

You Go and Do Likewise

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Date: 16 October 2022

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] And we're going to begin our worship singing Psalm 122, Psalm 122 in the Scottish Psalter. And that's from page 416, the tune is Free Church.

I joyed when to the house of God go up, they said to me, Jerusalem within thy gates, our feet shall standing be. Jerusalem as a city is compactly built together, and to that place the tribes go up, the tribes of God go thither. A psalm that celebrates, sings praise in regard to coming to be together to worship the Lord, but also speaks of the unity that God's people enjoy as represented there by Jerusalem, the city of the Old Testament times. So let's sing through these verses, the whole psalm. We'll stand to sing, I Joyed Went to the House of God.

I Joyed Went to the House of God, O what they said to me. Jerusalem when in thy gates, our peace shall stand outside me in thee.

Burst the Alejandro Magdalene Paulin and the Church of Jesus' fire to the Lord and the arching is strong to swan out and be blessed.

We'll be right back.

[2 : 16] To God's name thanks to him. For thrones of judgment, King the thrones of David's house, The host does keep me selected, roughest day.

Free, but Jerusalem, Leah, peace of Happy City.

Let them that love me and my peace have still prosperity.

Therefore I wish that peace may still within thy woes remain.

And ever may thy policies prosperity retain.

[3 : 49] Now for my friends and brethren saints, Please be in me, I say.

And for the hearts of God our Lord, I'll see thy good always.

Let's again join together in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord now in prayer. Almighty and gracious God, help us, we pray, to draw near to you once again as a gathered people.

And enable us to do so, O Lord, in due dependence upon you. We know what it is, O Lord, to gather together so frequently. We know what it is to read your word, to sing these psalms of praise. And yet again, O Lord, we confess our need of your own application of all of these privileges to us. And we pray that you would help us, O Lord, as we interact with your word once again this evening, to receive it as your word, to receive it in such a way that we will hear your voice speaking to us through it.

[5 : 19] We thank you, O Lord, for that privilege that we have of gathering together once again at the end of, approaching the end of this Lord's day. And we pray that it may always be our delight to gather together in such a way as we do now.

We have been singing of these words of the psalmist from so long ago. And they are still redolent, O Lord, in the experience of your people. And they live with us as an expression of the excitement and the joy that was given to him and to his people as he went with them to join with them in the worship of God.

And Lord, we pray that it will always be our joy to gather together as we do now in order to praise the Lord, in order to manifest his praises to the world in which we live.

And we ask that you would make us conscious, O Lord, of the privilege we have in doing so. And we pray that as we gather here tonight, your blessing will rest upon us.

We give thanks, O Lord, for the guidance your word gives us in respect to our drawing near to you. O you are God, and we know that we need to respect you in every way.

[6 : 37] And that as we draw near to you in worship, so also we need to come with reverence, with godly fear, even along with our joy and rejoicing in you.

And we thank you, Lord, that you have combined these elements in the experience of your people in their hearts and minds, so that they themselves are pleased, O Lord, to come to seek to draw near to you in this way.

Help us to exalt you in our thoughts, in our consideration this evening of your word. Enable us, we pray, to lift up your holy name as we worship you, but to do so in a way that would willingly and consciously ascribe all glory and honor and praise to you.

And we pray, O Lord, that your blessing will be with us as a congregation of your people during these days. We give thanks for the gospel amongst us. We give thanks for the support of your people of the gospel.

We give thanks, O Lord, in times of difficulty, financially and economically, that your people still support your cause financially as well as prayerfully.

[7 : 48] We thank you for this, and it encourages our hearts, O Lord, when we see people committing themselves to the further support of your cause in this way.

We thank you tonight for those who pray for the advance of your cause, for the advance of your cause in this congregation, as well as in every other congregation of your people.

We thank you for the remembrance that they have in prayer of the preaching of your word and of the preachers of your word, and of those who are elected to leadership in your church, for those who rule in your church as elders, for those who give of their time as deacons, for those, Lord, who come to support the prayer meetings, and for every way in which your people, O Lord, show their support for your cause and their concern that you be glorified, that your cause be advanced.

We ask, Lord, tonight, too, that you would bless us in all our activities in relation to the gospel itself, along with the services of worship. We thank you for the many ways in which people have come to commit themselves to meetings that involve our young people and our older age people as well.

And we ask, O Lord, that you would bless every effort made to the well-being of people to be advanced. And we pray that especially under the gospel's teaching, that we will come together as a people to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of Christ, and that it may be our concern daily to see ourselves advancing in this way.

