

Peter The Fisherman Catches A Coin!

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[0 : 00] We do gather together virtually, but nevertheless we gather together, as you all well know, to worship God together. And we're glad to be able to do that through the medium that is provided for us online.

We're going to begin our service tonight singing in Psalm 100. That's in the old Scottish Psalter version, Psalm 100, on page 362.

And that's the first version, the long metre version of Psalm 100. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell.

Come ye before him, and rejoice. Know that the Lord is God indeed. Without our aid he did us make. We are his flock, he doth us feed. And for his sheep he doth us take.

We sing the four verses of the Psalm. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

[1 : 13] Him send with mirth, his praise forth tell. Come ye before him, and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed. God indeed.

His gates with praise. Approach with joy, his courts and two.

Praise the Lord and bless his name always. For it is seemly so to do.

For while the Lord our God is good, His mercy is forever sure.

[2 : 54] His truth at all times firmly stood, And shall from age to age endure.

Now let's read from God's word, a short passage from the book of Exodus in the Old Testament. Second book in the Bible, the book of Exodus.

Exodus, and we're reading chapter 30, verses 11 to 16. Exodus chapter 30 at verse 11.

The Lord said to Moses, The Lord said to Moses, When you take the senses of the people of Israel, Then each shall give a ransom for his life to the Lord when you number them, That there be no plague among them when you number them.

Each one who is numbered in the senses shall take this, Shall give this half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary. The shekel is twenty giras.

[3 : 59] Half a shekel as an offering to the Lord. Everyone who is numbered in the senses from twenty years old and upward, Shall give the Lord's offering. The rich shall not give more, And the poor shall not give less, Than the half shekel when you give the Lord's offering, To make atonement for your lives.

You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel, And shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, That it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the Lord, So as to make atonement for your lives.

Amen. May God bless to us that reading of his own word. Let's engage now in prayer. We're going to call upon the Lord in prayer. O Lord, our gracious God, We thank you for all that you are, As you describe yourself in your word to us.

We would not want you to be different to what you are, In any aspect of your being or of your works. Help us, O Lord, we pray to accept you for what you are, As you describe yourself as we experience you, In the experiences of our lives.

Help us to give thanks to you, To pray to you, to depend upon you, Even in those things of your providence, That sometimes mystify us, perplex us, Cause us pain and distress.

[5 : 24] We thank you that you are in charge. That nothing has changed with your throne, With your authority, with your wisdom, With your love for your people. We bless you tonight, O Lord, That as we come to worship you, So we do so with a willing heart.

We do so out of a recognition from your word, That you are the only true God, The only one who is to be worshipped and served, The only one who rules over all things of this creation.

We bless you, O Lord, That we are the work of your hand, That you have made us in the beginning of the creation, When you set forth your own mind and purpose In the creation of mankind, And when you placed him in that environment of the garden, That we read about in your word, An environment that was so fitting and so suitable, So full of everything that was required and needed, For a contented, happy life in fellowship with God.

Lord, we thank you that, Although we fell from that state of perfection, And brought upon ourselves the sin and the death, And the curse that affects the world, The creation at which we live, We thank you that you did not abandon us.

Although you drove us out from your presence, As leaving the garden of Eden symbolises, For us. We bless you, O Lord, That through your own love and through your grace, You gave your Son to be a redemption prize for us.

[7 : 01] And through his death on the cross, We might again come to know you as our God and as our friend, Might come back into living fellowship with you, And come to enjoy that eternal life, Which begins here in this world, As you give it to your people, But which is enjoyed in its fullness only in heaven.

Lord, we thank you tonight for the privilege of coming before you to worship you. Help us once again to estimate it aright as our privilege. Help us, Lord, we pray, Never to think of it as our right by ourselves, For it is only our God-given right by grace.

We thank you that it is such, That you give that right to all those who have come to trust in you, To be the children of God, To call themselves by your name, And to avail themselves of your promises. We thank you tonight, O Lord, For every good and perfect gift that you give us from above. We know, Lord, that we enjoy your gifts in a fallen world, That we ourselves are inwardly corrupt and sinful, And yet we enjoy your gifts, So that we can come through your grace to progress onwards, Through the sanctifying work of your Spirit, Until finally you present your people perfect again in holiness, Before you in heaven.

Lord, help us tonight to recognize that these few moments of worship, Do themselves contribute meaningfully towards that process, Towards that progress that your people know of, As your Spirit works within them.

[8 : 43] And we give thanks tonight that we form part of a great number of people, A great multitude that no one can number, Not only in this world, But also above in heaven.

For your one church, O Lord, Is a church that is united together in the bonds of your Spirit, United together in the person of Jesus Christ. And we give thanks, O Lord, For belonging to that one church, For belonging to that unity of the body of Christ.

