

# An Invitation

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 28 August 2022

Preacher: Rev Colin Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you, James. It's a privilege and a joy to be with you once more this evening to worship together the living God. Let me read to you just these few words from his word before we sing praise together to his name. Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. Let us worship him together, singing to his praise from Psalm 96a. Psalm 96a and sing Psalms, page 126 in our Blue Psalm books, page 126. Singing Psalm 96a from the beginning, we'll sing to verse 9.

Sing a new song to the Lord. Sing praises to his name and his salvation day by day that all the earth proclaim. His glory and his mighty deeds to every land declare how great and awesome is the Lord with him no gods compare. Psalm 96a, we'll sing to verse 9 to the praise of God.

Lord with him no gods. Sing a new song to the Lord. Sing praises to his name and his salvation day by day that all the earth sing a new song to the Lord. Let his salvation day by day that all the earth proclaim. Let glory and his mighty deeds to every day of the earth.

to every land declare. To every land declare. How great and awesome is the Lord. With him no gods compare.

All other gods are good and stone. The Lord may tell us high. All power and majesty are missed.

[ 2 : 47 ] All nations do. The Lord has guide. The glory that is due. All nations do. The Lord has guide. The glory that is due. All nations do. The Lord has guide. The glory that is due. All nations do. The Lord has guide. The glory that is due.

All nations do. The Lord has guide. The glory that is due. The glory that is due. The glory that is due. Holy that is true.

Glory and strength, and strength to God, and praise his name anew.

And turn his course with joy and ring, and offer him with you.

Worship the Lord in holy fear, all earth before him.

[ 4 : 08 ] Let us join in prayer together. Let us pray. Worship the Lord in holy fear, let all the earth before him bow.

Lord our gracious God, this evening from the outset of our time together, we would acknowledge your greatness, your majesty, your holiness. We acknowledge that you are altogether other, that you are our creator, sustainer, sovereign ruler, majestic and glorious in power and strength and wisdom and might.

Lord, we humble ourselves before you this night. And we know that that is the spirit and attitude and mindset of worship, to bow before you, our creator, and to say in our hearts and to acknowledge in our songs, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God.

And so we pray that you would, Lord, look upon us in favour this evening. That you would open your word to our hearts, and in your spirit open our hearts to your word.

That we would again acknowledge and study and reflect on the good news of Jesus Christ. This gospel of grace, this declaration that in him, your son, there is forgiveness and freedom, there is life and immortality, and it is ours through Jesus.

[ 5 : 46 ] For we know that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus, our Lord. And so we come, Lord, before you, and we humbly seek your presence and seek your face through Jesus.

It is all of him. He is our hope, our joy, he is our surety, he is our mediator, our intercessor, our redeemer, our saviour, Lord, King and Friend.

He is Lord of Lords, Lord of all. And so we would acknowledge tonight the good news of Jesus. He would lift up his name on high.

And we give thanks tonight that we know his name. And we have come to know that by day and by night he is with and before and around his people.

For the Lord has said he will build his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And so we tonight, Lord, would ask for your grace and strength to don the armour of God as we are called to do, to face the weak to come prepared fully in heart and mind and soul.

[ 6 : 57 ] By worshipping you aright this evening, Lord, we put you at the beginning of this week. And we ask in so doing that you would be honoured and that you would be pleased to dwell among us, Lord, and bless us with your grace.

That we would be strengthened with your might in our inner beings, ready and fit and willing to run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and completer of our faith, who for the joy set before him despised the shame.

Oh, Lord, our God, we think of the race set before us because of the cross set before him. And we ask tonight that we would maintain a sense of perspective as we go through life and as we run our course.

At times, Lord, we are imbalanced, we get selfish, we get impatient, we become demanding before you. Forgive us, Lord, for these times when we get things so badly wrong, when we forget our place, when we forget that you are almighty God, glorious in power and wondrous in might, amazing in grace.

Lord, at times we lift up our prayers to you in a spirit that is less than satisfactory, in a spirit that is perhaps demanding, in a spirit of seeking after ourselves.