[9 : 25] We pray your blessing for the forthcoming Over 55 Club. We pray for Duncan Norman as he heads up the organizing of it. We pray, Lord, that you would continue to own and acknowledge the club as it meets together.

We pray that there may be that mutual support of each other by those who attend. We thank you for the encouragement from the last meeting. We pray that that will continue.

We ask your blessing for the anticipated presbytery camp as well for our young people. Lord, remember them, Lord, as we pray for them and pray for their own further establishment in the things of grace, in the ways of the gospel, in the ways of following the Lord.

Gracious Lord, protect them, keep them, guide them in your ways. I give them not to turn aside through temptation from the world to those things which would make them depart from following the Lord and following his teaching.

And remember, any who have gone aside, O Lord, in recent times or recent years from the teachings of Christ. Oh, remember them, Lord, we pray, who once frequented the services of your church and no longer do so.

[10 : 44] Oh, gracious God, remember them, we pray, in your pity and mercy. And show to them, O Lord, that they're still welcome to come to join with your people wherever that may be.

Grant that you would graciously work in their hearts so as to reignite and renew in them that desire after yourself. Remember, we pray to those tonight who have various troubles in their lives, socially and morally and in family life.

Oh, remember them, we pray as well. We commit to you, too, those who are mourning the loss of loved ones during these days. We ask that you would bless them with your comfort and grant to them, Lord, that you would make them conscious of how near you are to those who call upon you in truth, that you have made yourself available through the gospel so that we might come and draw our strength and our encouragement from you.

We ask, O Lord, that your blessing will reach out into the world in which we live, that you would use ourselves and give us the further desire to be used by you as a people who would communicate the love of Christ to this generation we belong to.

We pray, Lord, that all who do serve you in this way and seek to act as witnesses to you in the world, in their homes, in their places of work, wherever they may be.

[12 : 14] We ask your blessing to follow every instance of witnessing to you and of seeking to commend you to this lost world in which we live. We thank you that in saving ourselves, your people always, Lord, look to that as evidence that you are able to do for others what you have done for them.

And this is our prayer tonight, O Lord. Reach out your hand, we pray, and take those who are presently living without a care for eternity and without trust in the Lord.

Oh, bring them, we pray, to realize their spiritual state and grant that you would, even tonight, reach out and work in hearts around us in our communities so that they may come to realize their need of the Lord himself.

Remember any tonight who hear the gospel but are not yet saved, whether it be in this building or in other gatherings of your church, we pray, O Lord, that your Holy Spirit will tonight work creatively in the hearts of those who are still not saved.

We pray that their familiarity with the gospel may not itself prove to be a barrier to the reception of the Lord. Grant that you would overcome whatever obstacles they themselves may place in the way, in the way of turning to Christ, in the way of receiving him gladly, in the way of turning to follow him in this world.

[13 : 42] We pray your blessing too for those, Lord, who are caught in various addictions, also working with them. We remember Davy and his work with Road to Recovery and every other related work that deals with such social problems during these days.

O Lord, remember them, we pray, and grant that all efforts made to be of help to those who have such difficulties and trials in life, that you would be pleased to bless them and bless the efforts, O Lord, that those who sincerely seek to bring the power of the gospel to bear upon such lives.

Remember us now, we pray too, as a nation. Remember our government here in Scotland.

Remember the government in Westminster. Remember them, Lord, at this time when there's so much uncertainty, so much turmoil in the political system.

We pray for our Prime Minister, whatever people may think of her election or of herself. We pray for her, we pray for the new Chancellor. We pray that there may be stability in the days to come, not only economically, but what we would love to see, O Lord, would be stability morally and spiritually. And we ask that you would turn us as a people to yourself, that you would graciously bless the witness and testimony of your people, especially those of them who serve in the parliaments of our nation and who bear testimony to Jesus, to the Lord and to his law, before their fellow members of Parliament.

[15 : 20] O Lord, bless them, we pray. Hear their prayers as they pray to you for direction. We ask that in all of these ways you would grant to hear our prayers this evening.

Do for us, Lord, we pray more than we can ask or think. For this is how you describe yourself as God in your word. We pray that it may be our experience likewise of the Lord's ways with ourselves. Hear us now, we pray. Cleanse us, pardon us, accept us. For Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to praise the Lord again this time.

