

Remember God's Word and Work

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] I want to extend a very good evening to everybody this first evening of the year, First Lord's Day, as we meet together at Stornoway Free Church and wherever you're meeting, it's good to have you in our worship.

And we ask that God will indeed bless our time together. We're going to begin, first of all, reading from Psalm 105 and sing Psalms. Psalm 105.

Let us now bow in prayer. Let us now bow in prayer. Let us now bow in prayer. For the ages to come to make good, his promise to Abraham, to Isaac renewed.

To Jacob, his sovereign decree was made sure. With Israel, his covenant would always endure. To you I will give us your portion to stand. The country of Canaan, the beautiful land.

Let us now bow in prayer. O Lord, our gracious God, as we gather before you on this Lord's Day evening, the first Lord's Day of a new year, we ask that you will bless us.

[1 : 41] And as this year stretches out before us, we do not know what a day or an hour may bring. And we ask, Lord, that you will be with us, just as you have been with us in the past, that you will continue to be with us in the present and in the future.

We give thanks, O Lord, that the future is yours, just as the present and the past has been yours and is yours as well. We give thanks, O Lord, that we are not bobbing about in a sea of chance, but that you are the God of destiny, the God who has a purpose in everything.

And even as you are working out your purposes for your people in this world, we know that ultimately it is for your own glory and for the good of your people and the good of the church.

And we ask, Lord, that you will enrich us and bless us in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. We give thanks again for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. May he become ever more precious to us.

May we delight in him. May the knowledge of your truth fill our hearts and our minds and that we will know the blessing of God and that you will uphold us and keep us.

[2 : 50] We pray, Lord, for all those who are struggling in life that last year and coming into this year has been difficult for them. They have faced all kinds of trials and traumas and losses and pains and sorrows.

And the relentless passage of time always brings with it pains and sorrows, along with joys and pleasures. But we give thanks that when we look to you and when we put our trust in you, that we can look ahead to a day of perpetual joy and where at your right hand are our pleasures forevermore.

O Lord, O God, then we ask that you will be with us as we wait upon you this evening. Bless your word to us and may we be able to rejoice in it.

May we be filled with the knowledge of your will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Lord, we pray that you will guard our hearts and guide us as we go along in life. We pray, Lord, that you will be merciful to us and forgive us our sin.

As we look back over our lives, we see a catalogue of failure and how little we feel that we have ever done for you. We might have done this and we might have done that, but have we done it by faith?

[4 : 03] Have we done it to the glory of God? Have we done it with a right motive and a right spirit? O Lord, help us to remember that your word tells us that we are to press towards a mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and that we are passing through this world.

It's only for a wee while. This world is a training ground for the world in which we are going to dwell forever. And so we pray that we might be found in Jesus Christ.

We ask, Lord, for any who do not know you personally as Saviour, who have heard about you, may have an element of interest in you, but that's as far as it goes.

O Lord, we pray that you will draw them to yourself, that they may be able to discover riches in you that they had never known before and didn't know were possible. Lord, will you take people up on to the spiritual dimension of life, where they will be brought to that new dimension, where we aren't just bound by the things of time and sense, but that we will see beyond.

O Lord, we ask that you will grab that faith, because without faith, not only is it impossible to please God, but without faith, we cannot see these things.

[5 : 20] O Lord, O Lord, O God, we ask then to open the eyes of those who so far haven't seen, or the ears of those who so far haven't heard, to open the hearts of those that have so far remained resistant to your word.

We ask that today and this year will be a year of great blessing. O Lord, O Lord, I ask that you will help us in the midst of this awful pandemic, with soaring numbers and with all the added pressures that the NHS has to bear.