[ 8 : 19 ] Forgive us. And Lord, lead us to seek your ways and to know your paths. Give us that teachableness of heart that we would say, here am I, Lord, send me.

And may we go into the week ahead conscious that you have set us here as signposts and missionaries, each and every one of us, missionaries in our districts and across our island.

And we thank and praise you, Lord, that there are so many of your people who are so called to be missionaries here on our own island, in our own districts. And so we pray tonight that as the word is preached here and across our island, that your people would be encouraged and nourished and built up, that we would be stimulated to go into the week ahead and to make Jesus known.

Sometimes, Lord, this is difficult to do. Sometimes we are uncertain of how to share our testimony, how to share our faith. Lord, give us grace and insight, understanding, wisdom, patience, tenacity and courage, for we need all of these things to make Jesus known.

And so we would seek to share the good news of Jesus Christ, the gospel of grace with those around us and beside us, in our homes, in our communities. And we pray, Lord, that as that witness unfolds this week, that you be pleased to bless the labors of your people, for it is not in vain that we labor in the Lord.

[ 9 : 44 ] We look to you, Lord, and pray that the gospel would flourish, that it would take root in hearts and lives, that men and women, and boys and girls, would be held and constrained in their awareness of their need of salvation and see in Christ the Savior.

For it is through him, through this man, that is preached the forgiveness of sins. This is the message of salvation that the Christian church has declared loud and declared strong and clear down through the generations.

May we continue to do so as we build on the labors of those who have gone before us. May we continue to be faithful to the task. May we be good soldiers of Christ Jesus.

May we endure hardship as at times we must. And may we look unto the one who has called us to run our race, sharing the message of forgiveness in him to all around.

We pray then, Lord, for your work here in Stornoway. We pray for James and Donna, for Calamurdo and Joanne and their families. We pray, Lord, that you would uphold them and keep them in their ministry here in the town.

[ 10 : 55 ] That you be with the elders and deacons and all those involved in Sunday school and creche and mother and toddler and all the activities that are ongoing, the work that so many put their hand to here in the congregation in Stornoway.

And may it continue to be an encouragement to all of us that we too, Lord, would follow this example and work as hard as we can where you have placed us to your glory and to the furtherance of the gospel.

We long for the day when we will see men and women and homes and families transformed by grace. So, Lord, we pray for conversions tonight. We seek conversions through the preaching of the word.

We ask that many in our districts would be brought under conviction of sin and there in Christ to find relief and peace and joy for in him there is forgiveness.

In him there is plenteous redemption. Lord, we ask for your blessing across our island and nation. We pray that you would raise up leaders who would be unashamed of the testimony of the gospel, unashamed of naming Jesus as Savior.

[12:02] We long for leaders who in the public square would reflect a love for Jesus and would have at heart an honouring of his word that they would be clearly people of prayer, people of faith, people who would set an example that they, Lord, would lead us by themselves being led by you.

We long for this, for an upturn in our nation's spirituality, for an outpouring of the Spirit to an extent that we could not contain it or even begin to imagine it, but that many in our land would come to know Christ Jesus for themselves.

We pray, Lord, that you'd remember us this time as a nation as we pray for our parliament, our leaders, our politicians. We remember our armed forces. We pray for the emergency services and the National Health Service staff, those who look after us and do so much on our behalf to keep us safe and to look after those who are ill and those who are housebound.

We remember carers who are under particular pressure and stress at this time. And we ask, Lord, that you would watch over them and bless them in the wonderful work they do across our communities in helping those who are housebound and unable to leave homes and unable to join us in worship, unable to spend time with family, unable to do so much because of ill.

Lord, we pray tonight for those bereaved. We pray for those, Lord, who have known sadness and loss in their lives and continue to feel that the weight of that loss.

[13:34] We near them, Lord, and grant them that peace that passes understanding. Be with them in your grace and in your mercy, we pray. And so, Lord, we ask tonight that you would open your word to us, that we would hear something of the wonder and splendor and scope of the gospel.

And all these things we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen. We'll turn again to sing to God's praise.