We're praising him from Psalm 25. In Sing Psalms this time on page 29, the tune is rocking him. Psalm 25 and verses 8 to 15.

Because the Lord is just and good, he shows his path to all who stray. He guides the meek in what is right and teaches them his holy way.

[16 : 19] To those who keep his covenant laws, he shows his love consistently. For your name's sake, O Lord my God, forgive my great iniquity. Psalm 25 is verses 8 to 15 to God's praise.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Because the Lord is just and good, he shows his path to all who stray.

He guides the meek in what is right and teaches them his holy way.

To those who keep his crown and cross, he shows his love, consistently.

For your name's sake, O Lord my God, forgive my great iniquity.

[17 : 57] who then are those who fear the Lord.

He'll teach to them the chosen way, God's praise.

The king may prosper all their life, their children in the land will stay.

God's praise. God's friends are those to fear his name.

With them his covenant he will share. my eyes, my eyes, the only saw the Lord.

[19 : 09] He'll free my feet from every seer.

Let's turn now to read the Word of God. Tonight's reading is from Luke's Gospel, chapter 10. The Gospel of Luke, chapter 10, reading from verse 25.

Luke 10, at verse 25. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put Jesus to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said to him, What is written in the law?

How do you read it? And he answered, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

And he said to him, You have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

[20 : 21] Jesus answered, A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance, a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.

Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, The one who showed him mercy.

[21 : 28] And Jesus said to him, You go and do likewise. Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?

Tell her then to help me. But the Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary.

Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her. Again, we pray God will bless to us that reading of his word this evening.

Let's sing now to his praise further in Psalm 113. Again, it's from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 113. We'll sing the whole psalm. It's on page 393.

[22 : 31] The tune this time is Argyle. Praise God, ye servants of the Lord. O praise, the Lord's name praise. Yea, blessed be the name of God.

From this time forth always. From rising sun to where it sets, God's name is to be praised. Above all nations, God is high. Above heavens, his glory raise.

Psalm 113. To God's praise. Praise God, ye servants of the Lord.

O praise the Lord. O praise the Lord. Say praise. Yea, blessed be the name of God.

From this time forth always. From rising sun to where it is set, God's name is to be praised.

[23 : 56] upon upon nations, upon nations, God is high. Upon nations, God is high.

Of hence, his glory raise. unto the Lord. unto the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, that dwells, on high, who can't compare, himself that come, and the Lord.

He will be the name of God. He will be the name of God. He will be the name of God. **CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS**

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CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Singeth man to thee, of Sam's hammer, where full of joy, praise to the Lord give thee.

Let's turn for a short time this evening now again to Luke chapter 10. Luke chapter 10, and we're going to look at this passage from verse 25 down as far as verse 37. It's entitled there, The Parable of the Good Samaritan.

[27 : 00] It's very obvious from reading the Gospels that Jesus was a very great observer of the world around him, an observer of the creation, an observer of the natural world.

You see how many times as you read the Gospels he drew from what he found in the natural world to illustrate his teaching. But he was also a great observer of human beings, of human nature, of human tendencies, of human actions and human words.

And he wasn't just an observer. He was an observer that was able instantly to just weigh up what he was seeing and bring pronouncements in regard to it.

And as you find in this passage here, I think you can say that we could say that if it is a parable, it's entitled a parable, but there's nothing in the text itself that says it was a parable.

The characters and the characters and the actions and the thoughts as they were indeed set out here by Jesus were things which undoubtedly happened in the world of his day.

[28 : 12] And it may very well be that he had seen something like this himself or been told of this as an actual event. But in any case, it does show us that his observation of human nature, of human tendencies, was very much behind what he said here in regard to the way that he answered this lawyer and got this lawyer to think deeply about what he was really saying.

And you can see that verse 25 there, And when that word appears in the text of Scripture, it's there as a kind of spotlight to just say, well, here's something really important coming.

But I think it's also indicative of how the Lord was constantly being sought by various people, how he didn't have much time to rest as he went about from place to place.

And here we find that it came soon after he had expressed his joy, having sent out the disciples.

The 72 returned with joy, and Jesus himself rejoiced in spirit as he heard the report of the blessing of God through them.

But he didn't have time to rest after that. It's indicative of much of his life. He really was hard-pressed so often by various needs, by things that were brought to him, people that were brought to him, descriptions made to him about people.

[29 : 42] And tonight we can be greatly thankful that we have a Savior who appreciates what it is to hear about people's problems and to give his full attention to them, even when he was tired, even when he was tired, even when he didn't have time to rest.