And we give thanks, O gracious God, For the many privileges and many blessings, That you bestow upon your people, In union with your Son.

Help us then, Lord, We pray tonight to draw near to you, Believing that you are a rewarder of those who diligently seek you. We give thanks that your word assures us that you are.

We pray that by faith we may draw into our own experience, The blessings that are stored up for your people. And yet help us, we pray, To realise that our exercise of faith, As we seek to have it, Anchored within the person of Jesus, Who is above on the throne of heaven.

[9 : 55] To see that we are not so much drawing him toward us, As drawing us towards him, And towards you as our God, So that we draw near to God, Through the exercise of our faith.

We ask your blessing to be with us, In all our circumstances as a people, We pray for ourselves, Lord, As a congregation, As we continue to wait upon you, During these difficult times.

We pray that you would extend to us, The grace of patience and perseverance, Help us to look to you daily, Help us to look to you in our own lives, Personally, In our family life, In all our family circles, In all that we seek to continue to do as a congregation, In our life and witness and testimony to, Being a congregation of your people.

We pray that you would hasten the day, Lord, When we are able to gather together once again, In our buildings, To gather together physically, As we once did. Lord, We pray that you would come to curb, The extent of this virus throughout the world.

We thank you for the vaccines, That have been provided, And are continuing to be rolled out, Among us as a people. We thank you for that provision. We pray, Lord, That you would make them effective, For we depend upon you, It is in you we live, And move, And have our being, And all the things that are provided for us in this life, From the food we eat, To the vaccines that we use, Are dependent upon your own power, And upon your blessing, And upon your grace, To make them

effective.

[11 : 35] We ask, Lord, That you would help us to continue, To depend upon yourself, Help us to entrust ourselves to you, As we pray for ourselves, We pray for the whole world, In which we live, For it is our privilege to do so, You have laid upon the hearts, Of your praying people, All of those, Oh Lord, In this world, Who inhabit this earth, Whatever circumstances, As people are in this evening, We pray for their welfare, For their well-being, For their spiritual well-being, We pray that they may be brought into your kingdom, That they may come to know you, As their saviour, That they may be delivered, From all false religions, From everything that would, Prevent them, Lord, Coming to know you, And receive you, As the living saviour, As the way, The truth, And the life, Who alone brings us, To know the Father, And we pray a blessing, To those who are ill, Those of our own number, That we know, In hospital, Or in care homes, Or at home, Bless them,

And bless those who care for them, Bless all, Oh Lord, Of our medical staff, As we give thanks, Once again, For their provision, And we pray, That you would bless them, As they go about their work, And we pray, That you would protect them, That you would, Grant that their, Their service, Will be, Of continued blessing, To many others, Bless those recovering, From COVID as well, We know that many, Oh Lord, Have a long process, Of recovery, When they have been, Affected badly by it, Though many have, Only mild symptoms, Yet we pray for those, Whose health, Has deteriorated, Even on the road, To recovery, Yet we pray for them too, We ask that you bless, Those who have lost loved ones, Either through COVID, Or other, Ways in which their life, Has ebbed away, In this world, Bless all those, Who mourn, Bless them, We pray as they weep, Over loved ones, No longer with us here, And we ask that you would, Bless them with your consolation, With your comfort, With your presence, We pray that you would, Help us to see, In the light of, The COVID, The COVID pandemic, And every other providence, That reminds us, Lord, Of eternity, Help us, We pray to see, How short our days, In the world are, Even if we live, To be a century old, They are as nothing, Compared to eternity, And help us, To measure their duration, Against the endlessness, Of that world to come, Help us, We pray to be wise, And to salvation, Through faith, That is in Christ Jesus, Continue then we pray, To bless us as a nation, Bless those who are, Over us in government, We pray for them, Continually and bless them, We pray tonight as well, We ask for those, Who have lost their employment, For those who are uncertain, About their own employment, In days to come, We pray for individuals, We pray for companies as well,

We pray for, The hospitality industry, In which we know, Many working, And at this time, On furlough, We ask that you would bless them, And help them, We pray to, Have their employment restored, If it please you soon, And we pray for those, Who have, The management, And the ownership, Of such businesses, And who may feel, Uncertain about, What is the future, Grant them your blessing, We pray, Grant your blessing too, To many charities, Who at this time, Have to, Go without the usual, Fundraising means, Lord, We pray that you would, Continue to provide for them, Especially those of them, That have to do with, So many vital areas of life, Grant your blessing, To encourage them, Lord, We pray, And help them, To raise funds, And whatever, Means are available to them, That are proper, And fitting, Grant Lord, That you would, Grant this for ourselves too, In the support, Of the gospel, And we give thanks,

For all who give, So willingly, To maintain the gospel, And its preaching, And its witness, In our communities, And so continue with us, Now we pray, Hear our prayer, And accept us, And pardon our many sins, Cleanse us, We pray and receive us, For Jesus' sake, Amen.