Sing Psalms in Psalm 65. Psalm 65, singing from verse 8. That's page 82 in our blue psalm books. Page 82.

Psalm 65, singing from verse 8. Those who inhabit distant lands with all regard your ways, where morning dawns and evening fades, you call forth songs of praise.

You tend the land and water it, you make it rich and good, as you ordain your streams are full to give the people food. Psalm 65, we'll sing from verse 8 to 13 to God's praise.

[14:43] Amen. Psalm 66, singing from verse 9.

When morning dawns and evening fades, you call for songs of praise. When morning dawns and evening fades, you call for songs of praise.

to take the land and water it, you make it rich and good.

As you ordain, your streams are full to give the people food.

the grace of the earth of the land, you heaven off the ground, you soften it with showers of rain and make its crops above.

[16:28] You end the year with truthfulness, your harvest overflow, the grass that flourishes again, the hills with madness glow.

The birds to stream with thoughts are cold, the meadows covering.

Above, he's there themselves with corn, they shout for joy and sing.

A song of gratitude and thankfulness for God's provision toward us, his grace poured out in that psalm.

We'll read together from his word, first of all, from the Old Testament and the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 40. Isaiah and chapter 40, we'll read from verse 18, and then we'll turn forward in our Bibles to the Gospel of John and chapter 3.

[18:11] Reading first of all, then, from Isaiah and chapter 40, and verse 18. A section that is all about the greatness of God.

To whom, then, will you liken God? Or what likeness compare with him? An idol? A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains.

He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot. He seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move. Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to dwell in, who brings princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth when he blows in them and they wither and the tempest carries them off like stubble. To whom, then, will you like compare me?

[ 19 : 35 ] That I should be like him, says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these. He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, my way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God? Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint and to him who has no mighty increases strength.

Even youth shall faint and be weary and young men shall fall exhausted, but they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. And turning forward to the Gospel of John, reading from chapter 3, the Gospel of John and chapter 3.

[ 20 : 56 ] We'll read the most famous of words in this chapter from verse 16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

And this is the judgment. The light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. But everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed.

But whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God.

Amen. And may the Lord bless the reading of his word to his own name. We'll sing again to God's praise before considering together this evening these words.

[ 22 : 08 ] And we'll sing from the Psalter, Psalm 130. Psalm 130. A song of redemption. A song of provision that is found in the Lord.

Psalm 130. Page 421 in our blue Psalm books. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. My voice, Lord, do thou hear unto my supplications voice.

Give an attentive ear. Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity? But yet with thee forgiveness is that feared thou mayest be.

We'll sing the whole Psalm to God's praise. Lord, from the dead to thee I cry, my voice for to the hear.

Come to my supplications, Lord, in an attempted ear.

[ 23 : 28 ] Lord, who shall stand in thine, O Lord, to spark in liberty?

But yet with thee forgiveness is the fear, the vainest being.

I wait for God, my soul doth wait, My hope is in His word.

For love, yea, love, for morning watch, My soul waits for the Lord.

On same or now, they have to watch, The morning light to see.

[ 25 : 04 ] Let Israel open the Lord, For with Him mercy's thee.

On grandiacal redemption, His name were found within, And from all His iniquities, He Israel shall redeem.

Let us pray together for a moment. Lord, our dependence upon you is complete, is total. We seek your face, and by your spirit we ask you would lead us this evening as we consider your word, this eternal truth contained in scriptures and provided toward us.

What gracious provision. Lord, we thank you that we meet tonight around the word of God, and that brings us to the God of the word. And as we worship and sing and pray and now study the

scriptures together, we ask above all that you be glorified, and all that is done and said here would be pleasing and acceptable in your sight.

Lord, draw near to us. And may we heed the Spirit's leading this evening, and may we respond to your graciousness. May we respond to the gospel.

[ 27 : 07 ] And may we go from here knowing it's good to be here. Bless, Lord, your word to us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, if you would open your Bibles at the gospel of John in chapter 3, where we read from together already, you will open your Bible at probably the most famous verse of the whole scripture.