It is the kind of Savior that he is, the kind of person he is, the kind of Redeemer God has provided for us, one whose interest in our well-being is so tremendous that it really overtook anything that he had with regard to himself and his own peace.

And so tonight, as we look at these verses and see that they fit into that category of people just pressing Jesus for reactions to what they were going to say to him, look first of all at the lawyer as he questions Jesus.

I'll give some time to that, and then we'll look secondly at how Jesus reverses the lawyer's question in order to correct his thinking. And in fact, he doesn't just correct it.

He turns it completely the other way around, and there's so much that we can learn from that as well. But here is, first of all, this lawyer who stood up and put Jesus to the test saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

[31 : 03] Now, a lawyer here wasn't the kind of person that nowadays we describe as a lawyer, not a solicitor or a defense lawyer or prosecutor or something like that. This would have been probably a scribe, one of the scribes who belonged to the teaching element of God's people in those times, who would teach the people regarding the laws of God, and very often, of course, the laws that had been added to the law of God by the scribes, the Pharisees.

And here was somebody who was himself a religious man, a religious man as far as his own official place in the system was concerned. And so he knew his Scripture, the Old Testament, of course, at that time.

And he came with this question to Jesus, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? Now, as far as a reference to eternal life is concerned, this is an important question for him.

What shall I do to inherit eternal life? Although, of course, the emphasis on his doing is something that we note just in passing, that we don't do things in order to inherit eternal life, and yet there are things that are required of us that we may come to possess eternal life.

We need to have placed our trust in Jesus, to accept him, to receive him, as he's offered in the gospel, so that we come, therefore, to possess through the Lord's blessing that eternal life.

[32 : 29] But anyway, here is this lawyer, this scribe. Let's take it, he's a scribe. But you can see he's not coming with a real desire and a thirst to learn.

He's come to Jesus to try and catch him out. He's come to Jesus to see how he will answer this question. He's come really, as we say, as it's put there in verse 25, he came to put him to the test. You see, here is this crowd listening to Jesus. Here is this man. He stands up all of a sudden and he says, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he thinks he's going to catch Jesus out.

He's really taken with how Jesus is going to answer this question, and he's going to assess Jesus on the basis of how he answers his question. Of course, Jesus knows that very well.

So, he's not sincere in the way that he puts the question or the reason he puts the question to the Lord. Now, it's always a very dangerous thing to think that you can somehow get one over the Lord, that somehow you can actually do things in a way that just overcomes his ability or his word.

[33 : 40] Here's a man who's in a very dangerous position. He's religious. He knows his Old Testament. He knows his Bible at the time. But he doesn't love the Lord in his heart.

He has no love for Jesus. He has no commitment whatsoever to him. He's just come to test him. There's always a very dangerous thing for us to have a lot of head knowledge which is good in itself.

But then to think somehow that we can arrange our own lives, that we can somehow just sidestep the demands, the requirements that Jesus lays before us and the things that he requires of us, and somehow think that, as it were, we're going to then manage by ourselves or manage in a different way to the way that Christ's demands are set out before us.

You know tonight that that's not going to work. And as you go through this passage tonight, we'll see that more and more this man is being boxed into a corner and eventually comes into a cul-de-sac, a theological cul-de-sac, where Jesus actually forces him or brings him to just completely reverse his thinking.

We'll see that in a moment how he does it. But you see what Jesus does. He says, what is written in the law? How do you read it? And he answered, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

[35 : 14] And it's important to notice that Jesus actually sent him to the Word of God. Here was the man coming. What must I do to inherit eternal life? What does Jesus say?

He says, go to the law. Go to the Word of God. Go to God's revelation. That's where you'll find an answer to your question. And that's again an important matter for ourselves.

One of the things that distinguishes us as a Reformed church, a church that really prizes Reformed theology, that goes back to the Reformation, that goes back beyond that, to the apostles indeed, and to the teaching that arises out of the New Testament.

And as a Reformed church, one of the central planks of our well-being and our being as a church is the truth of God as we have it in a way that here we're giving some, the centrality to the gospel that the gospel requires.

The Word of God is basic in our understanding, basic in our thinking, basic in our application to what life is and what life is about. That's how you must always think about yourself and answering questions regarding yourself or questions from others.

[36 : 33] What do you think? The first thing you think of is, now how am I going to deal with this? The first thing you think of is, what does the Bible say? Not what does the minister say? What does the kirk session say? Or what does such and such a church say?