[15 : 58] Well, A word to the children, At this point, Last week we looked at, Jesus in the Psalms, And that's what we're going to continue to do, To this evening, Last week we looked at Psalm 45, A verse there, Tonight I'm looking at, Psalm 22, And if I just read the first verse of the Psalm, My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, From the words of my groaning? And you'll know yourselves, Children, I'm quite sure that, The first part of that was, Spoken by Jesus, On the cross, When he was reaching, The worst of his sufferings, These were describing, The worst of his sufferings, My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?

Because we have to remember, That the death of Jesus, Was more than his physical death, It was more than just, His soul and body, Being separated, As we know, Is indeed part of death, And what death means, But death, Is actually spiritually, Our separation from God, And I think I mentioned earlier, Prayer, That our separation from God, Is something that you see, When God sent Adam

and Eve, Out of the garden, Out of the garden, Of Eden, He drove them out of the garden, They had sinned against them, They had brought this curse, Upon themselves, Upon the creation, In defiance of God, And what he had said to them, Not to do, Not to eat of the tree, Of the knowledge of good and evil, When they did, That's when they became, Fallen sinners, And that sin has passed, To us as well, And as we'll see tonight, In our sermon, And I hope you're listening, To the sermon too,

I'm sure you will be, We're looking at something, Very like that, How God dealt with our sin, In that way in which Jesus died, And Jesus on the cross, He cried out, In this, These words, Of Psalm 22, My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?

Because death really, Is being separate from God, And what God was doing, Through the death of Jesus, Was dealing with that separation, That we had caused by our sin, So that we would be brought back, Into friendship again, With God, But to do that, Jesus needed to experience, The pain of paying for our sins, By that death of separation, From God, And that's what we sing in Psalm 23, And this would have been, Our communion time, Over this weekend, And normally, This morning, We would have had, A communion service, In the church, And very often, We sing, Psalm 22, At our communion time, Because it is so appropriate, Because they were used, By Jesus himself, When he, Described the pain, That he was going through, The pain of that, Spiritual death, That he was experiencing, In his soul, My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me,

[19:04] So it's to do with, The death of Jesus, But in a wonderful way, The psalm also, In the way that it finishes, The way that it ends, Deals with, Christ's victory, Over death, You see, The way that, Here in verse 30, And 31, It talks about, People coming, To serve the Lord, In the future, From the time the psalmist, Was actually writing this, They shall come, And proclaim his righteousness, To a people yet unborn, That he has done it, And I just love these words, At the end of the psalm, That he has done it, I don't know, If you sometimes watch, On television, Some of these, What do they call it, Ninja warrior games, Where people have to go through, That kind of assault course, With all kinds of obstacles, And if they fall off, They fall into water, Into some gunge, Or something or other, And a lot of people, Don't finish the course, Because they fall off, At some stage or other, But if you're following someone, And you really want them, To get to the end of the course,

And they're getting nearer it, They're coming to the point, Where they have to climb up, Usually to the top platform there, And there's a big red button there, And they're just about, Reaching that button, And as they reach that button, They finish the course, And they press that button down, And you can say, Yes I've done it, That's what Psalm 22 is saying, About Jesus on the cross, He has done it, He has actually paid, The price that God required, The price of his own death, On the cross, He's done that, And he's risen from the dead, He came out of the grave, To stand above death, As the defeater of death, As the conqueror of death, So both in the death of Jesus, Who paid as God required, And in the resurrection of Jesus, Who came out of death, So as to give us to that victory of resurrection, When we trust in him, You can say, He has done it,

He's done it, He's finished the course, And now he's alive, Forevermore, So it's to do with the death of Jesus, And the Psalm also has to do with, The victory of Jesus, The suffering of Jesus, The death of Jesus, And at the end of it there, The victory of Jesus, And that's what we worship, That's what we remember, When we worship God, When we worship Jesus, We do that, Remembering his death, Giving thanks for his death, Giving thanks for his victory, Over death, And as we'll see in the sermon, Giving thanks too, For the way that he lives with his people, That he comes into our lives spiritually, And comes to live in our hearts, By the Holy Spirit, My God, my God, Why have you forsaken?

We're looking for Jesus in the Psalms, Psalm 22, Is a Psalm in which you find so much about Jesus, His sufferings, His death, But his victory as well, So let's say, And pray the Lord's Prayer together, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors, And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil, For thine is the kingdom, The power and the glory, Forever.

Amen. We're going to read again, This time it's in Matthew's Gospels, Chapter 17. Matthew chapter 17, And we're beginning at verse 24.

[22:55] Well, we can read from verse 22, Well, it's verse 24, To the end we're looking at. Let's read from verse 22. It's about Jesus and the disciples.

As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.