John 3 and verse 16 is the Bible in miniature. It is the gospel in summary. And I'd like us to think about it this evening and to learn together what it has to teach us about the gospel, and above all, what it has to teach us about God.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

I wonder sometimes what people who have never been to Scotland actually think of Scotland.

They might be depending on a tourist or a relation or someone who's lived here, telling them what our country is like. They might take their impression from the internet, from a travel magazine, from a postcard, from TV, who knows?

[ 28 : 25 ] I just wonder sometimes if they envisage pipers and haggis in every corner, and the low mists and the songs that just float up and down our land.

I wonder if they ever think of the rain and the midges and all that stuff. And I sometimes think about that because I often wonder, more so, what people think about God without ever coming to his word.

And I think that's a massive problem in our own time, in our own land, this very evening. There are vast numbers of people tonight who have a concept of God, call it a theology of God, perhaps that's pushing things.

They have an idea, a system, a scheme, whereby they think of God along their terms, without ever coming to the word he has given us.

And that's something we must be on our guard against. Friends, this evening, if you have a concept of God, if you have an imaginary thought about what God is like, and you have framed your thinking in isolation to the word, then you need to stop now and come to this text with me this evening and think about what this tells us about the living God, the God of the word.

[ 29 : 48 ] And I would say also right from the off that we shouldn't understand the Bible or approach the Bible thinking that it's a book that is set before us to convince us about the existence of God.

That is not the Bible's focus and purpose. The Bible has not been given to us this evening to answer the question, does God exist? That question is not addressed by the Bible.

The question the Bible addresses is not, does God exist? But what is God like? And John 3 and verse 16 brings us right to the heart of the matter.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

It's a very high probability that most of us here know the words off by heart. So I approach a text like this that's so well known with a level of trepidation because it's a text that will always feature in any preaching ministry because it's so deep and wide and beautiful.

[ 31 : 00 ] There is so much here of God. There is so much here of the gospel that it would take many, many visits to this text to begin to just scratch the surface.

But it's good this evening to think about God. That's why he raised up his church. The church militant is here to profess faith in Christ and declare the unsearchable riches of Christ, to preach the cross.

And we will never exhaust that subject. We read from Isaiah in chapter 40 and verse 18 begins, To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness compare with him?

And then it says toward the end, Lift up your eyes on high and see. Who created these things? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name. This is God, the God of wonders, the God of power, almighty God.

Wondrous in power and glorious in might. And so we come to this answer he has given us. And we come humbly and carefully to listen to what God has to say to us in this most famous of texts.

[ 32 : 07 ] And above all, we seek to form our thinking of God and toward God based upon his word. So there are a few things to think of this evening.

I want to think with you first of all, from John 3 and verse 16, about what God has done. What God has done. God is a God of love.

Love flows from him. It is part of who he is. It is of his very essence. And as we read through various passages in the scripture, we come to see more and more of who God is and what God is like.

John, as he wrote of the love of God, particularly in his letters. And if I could just turn very quickly to 1 John in chapter 4, to consider just a few things there we're told here of the love of God.

In chapter 4 of 1 John and verse 9, in this the love of God was made manifest among us, revealed, confirmed, declared, that God sent his only Son into the world.

[ 33 : 15 ] There is the declaration and affirmation and confirmation of the love of God, so that we might live through him in his love for us.

He has sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. Such is God's love and its intensity and its perfection and its purity.

That God has made provision for sinners in sending his Son. And this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. That's why love must be at the center of any gospel preaching and gospel declaration, because it is of the essence of our God.

And in his love, he has provided his Son, for God so loved the world that he gave. And that's the key word in John 3 and verse 16 when it comes to thinking about what God has done.

[ 34 : 25 ] We speak of his character, his nature, being perfect and pure in love. And we see that in his love, he acts. It's not just words with God.

It's actions. And in his love, because of his love, through his love, he gave. God gave.

It's wonderful just to pause and think and reflect for a few moments about this, to think of the love of our God. His love is limitless.

And this is how one writer sums it up. The magnitude of his love is matched by the magnitude of his gift. The magnitude of his love is matched by the magnitude of his gift.