What does any of those say? Even if they're very sound in what their thinking is about. First thing you say is, what does God say?

What does the Bible say? And that means, how is it written? What is it written? What is written there? Jesus is saying, what is written in the law?

And His response is correct. His response is correct up to the point of answering the question. He says, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

In other words, He went back to the law, to the likes of Deuteronomy chapter 6, where God had said to Israel, hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one. You shall love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might.

[37 : 37] And you could add to that the likes of Leviticus chapter 19, where responsibility to your neighbor is in different categories set out there in Leviticus 16. So, you could say that this man, the scribe, was really answering very accurately and very knowledgeably from the Scriptures that he knew probably so well.

And Jesus is saying to him, you have answered correctly, do this and you will live. Is Jesus saying to this man, you've asked about how, what you will do to inherit eternal life, and now I'm saying to you, do what is written in the law and you will have eternal life, you will live.

Well, Jesus is not actually commending salvation by works. Jesus knew very, very well that this man was not able to keep the law any more than anybody else, apart from Jesus himself, to the perfection that was required if he was going to be saved by his own works.

There's nothing wrong in the principle that says, if I was able to actually observe the law of God in all its requirements, all the time, every moment of my life, for as long as I live, then salvation would be on that basis.

But we can't. We're disqualified. We're disqualified very obviously. because it don't take long from the time you get up in the morning to realize that you haven't gone very far into the day before you've sinned in your thoughts or in your actions, in your speech.

[39 : 10] And we confess our sins, therefore, on a daily basis, as Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer. Forgive us our trespasses, our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

In any case, this is what Jesus said to him. You have spoken correctly. Do this, and you will live.

And then the next thing you find is the man actually replies, desiring to justify himself.

You see, you can see a lot about the character of this man, first of all, from the fact that he's putting Jesus to the test, that he thinks he's going to outsmart Jesus or catch him out.

And then you can see more about his character in verse 29, but he, desiring to justify himself, desiring to justify himself, standing in the presence of the Son of God, thinking he's going to catch Jesus out.

So he says, well, who is my neighbor? Well, none of us is going to be able to justify ourselves in the presence of the Lord.

[40 : 22] And this man is a telling example to us of how we are not to conduct ourselves in the presence of God. You're not going to outsmart the Lord. You're not going to catch him out.

You're not going to box him into a corner. It'll be the other way about, as we'll see with this man. So tonight, don't argue in your own heart against the Word of God.

Don't argue against it when it tells you things that you need to know and are required to do in order to come to possess life. Even though it is true that you're not going to be able to produce that eternal life by your own obedience to the Word of God, to the law of God, there are many, many things, of course, that Jesus, as the Lord says to you, are required of you that require you to alter your thinking, that require you to alter your way of life, the way that you go about seeing yourself and seeing the world and seeing eternity.

And you know, sometimes, indeed, until the Lord Himself changes us, until we have our minds changed, we're going to argue against that. We're going to argue against the Scripture that tells us, that insists, that today is the day of salvation.

Today, if you hear His voice, don't harden your heart. But, and yet, we'll still say, no, I'll leave it tonight. There'll be other times. That's arguing against God.

[41 : 51] That's arguing against the wisdom of God. That's taking the mind of Jesus and saying, no, that's fine, that's okay, that's you saying that, but at the moment, I'll do it this way.

I'll do it my way. I'll follow the path I'm on. And, please look at yourself tonight if you're here and you're not yet in Christ, you're not saved.

I'm not saying this accusingly to you. I'm not, I hope, presenting the truth to you tonight in a way that seeks to be judgmental. That's not my business.

That's not my place. That's not my right. That's the Lord's business. But I am seriously saying, if you find yourself tonight in your own heart, secretly, just arguing against the argument of God Himself, the requirements of Scripture, the requirements of Jesus, just think about what that is saying.

It's really effectively trying to justify yourself against what the Lord is telling you. And that's really what this man was doing. He, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, and who is my neighbor?

[43 : 04] You see, he's walking into a theological cul-de-sac. There's only going to be one winner here in this confrontation, and it's not going to be this man. It never is.

Whenever you have a contest between any of us and Jesus Himself, there's only going to be one winner. And it won't be you, and it won't be me. It will always be Him.

He's the Master. He will always come out on top. He will always have the last word. His word will always prove to be true. So, there's the lawyer questioning Jesus.

