moment, he is going to fulfill all of the purposes of God and bring about the birth of his church. And bring about the taking in of the nations of the world to belong to the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ.

The proclamation, the self-consciousness of Jesus, this is who I am. I want you to know that this is who I am. And if you know who I am, then you'll know why I am here and you'll know what is going to happen to me.

And when he makes that claim, he goes on to finish off the parable, to bring it to its conclusion.

[45 : 37] Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. We know that. We can have a packet of seeds or a bag of seeds in our garden sheds and they just lie there.

They're not going to do anything. There has to be the process of taking them from where they are stored and placing them where they are going to bear fruit.

And then we can expect a great change. Unless they're put in the right, in the ground, in the right environment, in the right location, then nothing is going to change with regard to the grain, to the seed.

And that's what Jesus is saying here. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

With regard to Jesus, since he is going to die, or when he does die, the seed is going to bear much fruit.

[46 : 39] And we think of the environment for the natural seed and how certain things must be in place for it to germinate and to grow and to bring forth fruit.

And we think of Jesus as the seed of the woman sent by God to be our Savior and in the right environment, in the right place, with the right conditions.

Then in that moment when Jesus dies on Calvary's cross, the perfect environment for his death, prepared by God, directed by him in that moment of his death, then he will bear much fruit.

And so the location is not an accident. The circumstances is not an accident. His experience is not an accident.

The darkness is not an accident. All of these things are crucial elements in the death of the Lord Jesus as he is suspended on Calvary's cross.

[47 : 48] And when he goes through the darkness and when he says it is finished and he bows his head and he gives up his spirit, then we can look for fruit.

We can look for things to change. And the fruit that Jesus is talking about is exactly what God promised to Abraham. That the people of God, the seed of God, that in Abraham all the families of the earth will be blessed.

And the Jesus who is the servant of God concerning him by say, he shall see his seed. He shall prolong his days.

The purpose of the Lord, the purpose of the Lord will prosper in his hand. There it is. And where do we see the fruit that comes from the fact that the son of God died on Calvary's cross?

We see it around us this evening. We see a people who are the children of God who have their life in Jesus, rooted in him, because of his death and because of his resurrection.

[48 : 56] And these are the ones who decide to see Jesus. They understand that the life originates, is rooted in him. Without him they have no life.

But because of him they have the life which is full and which is eternal. Where else do we see it? We go to the end of the message of the Bible.

And we go to Revelation chapter 7 and we see a great multitude which no one can number. From all the nations and language and peoples and kindreds from all over the whole of the world.

There is the seed, the harvest of this moment of isolation in the life of the son of God. When he cried, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And if we take that as a question, the fruit is the answer. The church is the answer. The day of judgment is the answer when the people of God are gathered around the throne of God.

[50 : 01] The proclamation, unless it falls on the ground and dies. And tonight if I want to see Jesus, it needs to be more than wanting to see him in the manger.

It needs to be more than wanting to see him perform his miracles. It needs to be more than wanting to see that he died. It needs to reach the point where I see that he died for me.

That he loved me and gave himself for me. That's where our desire comes. And as we do prepare to remember the Lord's death, that's why the death is important.

It's important to God. It's important to Jesus. And it's not kind of a prayer. It's at the center of the son of God's life. It's at the center of God's life.

It's at the center of God's plan. And it comes to be at the center of those who are his people.

[51 : 17] The proclamation. multitude that's destined for glory and that God is adding to that multitude every day in the existence of this world. The proclamation. And thirdly, we want to think of participation.

What about you? What about me? Participation. And Jesus has something to say about that. And so we read on in this section. And in verse number 31, we read, Now is the judgment of this world. There's a crisis in the life of Jesus in going to the cross.

But there's another crisis. And it is with regard to the world or the people in the world. John tells us in chapter 3, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

The world is the people into which God sent his son. John says, Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. The world are the people surrounding Jesus in his own day.

The world are the people to which we belong ourselves. It's humankind as we live in our existence here on God's earth. And with regard to that world of which you and I are part, Jesus is saying, Now, in this church calendar event to which he is connecting his death, now is the judgment of this world.

[52 : 58] And judgment is a sifting process. And the kingdom of God is like that. And John speaks in Luke chapter 3 about separating the chaff from the wheat.

There is that sense of sifting. And for ourselves this evening and going forward, the gospel is doing that now.

There is a judgment. And the judgment is based upon the way in which you judge the events in the life of Jesus.

His life is death. And the way in which you judge the gospel. And the way in which you judge the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

There is a judgment. And right now in all of our thought processes, we are saying something about what we think about Jesus.

[54 : 09] We are either deciding to see him, or we have just nothing more than a passing interest. But the judgment is taking place. And you have to reckon with that yourself personally, and ask yourself, What am I thinking?

What is my real view of who Jesus is? And how do I view him as the precious Son of God, who is the only Savior of the world?

The judgment is happening now in your mind and in your thinking. And as it was true in the days of Jesus, as he went to Calvary's cross, that judgment which took place in their minds and in their thinking, worked out in their actions.

And they went to crucify the Lord of glory, because they would rather have him removed from their midst than to have anything to do with him.