And when people ask you, what gift? What's God ever done for me? Remind them that he who did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

[ 35 : 35 ] He gave all. The magnitude of his love is matched by the magnitude of his gift. How many people in Stornoway tonight and across our land are thinking, well, what's God ever done for me?

What's God ever given me? Particularly when things go bad and when life takes a downward turn where there's a period perhaps of ill health or bereavement or financial strain and pressure, unemployment, when relationships break, when things get bad, when brokenness comes in, when there's addiction, people lash out at God and blame God and shake their fist at God and will have nothing to do with God and if ever he gets a passing thought as well, what's he ever done for me? And the tragedy about that mindset and that heart condition is that it goes straight past this open declaration of what God has already done. In love, he's provided his very own son.

You see, the gospel's not a bedtime story. It's not about a bunch of rules. It's not about a code of conduct for religiously minded people. The gospel, as we've already noted this weekend, it's not a message about religion.

It's a message of salvation. For I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God to salvation to all who believe. It's about salvation and being saved and how does it, how do we get there?

[ 37 : 04 ] It comes from God. It pleased God from all eternity to ordain and appoint Jesus as our mediator. It's paraphrasing our own confession of faith.

For God so loved the world that he gave. He gave his son. And the gospel tonight stands upon this historical giving of Jesus. We have to assert and maintain and defend that the one who from all eternity was with the Father, through whom all things were made and through, by whom all things are sustained, by whom all things were created, as a result of his being given, became flesh and dwelt among us.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. By him all things were created through him and for him. In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

How long have we got to unpack these words? A lifetime isn't long enough. The fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

This is our Savior. And this is our song. And this is who God the Father gave. Why? Because of his love.

[ 38 : 25 ] What God has already done. You see, he came to finish a work. He came to complete a task. He was given to do and to do that he gave himself to death, even death on a cross.

He took our place. He paid our price. If you this evening are asking, what's God ever done for me? Your answer is the cross.

And the response to your question is one that the gospel raises. What have you done about what God has done for you? Have you come to him?

Have you pled for his mercy and forgiveness? Have you sought his grace in your heart to take your sins away? Have you come to him and cried out the great New Testament prayer of confession?

Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. Because that's where we all begin. And that's the point where we all must come in order to reckon with God.

[ 39 : 29 ] We must come to him on his terms, by his appointed means, through our mediator, our redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

What God has done. I want to think secondly with you about this. What God is doing. Because this incredible text refers not just to the past but to the present.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

So if God has already done something, what is it God is now doing? And what God is doing is calling us to his son. This is my beloved son.

Hear him. This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And as John the Baptist said when he saw him, he couldn't contain himself. He couldn't keep the words in.

[ 40 : 27 ] He just blurted out, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And he does. And there are testaments to that saving work in here this evening.

Many, many people, men and women and boys and girls, who have come to know Jesus in their own hearts, who have prayed the prayer of faith, come into my heart, come into my heart, come into my heart, Lord Jesus, come in today, come in to stay, come into my heart, Lord Jesus.

This is a message of salvation. And that's probably why in John's writings, between his gospel and his letters, when we put them together, we find the word life 36 times.

It's a message of life. And look what he says here, that you should not perish but have eternal life.

Christ wants to bring us from death to life, from darkness to light, from estrangement to being children of God, not just bringing us into the palace, not just bringing us into the kingdom, but bringing us right into the family of God.

This is grace. Because, friends, in and of ourselves, what are we? We're sinners. Look at the last verse of this famous chapter, John 3 and verse 36.

[ 41 : 47 ] We have a solemn perspective and balance presented by God so that tonight each one of us can go home and be under no illusion, no uncertainty as to where we stand tonight before our living God.

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. Solemn words, searching words, words that I believe the Spirit will use this evening to seek you out and to stir up your conscience so that you would come to Christ yourself, that you would come and ask the question, what must I do to be saved?

What did Paul say? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. Believe. And there it is, the gospel in a moment of time as the Philippian jailer fell to his knees in desperation, knowing his heart and in his spirit something was wrong, sensing the void between him and God, sensing that he couldn't get across it himself, he cries out, what must I do to be saved?