He's sent to the Bible. He's sent to the Scripture. He comes back seeking to justify himself with another question, and who is my neighbor? So, how does Jesus then deal with that?

How does He answer the second question of the man? Well, He does so by effectively reversing the lawyer's question and turning it against Himself.

[44 : 07] See how He does that. He told them, first of all, about these three men. Jesus said about a man, rather, and three others in the story as well.

A man went down to Jericho from Jerusalem, and he fell among robbers. He stripped him. They beat him. They departed, leaving him half dead. And then along came a priest. He was going down that road.

When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came, he saw him, passed by on the other side. It wasn't that they didn't notice him, but they just decided, that's not for me.

I'm going to just pretend I didn't see that. I'll walk past, go to the other side of the road and just make my way that way. And isn't it interesting how language that the Bible uses has made its way into our ordinary everyday language and expressions.

You know the expression to pass by on the other side. Well, this is where it comes from. You pass by on the other side, you notice something that really requires your attention, and you pretend you didn't see it unless you've seen it, and you say, well, that's somebody else's business.

[45 : 13] I'll just keep going. I'll just mind my own business. I won't stop over that. That's where it came from. And it's here given by Jesus these three passers-by, and the first two very deliberately by Jesus, described in the way He does, you'd expect the first two, one of them or other of both of them, to have stopped and attended to this man.

After all, the first person going by was a priest, a religious man, somebody who actually had business with the temple of God, with the worship of God, with the sacrificial system of God. He passed by on the other side. And then there's a Levite, the tribe that were given particular authority to be in charge of the worship system of the temple, passed by on the other side. Didn't stop, pretended he didn't see. And then came a Samaritan. Of course, Jesus knows very well that many of His listeners, many of the Jews of the time, despised Samaritans.

And to actually hear Jesus saying, a priest passed by without stopping, a Levite passed by without stopping, but a Samaritan passed by and he stopped and he looked to this man and he attended to him in his need.

[46 : 38] That would have been grossly offensive, speaking about a Samaritan in that way to the Jews of Christ's day. And so, Jesus is aiming at the prejudice against the Samaritans, but He's using this, He's observed this obviously many times, I'm sure, in His own daily experience.

So, He's using this in order to get to the point that this man, this lawyer, was asking this question and to respond to the question, who then is my neighbor?

And when Jesus responded after telling him the story about these three men, these three different people, this is what He describes.

He describes a Samaritan as giving of his time, of his money, in order to care for this poor man who had been left half dead by the roadside, having been mugged on the way as he went towards Jericho.

Then Jesus, you see, comes and says, Now then, which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

[47 : 54] Now, there are a number of things in that that I can just try and highlight briefly. There is, first of all, very much an emphasis on you think. Which of these do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

And you see, what Jesus is saying there is, never mind what your contemporaries think, never mind what your peers think, never mind for those who actually share your present views, what they think, and how much you may be in the majority with regard to these things.

Jesus is saying, I'm asking you, what do you think? And you see, that's so important too under the gospel, isn't it? Because we're often carried along by what our peers think, what our fellow age group think.

And of course, that's true of all ages, but our concern particularly is for our young people, the pressure that our young people are under to conform to worldly teaching, to immoral teaching, the peer group pressure, the social media presence, and pressure that they're put under, all of that, you see, has an effect.

And our prayer for them to be established in the ways of God is taking account of that, is for that very reason. Because so many of them, sadly, are carried along by whatever the present thinking is with regard to how you treat people, what you say about people's condition, people's illnesses, people's mental health, whatever else, are carried along in the tide of peer opinion and peer pressure.

[49 : 37] But for us as Christians, for all who are God's people, it really comes down to this. What is your thought? What do you think?

What's your mind on this? You can cast your mind back over history and right through in the Middle Ages from the earliest, well, from way back before the Middle Ages themselves, right through to the 1500s.

What did you find? You found the church throughout Europe and the peer pressure of Roman Catholic theology and the Pope especially heading up the system where the pressure was for people just to conform to that and just to accept that.

That's what the kind of life that you're required to live. That's what God is doing, speaking through the church. The church is saying this, therefore it must be true. Until you find Reformers standing up here and there, culminating, I'm sure, with Martin Luther who stood up and very bravely said, no, that's not true.

People are not saved by indulgences, by the prayers of priests or whoever. People are saved through faith in Christ. People are justified in receiving, by receiving Christ as their Savior.