And they were greatly distressed. When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the half shekel went up to Peter and said, Does your teacher not pay the tax?

He said, Yes. And when they came to the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax?

From their sons, or from others? And when he said, From others? Jesus said to him, Then the sons are free. However, not to give offence to them, go to the sea, and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel.

[24 : 05] Take that and give it to them, for me, and for yourself. Again, we pray for God to follow with this blessing our reading of his word.

Actually, we've all seen pictures, or drawings, or cartoons, of somebody fishing, and as the rod comes up, on the end of the rod, there's an old boot, or a bit of wreckage, or something like that, that the hook has actually gone entangled in, under the water.

And, very often, it's fish that come up, sometimes not, sometimes it's just rubbish like that, if you get tangled up, in something on the bottom. And, Peter was a fisherman, of course, and Peter very well knew, how to fish successfully.

But, this was probably, the strangest catch, of a fish, that Peter, had ever caught. Peter was, aware of Jesus, miracles, and, bringing in, many fish, when the sea seemed to be empty, at another time. But, this is just one fish, and it's a very unique fish, in the sense that, it has something, in its mouth, that Jesus tells him, he needs to go, and give to those, who are gathering, this temple tax.

[25 : 24] Jesus said to him, go to the sea, and the first fish, that you catch, on your hook, when you open its mouth, you'll find a shekel. Take that, give it to them for me, and for yourself.

What a strange incident. Now, we're taking that, as a miracle, although it has features, that are different, to most of the other, miracles that we've been seeing, so far, and God willing, we'll see as well, in the future.

When you do look at, the circumstances here, the circumstances are, that those who are around, collecting, the tax for the temple, the tax for the temple, was a half shekel, per person.

And as we read, in Exodus 30, it went back to that time, when Jesus, when God, commanded, that this, half shekel, a tax be gathered, from everyone, 20 years old, and upwards.

Didn't matter, if you were rich or poor, the half shekel, needed to be paid. So the rich, couldn't boast, that they were able, to give a lot more, and the poor, couldn't really find, an excuse, by saying, well I've got much to do, with my money, and I can't afford, to give it to the, to the temple, to keep up the work, of the temple.

[26 : 36] No, God said, half shekel is for everyone, aged 20 years, and upwards. What is that about? Why are we, why are we, reading that, in this, in this passage, in Matthew?

And why does Jesus, deal with it, in such a strange looking way, as to pay, for this shekel, between himself, and Peter, so that a half, covers each of them, in what they need, to give, to the temple.

Well, the, as we read in Exodus, the temple money, this tax, this particular tax, it was to do with, atonement money, it's called. In other words, it was a reminder, to Israel, of their redemption, and of their need, of redemption.

Redemption, means being, being bought, by a price. And God, was teaching them, that their life, which was, needing to be, bought back, spiritually, their living, spiritually, as lost, as we are ourselves, lost sinners.

And God, was reminding them, this is, an atonement money. They weren't, buying it back, themselves, wasn't because, they paid this money, literally, that God, was then saying, well if you pay me, this money, I'll give you, your spiritual life, back.

[27 : 52] No, this was actually, just to represent that, it was a kind of, of picture for them, of the way, that God, was going to do, something remarkable, through Jesus, especially, this pointed forward, as we'll see to him, as a reminder, of redemption.

When you come to the incident, here are these people, that are specially, set up to collect, this tax, in Jesus' day, they went about, and when Jesus, and the disciples, came to Capernaum, they met these people, these collectors.

And so they went up, to Peter and said, does your teacher, not pay the tax? And of course, Peter being Peter, as quickly as, as Peter usually did, sometimes, of course, that got him, into trouble.

Here is Peter, saying immediately, yes, oh yeah, yes, my, the teacher, the master, the teacher, the rabbi, Jesus, he pays that as well, yes, of course he does.

And then I love the bit, don't you love the bit, where, then when they came, into the house, Jesus spoke, to him first. You can just, picture what's happening here, Jesus, is really keen, to talk to Peter, about this, and about the way, he answered the people, who were collecting the tax.

[29 : 04] And you can almost see him, just putting his arm, around Peter's shoulder, and said, hello Peter, I've got something to say to you, let me just go over this with you. And, he puts the question to Peter, what do you think Simon, from whom do kings of the earth, take toll or tax?

Is it from their sons, or from others? And Peter then said, it's from others. And then Jesus said, then the sons, are free.

And what he means by that, is that, he himself, as the son of God, strictly speaking, is exempt from paying, this temple tax.

It's the price, that symbolizes, the price of redemption. And Jesus does not need, to be redeemed, because he's not a sinner. And yet, he pays this tax.

And he pays this tax, to show, that it's not, so much about himself, in need of redemption, at all, but that in union, with Peter, he is going to enter, into, the price, of redemption, because he's going to die, the death, that's going to redeem, Peter.