The judgment. They were choosing whom they wanted to serve. And that's what the gospel always does to us.

[55 : 22] And in every Lord's Day, when we do hear the gospel, there is that sense of the claims of God upon our lives, there is that sense of our decision with regard to these claims, and where our decisions take us.

And our decisions will take us in perhaps opposite directions, although perhaps for fleeting moments such as our worship together this evening, our decisions may cause us to overlap, but there is something underlying when we don't embrace the Lord Jesus as our Savior, that leaves us, generally speaking, going in opposite directions.

And for participation, Jesus wants to lay claim upon the lives of all of the people, and he does so by the way in which he speaks from verse 26 onwards.

There are two things that Jesus is placing his finger on.

And the first of these is to follow him. And that means saying no to myself and saying yes to God. It means denying myself.

[56 : 48] It means taking up my cross and following him. And when Jesus tonight wants us to follow him and be his disciples, it's not to follow him to the cross in the sense of giving up our lives.

It's not, as we heard this morning, it's not to follow him and abandon the world. It is to follow him in the sense of taking up the work that he has begun.

And that's the challenge. That's the claims of the gospel. Jesus said to the disciples, As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.

And in this moment of judgment with regard to who Jesus is and what he has done, here is the claim of Jesus upon your life and upon mine, that he wants you to leave where you are, that he wants you to follow him, that he wants you to serve God the Father in the same way that he did, and to continue the work of being the light and the witness of God in the world as the church of Jesus, which he has purchased with his blood.

And the second thing is that if we do that, there is the promise, the Father will honor him. How is the Father going to honor you and I?

[58 : 18] If we take up the mantle, as it were, from Jesus, if we follow in serving God as he did, what does God promise? What is the honor? It is the honor of the glory into which Jesus himself is entering that at last we will step into that same glory and be glorified with him and because of him.

To serve is the call. To be glorified is the promise. And that's the claim of the gospel for us together this evening.

That's how we can participate meaningfully in all of the church events that God has put in place for our edification, for our building up in the faith, and for our growth and grace in order to serve him and be the light that we should be.

And in all of that process, Jesus wants them, as we close, he wants them to remember that Satan is cast out, that those who put their trust in Jesus, that Satan has been crushed and defeated, and although he is active, he doesn't have the victory, and we don't need to fear him in serving the Lord Jesus.

We put our trust in the one who is the captain, the victor, the one who has triumphed. And pulling the whole of the story together, and the way in which the gospel speaks of the claims of Jesus upon our lives.

[59 : 59] Jesus goes on to speak about the way in which if he is going to be lifted up from the earth, that he will draw all people to himself.

The Greeks were drawn to come to seek Jesus. Tonight, we may ask ourselves, do we feel the same drawing power?

The image of drawing is taken from everyday life where you lead somebody with a rope or a tether. It came from everyday life.

We don't see it like that when Jesus is using it, but we understand that there is the attraction, and there is the movement, and there is the coming closer.

And it's all because, not because people are forced to come and follow Jesus, because they are powerfully won over in their hearts by the sheer beauty of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.

[61 : 09] And tonight, as we prepare to remember the Lord's death, we ask ourselves, do we sense that drawing power? Do we sense that beauty of Christ?

That in the disfigurement and in the darkness of Calvary's cross, there's a beauty that's unspeakable and indescribable, that we can only see by faith that God gives to us, but can we see that beauty tonight?

In the words of the hymn, Jesus is the light of the world, God, beauty, it is beauty that made this heart adore you, hope of our life spent with you.

If we see beauty in Christ, he is irresistible, and he must be urged, and we must be with him. And we pray tonight, as we do prepare in the calendar of our own church life, to remember the death of the Lord, that we will know his beauty, and to know that it is that beauty that has caused our hearts to adore him.

And then if he says, remember, I can't wait to remember. If he says, show forth my name until I return, I cannot wait to show forth his name.

[62 : 32] And may God bless his word to us, and enable us, and encourage us to go forward looking to Jesus, trusting in him, and glorifying him in our obedience to his command.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Most gracious God, we rejoice in you tonight as the great God who is our Savior, in such a marvelous way as made yourself known, worked powerfully to rescue us from our sin and from our bondage, and to bring us to be the children of God.

Help us to be the children of God. Help us to live like the children of God. Help us to follow you and to serve you. And bless us graciously as we commit ourselves to you for all of the privileges of the days to come.

May you be in our midst, and may your face shine upon us, and may your word be richly blessed to us. Hear our prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen. The closing psalm is Psalm 22 and sing psalms.

Page 27, and we're singing at verse 27. Psalm 22 on page 27. We're singing from verse 27 to the end of the psalm.

[63 : 54] And I'll go to the main door after the benediction. The whole earth will remember him and turn towards the Lord their God. All peoples will bow down to him, the nations of the world abroad.

We stand to sing these verses to God's glory. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[64 : 57] Amen. To the Lord beyond And over patience is King The rich of all the earth will be And worship with an offering All those whose destiny is just Will happy Him before His throne They cannot keep themselves alive

For they depend upon Him alone What's day which Heard will serve the Lord And generations still to come Will tell a people yet unborn The righteous hand that He has done The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God, the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all now and forevermore Amen Amen