[50 : 51] They are justified by the grace of God, not by the excellence of human works. Peer pressure is shattered once the truth really comes to engage with people's minds.

Here's this man and Jesus is saying to him, which of these three do you think prove to be a neighbor? And that's really addressing me and is addressing you tonight.

Because the Bible and the Lord through the Scripture and through the preaching of the Gospel is not really asking tonight about you, asking you about what does your peer group think, what does your neighbor think, what does your family think, what does the majority of people in our society think about these issues.

The Lord is concerned to know what do I think. What am I making of his Gospel? What are my opinions about who Jesus is and what a good, sound, moral, believing life should look like?

That's what he's saying to us tonight. What do you think? You give me, God is saying, your opinion. How are you using my truth?

[52 : 03] But you see what he's doing. Secondly, he's not just saying, what do you think? But you see the way he's reversed the question. Here's the man who came, who is my neighbor? In other words, he's saying to Jesus, you tell me who my neighbor is.

You tell me who I should love. You tell me who I should not love. You make the differentiation. You make the distinctions. Then leave me to choose who my neighbor is. Then I will know who I should regard as my neighbor and who I should regard as not my neighbor.

And therefore, I don't need to bother with them. That's his mind. That's his thinking. And what Jesus is doing is completely reversing that and is saying, it's not a matter of working out who your neighbor is, but who you are going to be a neighbor to.

He's not saying to, Jesus is not saying to him, look, you've got to just pick and choose who your neighbor's going to be. That's not the primary point at all. Before you start thinking of who your neighbor is, you have to start thinking of yourself, who am I going to be a neighbor to?

Wherever I find need in the world, how can I be a neighbor to that person? How can I be a help to that person? How can I come alongside that person, get down alongside to where he or she is and try to help them in their predicament?

[53 : 18] That's essentially what Jesus is saying. And you see how that's completely changed the tenor, the thinking, the direction of this man's thoughts. Who do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

Jesus, you see, is not allowing us to think, let me just think for a moment, Lord, and work out who my neighbor is, who there is that I need to attend to and who it is I need not.

The Lord is saying to you, to me tonight, I need you to be a neighbor, to be a helper, to be somebody who ministers to the need of others irrespective of who they are.

It doesn't matter the color of their skin, it doesn't matter their background, it doesn't matter where they've come from or what they've fallen into by way of lapses in their life.

To be a neighbor means to take account of human need and to do everything that we have open to us to actually seek to help in that situation.

[54 : 30] Of course, that is a massive challenge. But the church's, the application to that, well, let's look at the, before we come to the application, let's look at the response of the lawyer himself.

He said, the one who showed him mercy. In fact, the older translation is, I suppose, the one who showed him mercy as if it's very reluctantly coming to the acknowledgement that Christ has caught him out instead of him catching Jesus out.

The one who showed him mercy. Isn't it interesting? Jesus had mentioned the priest, the Levite, Samaritan. He mentioned the Samaritan by name, the Samaritan, gave him that label.

But interestingly, when the lawyer replied, he didn't say, well, it must have been the Samaritan. He just can't bring himself to use the word. He's got that much prejudice in his mind against the idea of a Samaritan actually coming to outdo a priest and a Levite.

So he just says, well, the one who showed him mercy. No, Jesus didn't take him up on the fact that he didn't use the word Samaritan. He simply said to him, well, you go and do likewise.

[55 : 47] Now you can trace the thought patterns of the Lord and of this lawyer all the way through the passage.

And as you reach the conclusion of it, it's obvious, isn't it, that Christ is the master of the situation. That this man, for all that he tried his best to outdo Jesus and to try and box him into a corner, he must actually come to acknowledge that Christ was right and he was wrong.

And Jesus says to him, well, now you've said that, you go and do likewise. He has to actually become, if you like, a Samaritan in practice as described in what Jesus had said to him.

Now the application of that is obviously to us individually, but it's also important to us in terms of the church's ministry of mercy, ministry of doing practical good wherever the Lord has set us.

And it's certainly something we need constantly to be bearing in mind and reviewing as a congregation. That we give ourselves to mercy ministries to help in every way in which we find people in need, in need of our help.

[57 : 12] God, and whatever that help will be and however we can contribute to it practically, financially, prayerfully, the Lord is saying to us, well, you go and do likewise.

Don't leave it to others. Don't pass by on the other side. Don't let us be a congregation that I know we're not, but we have to remind ourselves of how important it is that we don't pass by on the other side and simply say, well, it's a large congregation, I'll just leave that to somebody else or somebody else is more qualified.