[30 : 17] And he's going to do it, as we'll see, with Peter, joined to him spiritually, as we'll see the meaning of, union with Christ.

So this is actually, about Jesus himself, this miracle. It's highlighting something, about Jesus himself, that's very precious to us. But it's highlighting also, Jesus in union, with Peter, and therefore, in union with his people, the principle of union, or being joined spiritually, to Christ.

So let's just lay out, for a wee while, the structure, of the study, that I'm going to follow, this evening. The two main headings, first of all, this is about, Jesus paid, the price of redemption, and that we'll see, is his death, as we said to the children.

Jesus paid, the price of redemption, by his death. And the two points, we're looking at under that, is that first, he's the Lord of the temple, and secondly, there's an important consideration, as well, in what he says, in verse 27.

So that's our first point, on the two subheadings. Jesus paid, the price of redemption, he's the Lord of the temple, but there's another important point, he mentions. Second heading, is that Jesus paid, the price of redemption, in union with his people.

[31 : 41] In union with his people. And the first matter in that, is to take this phrase, these few words, that end the chapter, for me and for yourself.

Take this and pay it, for me, and for yourself. That's why Jesus is giving him, these instructions, to take this shekel, and pay it to the tax collectors, because it's for me, and it's for you.

And we'll look at two, important applications of that, in our ending of the study. So first of all, Jesus paid, the price of redemption, by his death.

That's what's represented, by the redemption price, of the half shekel, going all the way back, to Exodus 30. In other words, what Jesus is saying, as we said, is that, the sons are free, means that he, as the owner of the temple, whose temple is this?

It's the Lord's temple. He is the one, who is actually, in charge of the temple. It's his worship, that goes on in the temple. He is the one, who can claim the temple, as his own.

[32 : 47] Remember what was said, back in verse 5, of this chapter, as the Lord, was transfigured there, the voice from the cloud said, this is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.

And of course, Peter overheard that. And now he's actually, receiving this teaching, from Jesus. Well, if the kings of the earth, don't charge their own sons, tax, it's charged to others, then in regard to the temple, the owner of the temple, the son of God, is also free, he's also exempt, in himself, from paying this tax.

He does not need, to pay a ransom sum, a sum, symbolizing redemption. He doesn't need, to be redeemed. But he pays it.

And that opens up, a wonderful strand, through the gospels, and through the New Testament. And indeed, it's in the old as well, not so clearly. And that's as we'll see, in the second point, our union with Christ, and the way Jesus, in denying himself, laying aside, as it were, in Philippians 2, terms his own rights, as the son of God, and placing himself, in the lot, in the place of his people, to bear their sins, and to bear the penalty, of their sins.

Let me just remind you, of how that's in Matthew's gospel, in chapter 3. Remember in chapter 3, that Jesus came, to John the Baptist, to be baptized. Came from Galilee, verse 13, to the Jordan, to John the Baptist, to be baptized.

[34 : 23] And in a very similar way, to what you find, Peter doing in John 13, with the foot washing. When Jesus began, to wash the disciples feet, Peter objected. Are you Lord, washing my feet?

Here is John the Baptist, saying, I need to be baptized, by you. John would have, prevented him. He couldn't really understand, how it was, that Jesus, needed to be baptized, by him. But Jesus answered him, let it be so now. Let it be so here and now. For thus it is fitting for us, to fulfill all righteousness.

Then he consented. Now what is that saying to us? It's saying that, Jesus by his own self-denial, the Son of God, as he came into this world, as he placed himself, under the law, as he by his baptism, showed, he's conjoined to his people, in a predicament of their sins.

So he says, yes, strictly speaking, I don't need to be baptized. I don't have sin, so that baptism, symbolizes my washing from sin.

[35 : 32] But nevertheless, now, this is how it has to be done. Fulfilling all righteousness, all righteousness, is by means of, my obedience, my putting myself, under, these regulations, these laws, these rights, these ceremonies, so that I can show myself joined to my people.

That's what it's saying. You see, God required human beings, you and I, to make amends for sin. Required you and I, not just to try and make amends in a general fashion, but to undo everything that sin had caused.

And as we said to the children, our sin especially, led immediately to our separation from God, represented, shown by God, driving Adam and Eve out of the garden.

He didn't just politely say, will you please leave? He drove them out. He said, get out, be done, be gone. Because sin to God is so serious.

The disruption of that fellowship with God, that sin had brought about, is such a huge, huge thing. The anger of God, the wrath of God against sin, is so difficult for us to conceive of, because it's just such an immensity.

[36 : 57] And here is Jesus saying, in giving himself to this life of obedience, even including the death of the cross, what you could not do as human beings, because you were disqualified by sin, God took the debt to himself.