We pray for all workers in hospitals and within our communities, and we realise, Lord, that these are difficult times and challenging times. May we look to you, Lord, we pray that you will bless us.

we give thanks that there is a vaccine but we realize that it might be quite some time before that vaccine is rolled out into a into an area that is going to or into a way that will affect society and begin to halt the rapid spread of this virus and so we pray that you will protect us because that you are the ultimate protection and so we ask lord that it might please you to put your hand around us and as it says in the psalm no plague shall near thy dwelling come no ill shall be be fallen we pray that that might be true for us watch over us then we pray and that you will do us good that you'll guide our leaders from all in authority over us whether it is in westminster in hollywood or here in the local council watch over us and bless young and old alike we commit them to your care and keeping we pray for those who are ill and those who are going through difficult times lord may your healing hand be upon them be with our families who are anxious and worried about them dry up the tears of the broken heart of those who have lost loved ones and this time in here is so difficult and we remember all the families who have not been able to gather in the way that they would want and how we miss those that would be so much part of our time together at at this time of year watch over us and we pray and bless your word now to us and take away from us that every sin in jesus name we ask it amen just going to say a wee word to the young folk first of all and at this time of year people tend to get calendars and calendars are sometimes in a sense like a wee diary the beauty of the calendar is that there are often lovely pictures on them and so i've got i've got a two or three calendars i got this one which is absolutely beautiful a calendar of uh of beautiful uh photos of who we can know you guys we know is one of the most beautiful picturesque places not just on the island but anywhere so there's uh see uh photos of different different they are the incoming tide and uig sands and such like our droil from so many of all uh just beautiful photos but of course you don't get that calendar just to look at the photos uh that you have the date of the so that today sunday the third but another calendar here of cars of collector's cars there's a clarin f1 so you see there and there are spaces so that you can actually put supposing you say to your show wednesday the third of february that's quite an important i've got a really important meeting so you would put in there and that's what we use the calendars for because we if maybe there's a wedding maybe it's a day where you start school again maybe it's your birthday or somebody a friend's birthday and of course you always put in the school holidays or play even play group holidays times you're going to get get off so calendars are very important and there's all kinds of there's funny calendars and i don't know i certainly didn't get this calendar but i found it that it's already hung up in the kitchen she who must be obeyed a year's worth of rules from the woman in charge and again you have a space there for all the different days and things and you can make up your own calendars because we have a calendar that we had last year joshua marie gave us this calendar

and there's a different picture of joshua each month and again the space so you can make up calendars people have calendars with their favorite football teams and pop stars or fun stars you can have calendars of anything birds and animals you name it but as i say the point of the calendar is that you will put in and you look and say all right i'm going to mark in that date because sometimes we forget things and it's important that we fix out where where we know something's going to happen we we put it down just in case we forget and you know at the end of the year the calendar sometimes looks like a diary because when you flick through it you'll see all these different things marked but you know it's very important to plan ahead and we should plan ahead but the

thing is that at the end of the day we don't really know if all these things that we've marked down whether they'll actually happen or not because you and i although we plan for the future and it's right for us to plan for the future we're not in control of the future we don't know what the future holds but you know the great thing that we know who holds the future you remember that you don't know i don't know who holds the future but we know we don't know i should say what the future holds you don't know i don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future and that's a lord he's in charge he's in control he's in charge of every day and every month and every year and you know the best thing that we can do yes we make our plans we write down our dates in the diary but that's the best thing is every day to hand the day over to the lord and say lord help me today help me to do the right things help me to be the right person help me lord to follow you so that i might live well and live for you in this world do you know if you do that not only will life become good for yourself and a blessing to yourself but you will become a blessing to other people greatest way to live so you think of them here you are at the beginning of another year you make sure that that's the way you begin this year let's say the lord's prayer 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 god's word now from the book of psalms book of psalms we're going to read from psalm 111 we're going to read the whole psalm and we're actually going to look at this psalm the whole psalm psalm 111 i will give thanks to the lord with my whole heart in the company of the upright in the congregation great are the works of the lord studied by all who delight in them full of splendor and majesty is his work and his righteousness endures forever he has caused his wonders works to be remembered the lord is gracious and merciful he provides food for those who fear him he remembers his covenant forever he has shown his people the power of his works in giving