No, we should say, well, this is what my Lord requires of me. How can I actually help with this? How can I contribute to meeting the need that I see, whether it's in my congregation or in my community, wherever it is?

Mercy ministry is part of the church's work and witness in the world. Somebody once went to Africa as a missionary and kept stressing theology all the time.

Of course, nothing at all wrong with that. Theology is a great thing and we can't do without it. But one of the people said, well, you know, actually, sir, our people listen with their stomachs.

[58 : 37] Our people listen with their stomachs. In other words, he was saying to them, he was saying to the missionary, look, it's fine to give us this fine theological teaching and all that you're setting out by way of teaching, but the practicalities must not be neglected.

Give our people the food. Try and actually arrange food for them. Then they'll listen better. They listen with their stomachs. And that's practically how we have to regard the world out there.

The world out there is not going to listen to you and to me spouting theology, not at least for a start. But they listen to acts of mercy, acts of kindness, acts where we see people in need and that whatever we open to us, we actually then seek to alleviate that need for that person.

There are many ways, of course, that we can do that. I was just going to mention one thing you're going to hear about more in days to come and that is that the charity called Safe Families UK are now established in Stornoway.

Safe Families UK do a tremendous work throughout the whole of the UK. We have some personal knowledge of their work in Scotland through our son-in-law, Andy Murray, who is a manager in the Lothian area of Safe Families UK.

[60 : 04] I'm not mentioning it for that reason. I'm mentioning it because I met just the other day with the volunteer manager, Catherine MacDonald, who's been appointed a volunteer manager

here in Stornoway of Safe Families UK, the Scottish branch of it.

And what is very obvious is that by and large, people like myself, and I'm sure maybe many of yourselves, are sheltered in some way from the plight of people who are indeed in dire straits financially or materially in our community, who have and do experience poverty, lack of resources, lack of help, lack of encouragement, lack of support even in a physical way.

And Safe Families are concerned, there'll be more publicity given to this in these weeks ahead, I'm sure, but Safe Families are concerned to engage volunteers to come alongside, to be trained by them.

It doesn't cost anything. It doesn't cost a congregation anything or an individual anything, just some time. And some time to get alongside people who maybe don't see anybody else from day to day. Young single mothers struggling with children or people with other different needs to them, but that's the kind of world we live in. That's the kind of community difficulties that we have.

[61 : 39] And I'll just mention it just now, but if you're in a position to be a volunteer for Safe Families, I really would commend that to you.

And please don't think that this is in some way contrary to the preaching of the gospel because the passage we've got before us lends itself very much to me asking myself and you asking yourself, well, how can I fit into that?

How can I actually help in my own community with those people who are in need if I don't have access to them personally, myself through my own personal direct intervention? Can I do it through the likes of Safe Families?

The answer to that is yes. And so let's really regard that as a great opportunity as it opens up for us and as it opens up for us that we too can go and do likewise as Jesus said to this individual.

And may God bless his truth to us then to that end. We're going to conclude this evening by praising God. Psalm 112.

[62 : 48] 112 in sing-sams. That's from page 151. And we're singing verses 5 to 10. A tune is Highland Cathedral.

Good is the man who gives and freely lends to his affairs with justice he attends. Surely a righteous man will stand secure. His memory forever will endure.

Though bad news comes he will not be afraid. His heart is firm. He trusts the Lord for aid. He will not be alarmed. His heart holds fast. He'll view his force in triumph at the last.

He freely shares his riches with the poor. His righteousness forever will endure. And so on. Due to the end of the psalm, these four stands. As good is the man who gives and freely lends.

Amen. Good is the man who gives and freely lends.

[63 : 48] To his affairs with justice he attends. Surely a righteous man will stand secure.

His memory forever will endure. His memory forever will endure. Though bad news comes he will not be proudly.

His heart is firm He will not be alarmed. He will not be alarmed.

His heart will fast. He will be his force in triumph at the last.

He freely shares his riches with the poor. His righteousness forever will endure.

[65 : 08] The Lord himself makes all his ceremony He gives the strength and he pray and he pray and he pray and he and him The wicked see in this world feel this pain He'll majesty thou soon will waste the way The wicked and their grace will come to turn off They ever will enjoy what they have sold This evening I'll go to the door to my right after the benediction.

Now may grace and mercy and peace from God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be your portion now and evermore. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.pers hal