And he sent his son into the world to pay the price of our sin. The very thing we could not do, though God was requiring it of us. And by virtue of the fact that the son of God is also a human, a human being in every sense, fully human, sinlessly human, but fully human.

So God accepts the sacrifice of Christ and his death on the cross as our contribution to make amends for our sin.

And when you come to believe in Christ, to trust in Christ, that death that he died is for you, as if you had died it yourself. And that resurrection with which he rose is as if you had risen yourself. Because in him, that's how God treats you. That's how God sees you. You remember in Mark chapter 10, Mark chapter 10, how there was something of a squabbling again amongst the disciples.

[38 : 23] It wasn't the first time. And in chapter 10, we find two of them, James and John, coming to ask Jesus, give us to sit, one at your right and one at your left in your glory.

And of course, Jesus answered them that it wasn't his place to do that, to give that to them. And when the other 10 heard it, they were furious. They were indignant at James and John.

And of course, this idea amongst them was always disputed who of them was to be the greatest. Which of them would be the greatest. And this is how Jesus answered such petty squabbling.

How did he answer it? He said, whoever will be first among you must be the bondservant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. You see what he's saying? To give his life as the redemption price for his people. You know, this is one of the main reasons why we must know our theology.

[39 : 29] It's not just so that we'll have a head knowledge of the person of Jesus and the death of Jesus and all of these things about Jesus. Wonderful that is. You see, what Jesus is saying is all of that huge theology is for practical purposes.

And the better you know your theology, the more you apply it to the practical issues of life. Who is it that's greatest in the kingdom of heaven? It's the one who's most like Jesus in his obedience.

The bondservant of all. The one who's willing to say I consider others better than myself. I put their interests ahead of my own.

That's why the death of Jesus, the theology of the cross is so challenging and at the same time so exhilarating. Because there is Jesus paying the price of our redemption by his death, in his death. But applying it as in Mark 10 to our even most practical purposes in this life. He's the Lord of the temple. He doesn't have to pay the price strictly speaking.

[40 : 37] But when in the position of the servant of the Father, the Redeemer of sinners, then he pays it. And he pays it with his death.

That's what we would have been remembering and what we have remembered many times in the Lord's Supper. This do, he said, of the bread that was broken on the cup. This do in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you show forth the Lord's death until he comes. But there's an important consideration before we leave this first heading.

There's an important consideration here, he says, however, not to give offence to them. That's again the tax collectors. Go to the sea and cast a hook, take the first fish.

And what Jesus is saying by that is it's not really about his own reputation. But he doesn't want those tax collectors to stumble spiritually.

[41 : 38] He doesn't want them to say, well, if he's not paying the tax, how can we understand him saying he's the son of God, he's exempt from the tax, all that's going to really mean is that they'll say, well, he's not bothered about the temple, he doesn't care about the temple, and yet he's going about saying that he's the Messiah.

Jesus is so concerned that nothing is done that causes people to stumble in their view of God, in their idea of God, in their faith, in their coming to place their trust in God.

and as Jesus is prepared to lay aside his own rights as the son of God and deny himself, so this is what he's saying, lest so as not to give offence to them, you go and do this.

And of course, you remember very well that it was Peter, when he heard this and had other experiences of Jesus with him, then he came to write this first letter of Peter that we find in the Bible, and one of the things about Peter is, we said earlier how much he got himself into trouble for just acting too quickly and not thinking things through, but look at how he learned, that's really the secret of spiritual life and progress, it's not that you never make mistakes, because we all make them, it's what you make of these mistakes, it's how you deal with these mistakes, it's how you learn from these mistakes, and not only that, it's how you help others then from what you've learned, because Peter wrote this, when Jesus was reviled, he says, you have been called to this, because he suffered, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps, when he was reviled, he did not revile in return, when he suffered, he did not threaten, but he continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly, that was

God the Father, for you and for me that's an important consideration, may we never cause anyone to find fault with God through something we've said or done, to cause them to stumble, let's remember the words of Jesus here, however, not to give offence to them, you go and do this, that's the first point then, Jesus paid the price of redemption by his death, secondly, Jesus paid the price of redemption in union with his people, this is the phrase at the end of the passage that we're dealing with, give it to them for me and for yourself, remember the tax for the temple in Exodus 30 was for a forfeit life, a life that we had forfeited, we had no right any longer to eternal life, you know what it's like when somebody fails to keep up the payments on their mortgage, well they forfeit the property, the bank takes it over, this building society takes it over, it's forfeit, it enters into somebody else's possession and a forfeit life is the life that through our sin and fall had lost the right to live eternally and that's what's being restored through the death of