[14:08] them the inheritance of the nations the works of his hands are faithful and just all his precepts are trustworthy they are established forever and ever to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness he sent redemption to his people he has commanded his covenant forever holy and awesome is his name the fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom all those who practice it have a good understanding his praise endures forever amen and may god bless to us this reading of his own holy word as i say we're going to look at this psalm in its entirety and it's entitled greater the lord's works and i want us to see the importance of remembering god's word and works because both are so highlighted here and the psalmist begins saying praise the lord i will give thanks to the lord with my whole heart and so on he goes on to say he has caused his wonders works to be remembered the lord is gracious and merciful he provides food for those who fear him he remembers his covenant forever so on so i want us to consider that this morning well one of the many things that we find in the in the book of psalms whenever we we read it whether we go through from psalm 1 right all the way through to psalm 150 is that there is constant praise of god we are constantly reminded about the importance of praising god and we are both exhorted to praise god and we're given the examples in the psalms to praise god and that's what the psalmist does he begins by telling us very clearly i will give thanks to the lord with my whole heart and i love that there's nothing half-hearted about the psalmist's praise you see it's we we can actually praise god we can go through that we can go through the motions we can sing praise to god and our hearts be far away well that's not praising god with all our heart when we praise god with all our heart our heart and our mind and our words all ought to be linked together so that when we're praising god we must be conscious of what it is that we're doing because he is worthy of all honor and glory and gratitude and praise because he is a great god we ought to be bringing our praise and thanksgiving to the lord all the time and to do so with all our heart and we have to ask ourselves have we today have we praised god you might be today in a very difficult sore sad situation but that doesn't stop us praising god we're not praising for the situation that we might be in but we're praising god for who he is it's a it's an important part of life and we see that the psalmist is doing so in the company of the upright in the congregation now this is one of the things that that we really have missed through our lockdown and although we are we have a we are getting back it's very restrictive what we do have in the way of being able to meet together our numbers are restricted we are socially distanced from one another and we aren't allowed to sing and of course singing is such a vital part of our worship and of our praise and you know i would like to think of spared when this lockdown is over and when we are able to get back and we are able to praise god in the way that we did

before that we won't actually be praising him as we did before but that we will praise him with a new energy and a new vitality and a new vigor because maybe far too often we might say to girls oh yes i went through the motions and i'm sure all of you like me it's one of the things you long to get back and to really praise god and i hope that when we get back that the church of the that the very walls will vibrate maybe exaggerate maybe exaggerating but that you know what i mean in with it with the level of our praise coming from our heart so this is what the psalmist is doing that he that he is praising god it's a great response from the heart and god's looking for this god looks for our praise he looks for our thanksgiving have we thanked god do we thank god all the way through every day remember when jesus healed the the the ten lepers and only one came back and jesus asked the question where are the nine did i not heal ten only this one who's a samaritan has come back in order to glorify god and to bring praise thanksgiving so let us make sure that we too uh will be found that god won't be looking wondering where our praise is but that we may be constantly giving him praise and so we see that here it talks about in the in the in the congregation and you know i sometimes think about it on our lord's day you know we have all the different time zones and time lapses within the world and when you think of all the believers that are praising god within the course of the day right around this world if we could see it and collect it and package it and see the praise and be able to in some way measure that praise and glory that goes to god even on the lord's day we would be absolutely amazed it's a wonderful thought that there is a global praise and as one lies down others get up and praise god great wonderful thought so as another year begins let us make absolutely sure that praise and thanksgiving is a vital part of our lives and that you say to yourself well whatever others do this is what i'm going to do it's like joshua remember what joshua said to the house of to to israel he said as for me and my house we will serve the lord it's almost like joshua saying i don't know what you're going to do in fact it's not going to bear upon me what you're going to do i hope you do the same as i do but as for me and my house we will serve the lord what a great way to start the year that this would be your desire your motivation as well and then verse 2 goes on to say great are the works of the lord studied by all who delight in him now god's work sometimes talks about the actions that he takes for instance in verse 6 it talks there with regard to his act as his works as his deeds his actions and in this it's the power of his work where he gave his people the inheritance where he gave them the land of promise these were his works he's was and this was a display of his work and fulfillment to his promise and so sometimes that's what it talks about in the bible other times and often it talks when i mention his works about his his works his creative works his great works like where he brought into being the the the sun the moon the stars the whole planetary system the earth the whole universe he brought and us everything and so greater the works of the lord studied by all who delight in them and because the wisdom of god has made this whole world and all that is within it we should actually be studying these things and the christian we shouldn't just look around and say well you know it's wonderful oh yes and i i love looking at the creation we should go further than that it should be such that we will so marvel at it we say i'd like to know more about this and there are many people like that and so we we it's it's i think it's helpful that we we we look for instance at the at the human body and the the marvelous way we are fearfully and wonderfully made when we study the times and the seasons and the the whole pattern to life and the whole pattern the soul system that god has set in place for the government of this world and for the way it works it really is mind-blowing when we study nature but always studying all these things looking at god realizing this is the work of his hands and then you develop this because it says his works are full of splendor full of splendor and majesty is his work i often think of how empty an atheist's life is where they are void of the spiritual dimension in life because you know when you become a christian and where you really see god in everything it don't you go on to you go into another dimension i remember after i became a christian i'm sure most will understand that um even being out i remember one night coming coming back it was out at a wee loch doing a spot of fishing and it was i i walked there often enough before but that night it was like everything around me seemed so different i could see god and everything i hadn't seen that before i hadn't seen that before i lived i've always had an interest in in the beauty of this world and everything about it it always fascinated me but i saw it at another level i went into another dimension where i could see god in it all and i often think for those who dismiss god and put god into the picture they they miss so much in life that their life is it it's it's missing this spiritual uh vitality and sadly as it says in romans 1 sin has so distorted the human heart that that people now worship the created rather than the the creator they worship the creature rather than the creator but this