Haven't we all done that, Christian friends? Yes, we have. That's what brings us to Christ, acknowledging our need for him, and so we come in repentance and faith, and we come to him, and we come to him in conscious awareness of his summons, his invitation to come in faith and believe.

And look what this verse says, whoever believes in him, there's the key word, when we think about what is God doing? What's God doing in Stornoway, in Scotland, across the world, now, this evening?

[ 43 : 33 ] God is saving those who come in faith to his son. And who are they? Here they're defined, whoever, whoever.

See, friends, we don't know. We only see the outward, but God looks at the heart. God knows tonight what we've done with this gospel, and what we've done with his son.

He knows that if we have responded in faith, He knows if we have stayed back uncertain, unconvinced, and unconverted, waiting for another time, waiting for that eternal tomorrow.

There's always tomorrow when it comes to the gospel, the great lie of Satan. Don't worry about this, that's fine, the gospel's a great message, the gospel has changed lives, and yes, it's true, but listen, you've got a lot to see to, you're only young.

Let's think about this at the next communion, let's think about it next Sunday, let's think about it when you talk to this one or talk to that one, any time but God's time, and God's appointed time for dealing with salvation is now, when in his spirit and in his grace and in his mercy and in his providence he presents his gospel to you, saying, come to me, and I will give you rest.

[ 44 : 59 ] this is the wondrous invitation and summons of Jesus Christ. The magnitude of his love is matched by the magnitude of his gift, and his gift is nothing other and no one less than his son.

So John 3 and 16 is vast in its teaching of the scope of the gospel, incredible in the lengths that God will go to.

It's tremendous in what it sets before us. First of all, in what God has done, and we can call that a statement of fact. He has given his son. Golgotha was 2,000 years ago, and now tonight we have the complete canon of scripture in a language and version we can read easily and follow.

Isn't God good? Isn't God gracious and loving and merciful? And that he's given us this message of his son tonight in a way we can sit in comfort, not worried about the police kicking in the door, not worried about being dragged off to prison, not under persecution, but in wonderful comfort and security with plenty provided for us, and we can reflect tonight for this half hour together on the wonderful gospel and provision of Christ.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Let's make it more personal on that.

[ 46 : 30 ] How about you? Because that's the essence and question of the gospel. God searches the heart and he's asking now this evening, individually, what have you done with my son?

What have you done with my gospel? What have you done with this knowledge that you have? What have you done with the Bible? What have you done with your need to be forgiven? Will you still stay away?

Will you still prevaricate, debate, argue? Will you still get into a remonstrance and a standoff with God? Will you rail against the Holy Spirit and continue to say in your hardness of heart, what's God ever done for me?

Or will you now, friends, stop and pause and think. He sent his son in love. He gave everything. And that's why as we go through the wonderful book of the Acts of the Apostles, we read of tremendous instances of clarity, of great theology, but great simplicity as well.

[ 47 : 41 ] Listen to Acts 13 and verse 26. Brothers, sisters, sons of the family of Abraham and those among you who fear God to us has been sent the message of this salvation.

And again down Acts 13 and verse 38. Let it be known to you therefore brothers that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you and by him everyone who believes is freed.

Isn't that wonderful that God has been so plain and clear and purposeful, tender and compassionate and gracious and ensuring tonight we'd be here for this short time, the end of the month of August 2022, the year opening up ahead of us and the week closing in already.

And God in his providence has appointed this time in this moment that the gospel would come before you again. that Christ in his claims over you would come before you again.

That our condition as sinners would come before you again. And again God is calling in his mercy, come to my son. Come to the one who was dead and now was alive.

[ 49 : 04 ] Come to the one who gave himself for you. The great declaration of Paul's earliest letter to the Galatians, the life I now live. I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me and to give himself for him what did he do?

He became a curse. That's what the cross was. It's an awful scene. It's a scene that we have to study and survey but friends let us do so in awe and wonder, humility, patience, tenderness.