[44 : 54] Christ, the payment for this is his death, he met the price of it, he met the demands of God, he's united to his people as he comes to the cross and he's united to his people as he comes out of the grave on the day of the resurrection, it's the principle of union with Christ that Peter is being told about here, give it to them for me and for yourself, he didn't just say you'll find a half shekel in this fish, take that and give it to them and cover your debts for the temple, no he says the shekel is for me and for you, it's for us conjoined, it's for the two of us together, it's for us united and you know that Paul frequently mentioned union with Christ as such an important theological and spiritual concept, Romans, you'll find a Romans there in chapter 6 verse 5 where you find if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection

like his, going into that just to mention it as showing union with Christ,

Ephesians, you find a chapter 2 as well where Paul is writing to the Ephesians, but God being rich in mercy, remember he's talking about those who are dead in trespasses and sins, forfeit life, but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses has made us alive together with Christ, you see that means in union with Christ, not only though that by grace you have been saved and he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places, in other words the theme of union is there right through, he brought us alive in union with Christ, he raised us up in union with Christ, he has seated us at God's right hand in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in other words such is the wonderful union between Jesus and his people, when he died they were united to him, when he rose from the dead they were united to him, when he went up to take his place in heaven where he was exalted by God to the right hand of the majesty on high, his people were united with him, now that doesn't mean we do not need any more to think about trusting in him or believing in him, we'll see that in a minute but what it says is, what it means for this moment is this, that the death of Jesus exactly met God's demand, God's requirement for the forfeiture of life to be undone and it also secondly met exactly our need of that life at the same time, what God demanded, what we needed, it's both of these are there fully in the death of Christ and that's why it's important to know that he died as the price of redemption in union with his people, there's this wonderful spiritual union with Jesus but now I'm going on to say two important applications and the first of these brings us to the need for faith, the fact that we know that Jesus has died a death in union with his people, that they were united to him on the cross, doesn't mean that automatically therefore I now am saved from the moment I come into the world, it doesn't mean that at all, it means yes, there's that union with him, but practically and personally

I need a living connection with Jesus for myself, that's the first point, first application, a living connection with Jesus and if you know your catechism and I'm commending this to the children, you'll find some good modern English catechisms as well, one by Tim Keller for example, the catechism is so important because it brings such beautiful summaries of important truth to us, brings the things of the Bible, summarizes them and puts them in the form of questions and answers and in catechisms 29 and 30, how are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, how do we come to really have that in our possession, partakers of it, we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ by the effectual application of it to us by the Holy Spirit and the next one, how does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ the Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ by working faith in us, in our effectual calling, that's the next question, what is our effectual calling, you see, wonderfully logical, these questions proceed, but this is what it's saying, we're made partakers of it because the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, works faith in us, produces, creates faith, by which we're enabled to believe in Christ, to trust in Christ, to place ourselves in debt to Christ, to trust in him fully, and just as we lost our live connection with God in our fall in the Garden of Eden, so we have it restored through the death of Christ, and by our faith coming to receive him, and accept him as our [50 : 46] Saviour. That's so important, this living connection with Jesus. Is that where you are?

is that where your life is anchored? Is that what empowers your life? Do you have this living connection with Jesus?

It's different to saying, I know much about Jesus, I know the Bible teaches about Jesus, and I accept these are things that God has revealed, and this Bible is the word of God. Well, just imagine if I decided to go and buy a new computer, a desktop computer, a really powerful top spec thing, went to place wherever it was being sold, and was advised of what the best one was that it could buy, that it could afford, and it had top spec, all the memory, loads of memory, loads of capacity, brilliant working speed, and so on.

And then I took it home and I set it down, started reading about it, and I began to understand a wee bit more about how it worked, and so on. There's one thing that needs to be done before that computer will do the thing that it's designed to do, it needs to be plugged in.

It needs to be connected to power, the power that makes it work, and then the components jump into life. Well, you see, it's the same for your life and for mine.

[52 : 12] This living connection with Jesus is what we lost in our fall when we sinned against God, and that's what's restored in our redemption, in the salvation that he has died to procure for us.

And so when you come to being regenerated by God, to coming alive as Ephesians chapter 2 put it in union with Christ, when the Spirit of God comes to work faith in you, what's happening?

You're getting plugged in. You're getting plugged into the source. Remember this as well, please. we mustn't think that because it's the Spirit of God that creates, that works faith in us, that that's the source of faith where it comes from.

Remember, it's you and I that are required to believe. It's you and I that do believe. The Spirit doesn't believe for us. God doesn't believe for us.

Jesus doesn't believe for us. Our parents don't believe for us. no one trusts in Christ for us. We have to trust in him ourselves. And it is the Spirit of God that enables that so that we are joined to him practically to follow on from the joining spiritually that took place in union with Christ in his death and resurrection.

[53 : 38] That's the first important application. Make sure that you're plugged into life. That you're plugged into God and to Jesus. So spiritual life is what marks your life too.

The second important application as well as a living connection with Jesus is a loving companion in Jesus because he is the one who once he comes into your life stays there.