The son of God, dead on a cross for the sins of the world. Him who was no sin. How is it put in Romans in chapter 8?

As Paul begins to unpack this, Romans 8 and verse 32, he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will they not also with him graciously give us all things?

The son of God given to death. and he died there to complete the work the father had given him to do in this eternal covenant, this covenant of redemption.

[ 50 : 19 ] So maybe you think that it doesn't apply to you, doesn't extend to you, maybe you think you're not good enough, maybe you think you've got time, friends, whatever you're lining up in your lines of defense to resist the gospel call in your heart, I would urge you to put them aside, listen to the words you've just sung together, and plenteous redemption is ever found with him, that's a wonderful Old Testament word, that word there, plenteous in the Hebrew is rabba, and it speaks of abundance, and a great abundance, so there's an abundance of what?

Redemption, and it's ever found with him, and from all his iniquities, he Israel shall redeem. What do we need to do? We need to acknowledge your sin, and cry out for forgiveness, and come to him for his mercy.

Friends, the Bible nowhere delutes or denies the awfulness of sin. That's what the world does. That's what cultural thinking does. That's what world leaders do who are not interested in the gospel.

They dumb it down, and they expect and demand the church to do likewise, to dumb down the teaching of the gospel, not to talk about sin, not to mention hell, not to raise the issue of judgment and God's eternal damnation that waits all those who turn away from him.

As the gospel says, whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. God is love and light and truth and mercy and wrath, and God's wrath will be poured out upon sin, and unless and until you come to Christ, and under his cover, and under his righteousness, the wrath of God remains on you.

[ 52 : 03 ] That's what the scripture tells us, and we'll be tied to church if ever we move away from this declaration of good news. I read the other day a nice story about Voltaire, can't claim to know much about the man, but I know he was a 17th century critic, thinker, philosopher, writer, and he had a great career of poking fun at the church and tearing away at the tenants of the church, and as one of history's best known atheists, he often stated by the time I am buried, the Bible will be non-existent.

A few years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society purchased his home and turned it into a print shop for Bibles. God will not be mocked.

God had the last word with that man, and we remember his arrogance, his atheism, his emptiness, and his hopelessness, his being bound in by this humanism and this atheism, this pluralism that said, anything but God, don't bring this message of personal salvation to me and a need for forgiveness.

How dare you? And what we have in Voltaire is this shaken fist, this arrogant denial of giving God his place in our hearts. And what does God do?

He comes to us again and again and again in his gospel and in his grace, saying, whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[ 53 : 38 ] And this is the last thing. What God has done, a statement of fact. What God is doing, a statement of promise. He's saving to the uttermost those who call upon him.

Then there's this last thing, what God will do. And this is a statement of intent. whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Now the Bible takes this teaching of what it is to perish before God. It's called the second death. It's called banishment in a place called hell.

John 3, 36 makes it clear, the wrath of God remains on him. It's possibly the most unpopular teaching in the New Testament today in many denominations that profess to be Christian.

They have Christian above their door. When you go inside, you'll hear none of this. Why? Because it's offensive. Because it's difficult.

[ 54 : 45 ] Because it's searching. Because it's not the God who's on a shelf in a box, kept there nice and neat for Easter and Christmas and baptisms and weddings and funerals.

This is the God of wonders, the God of might and splendor, who is holy and just and of pure horizon to behold in equity. A God who calls us to account and who tells us that the day is coming when he

will appoint the end of time and usher in eternity.

And that day is coming. We don't know when it will be, none of us do. And when the JW's and the Mormons and the rest of them ring your doorbell and start talking to you about fulfillment of prophecies, don't listen to them.

They don't know what they're talking about. They've created a scheme of teaching and thinking that's in isolation to God's word. Nobody knows the day or the hour. We just know it's coming. And we know that we need to be ready. And this is the ultimate question. Are you ready? Are you ready for that day? Because here we're told that God is coming again and he will judge the world in righteousness.

[ 55 : 50 ] Read through Thessalonians and the other letters where the apostle is moved to explain and express the teaching of Jesus. He came once, will come again to judge the world in righteousness.