Psalms 23 the Lord's my shepherd. That's Jesus being described in prophecy as the shepherd of his people. Even though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.

Why? Because you are with me. Your rod and your staff comfort me. When Jesus sent the disciples out in Matthew 28 to actually make disciples of all nations what did he assure them of I am with you to the end of the age.

I am with you to the end of the world. And you know tonight it's such a precious precious thing isn't it that you and I by trusting in Christ can take these words into all our circumstances it's for me and it's for you.

[55 : 02] You know sometimes we think we are at times in some circumstances very perplexing very difficult things that perhaps we weren't expecting whether it's an illness or a providence of some kind something that really hurts something that really causes pain and sometimes we may feel numbed and we may not really just be very oriented at that time and we may think well what am I going to do how am I going to cope with this how am I going to manage this and Jesus is saying to her hey you're forgetting something I'm in this with you it's for me and it's for you it's not you on your own it's you and I together it's for me and for yourself wherever you are as a Christian tonight whatever your circumstances are somebody may be watching this from some part of the world where it's virtually impossible to go out freely as a Christian and remember

Jesus is saying to you although I'm sure if you're in that category you're more aware of it than we are in our relative liberty and comfort compared to where such people are remember Jesus is saying it's me and yourself it's you and I isn't it an amazing thing that once you're joined to Jesus you're never disjoined and not only in this life but right through beyond death and through trials and all the rest of it remember Isaiah 43 the trials that are pictured there when you pass through the waters I will be with you and through the rivers they shall not overwhelm you fear not for I have redeemed you I've paid the price of your redemption you are mine I'm now with you it's you and I together and therefore when you pass through the waters I will be with you and even beyond this life and beyond the difficulties of this life through death itself what did

Jesus say to the thief on the cross in Luke 23 truly I say to you today you will be with me in paradise he didn't just say you will be in paradise and I'll be somewhere else you will be with me in paradise the union that you have with me now as you're dying on the cross beside me he's assuring the thief of is not going to be broken by death you're going to wake up in heaven and they'll still be there and I'll be with you and will never be parted and you can go up to revelation as well revelation the final chapters of the Bible chapter 21 and you remember there that John sees the new heavens the new earth and so on and coming down prepared as a bride adorned for her husband and then I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling of

God is with man he will dwell with them they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away why not because they are joined to Jesus and in heaven the enjoyment of heaven is the enjoyment of union with Christ the enjoyment of God dwelling with people and being with them to lead them as revelation 7 says to living fountains of water I came across this hymn I'm going to finish with these words this poem it's in form of a hymn you'll find it online it's called lockdown hymns that's by a

Glasgow group and it's something that's been up I think since the lockdown began hymns for this particular time of crisis for us and this one is called union with Christ I don't have a tune for it or anything but I'm sure you can find that if you go online and search for it there but this is what it says union with Christ what a glorious thought what a wonderful truth we embrace his victory attained makes the children of God to endure and to finish the race we hope that we have the hope that we have is no temporal thing to be swayed by our failures or fears in Christ we have faith as our conquering king and the Christian through faith perseveres hallelujah we are his hallelujah we are his no greater love is there than this Jesus is ours and we are his Lord our God we thank you for the wonderful teaching your word brings to us and assurance of your people's union with you and we give thanks for all that we can understand of what that union entails make it increasingly precious to us oh Lord that that union prevails and continues through life's experiences through death itself through a resurrection and onwards into heaven and into eternity and make us thankful

[60 : 39] Lord for what particularly has made it possible your own ransom price by your death on the cross hallelujah we can say what a saviour receive our thanks we pray for Jesus sake amen we're going to conclude again with a singing this evening and we're singing from psalm 116 the singh psalms version of psalm 116 the first few verses there verses 1 to 9 sorry it's verses 5 to 14 sorry psalm 116 in singh psalms no sorry I made a mistake it is as I said first of all verses 1 to 9 I love the Lord because he heard my voice he listened when I cried to him for aid and call on him as long as I shall live because he turned to hear me when

I prayed we'll sing to the tune Ellers psalm 116 and that's verses 1 to 9 I love the Lord because he heard my voice he listened to me when I cried for it I'll call on him as long as I shall live because he turned to hear me when I prayed the cords of death gripped and entangled me upon me came the anguish of the grave with grief and trouble

I was overcome then on the name of God I call Lord save the Lord our God is kind and full of grace both righteous and compassionate is he the Lord protects all those of childlike faith when I was in great need he rescued me rest oh my soul God has been good to you for you oh Lord have saved my soul from death my feet from stumbling and my eyes from tears that I may live for you while I have breath may the grace of God and may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and ever more amen thank you once again for joining with us in this service we trust that God will bless you in these days to come to please take all precautions and stay safe and above all we pray that God will follow with his blessing by worship of him and our study of his word today morning and evening thank you that