It's a day of reckoning. It's a day of accounting when all will stand before the judgment seat. And there the question will be, what did you do with my son?

So friends, what God will do is the very essence of the gospel. It's what gives the Christian church her sense of urgency, her determination and mission, her clarity of thought in forming strategies and plans and developing courts of the church.

Why? To feel good about ourselves and to think, well, we've done well, haven't we? Let's wave the flag of our denomination. Not for a minute. It's not what it's about. We don't impress the Lord with these things.

Our sense of urgency comes simply in wanting people lost in sin to be saved. This is a message of salvation, not a message of religion.

[ 57 : 09 ] salvation. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He came in to seek and to save the lost.

I'll share with you a nice story I read just as we close of a sculpture, a sculpture that was made by Michelangelo. Michelangelo was consumed with self-loathing and self-criticism as he came to the end of his life and he rarely finished the sculptures he began.

All his finished works are from early in his career. He was free and expressed his amazing skills to sculpt marble things that today are still looked at in awe. But toward the end of his life he began to lose patience with himself and he was so critical he would destroy his works and he'd been working on three, four, five years.

One of them was the Florentine Pieta. It's a sculpture that as far as we can tell he lost patience with after working on it for a number of years and he began to smash it up with a hammer and then he left it.

Then some time later a young sculptor apprentice was brought in to restore the damaged work that the master craftsman had abandoned.

[ 58 : 20 ] And over time and with patience and skill and ability that masterpiece was returned to its former state telling the story that Michelangelo had started but hadn't finished.

It's a wonderful story of restoration and I think that's a theme that we find here in John 3 16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Christ would restore you to communion with God the Father. Christ would restore you to a place of favour and grace and blessing and peace. That's what Christ does to all those who come to him in faith to all those who come to him in repentance to all those who come to men and women and boys and girls in repentance and wholeheartedness and that's why we have these wonderful statements such as this in Romans 8 verse 1 there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Are you? Are you in Christ? Thanks be to God. But if you're not in Christ I ask you in this moment of silence we're going to bow together in prayer call out to him seek him and seek the forgiveness of heart that only Christ can effect by the spirit and in his grace to restore you from alienation and distance and hardness of heart to being made new and being made right with God may he bless us that this would be so.

Let's pray together for a moment. Our gracious God we bow in your presence we thank you that you have given us the gospel.

[ 60 : 28 ] Thank you Lord God that we have this word of life the promise of life in Christ Jesus tonight Lord we pray you would bless your word to our hearts that we might take your word into our

life and home with us this evening to reflect upon your amazing grace that you gave your son in love and he came willingly in obedience sins and died in our place and in our stead on the cross by his wounds we are healed.

We give thanks that we have a redeemer. We give thanks that we know him as our saviour and we pray now Lord God for your blessing to rest upon those this evening who may be struggling with a sense of sin who may be struggling with a sense of estrangement.

Lord open their eyes open their hearts draw them to Jesus there to meet with the one who is all together lovely the one who is the way the truth and the life in his name we ask it amen we'll turn to sing psalms this evening and we'll sing from psalm 34 in verse 7 to close our service psalm 34 and we'll sing from verse 7 we'll sing to verse 11 to God's praise the angel of the Lord surrounds and guards continually all those who fear and honour him he sets his people free come taste and see the Lord is good who trusts in him is blessed oh fear the Lord you saints with need you will not be oppressed psalm 34 verses 7 to 11 and at the end if you give me a moment just to get to the main door please that would be appreciated we'll sing from verse 7 to God's praise prayer for the Lord's you love the Lord is and guards pant mutually

All those who fear that God and Him He sets His people free From this town see the Lord is true Who trusts in Him is blessed O fear the Lord, you saints with me You will not be oppressed We of my own state grow weak and faint And hunger for their food

But those who wait upon the Lord Will not lack any good Come here, my children, gather round And listen to my word And I will help you understand How you may fear the Lord May the blessing of God Almighty Father, Son and Holy Spirit Rest on you and those whom you love Now and forever Amen Amen