world screams out there is a god there is a god and he is a god of great wisdom and a god of great power and a god of great might and it tells us then in verse 4 he has caused his wonderful works to be remembered to be remembered now as you and i know memory is a great blessing and there are some people who seem to have the most extraordinary memory memory what they read they seem to retain some people with photographic memories or close to it there are some people who who hear i remember people uh i know today we have sermons recorded that online uh there's both the visual and the audio but there were people before there was any they could they could maybe maybe to almost take what they would hear word for word they could go back home and repeat huge sections of the service and they would remember what they heard 20 30 years ago incredible people were blessed with great memories but more and more today we find people are beginning to lose their memories and i don't know whether it's the incredible amount of information that has been thrown at us and the pace of life i don't have all these things that are bearing upon how it is i don't know i know for myself that my memory every year and it's part i think of getting older but my memory is now becoming really bad and if somebody says to me today what were you doing yesterday more often than not i cannot honestly remember and i have to rack my brain i can't remember so often we go for this and go for that we have not clue what we went for we go out and we should park our car somewhere and we're saying i can't even remember where i parked my car did i have a car with me you know you and you think that come on this is stupid but it seems to be part and partial of where we're at today however this is an area of life that god wants us really to work at is that we remember his wonderful works it's important that we do that and god wants us to remember all the different things he's done for us along the way that's what he wanted israel to do remember he wanted them to remember he wanted them to remember they're leaving egypt god had delivered them in the most wonderful way possible and in fact before they actually left it really was a a feast of faith they had the passover feast remember with the blood on the doorposts and on the lintel and they hit the passover lamb excuse me and then they left egypt and god wanted them every year to to have this feast to remember what he had done for them lest they forget and you know the lord has done the same thing for us as well because he has given us a new testament passover feast he's given us a lord's supper and he instituted that before he died and the disciples in the very first lord's supper they took it before the cross before jesus had gone to the cross again it was a little maybe they didn't fully recognize what they were doing but it was a feast of faith and you know when we take the lord's supper it's also a feast of faith because we're we're looking back at what the lord jesus christ has done for us but we're also looking ahead because it tells us as we take the lord's supper do this in remembrance of me for as often as you eat this bread remember we take the broken bread and the the wine representing the broken body and the shed blood of jesus when we take that bread and wine and we do it remembering what jesus did for us often as you eat this bread and drink this wine you do so in remembrance of me and you take it till he come till he comes again he's a returning savior so there's this huge element of faith that we're looking forward as well in the supper to the return like like israel took the passover before they left before their actual deliverance and the disciples took the first lord's supper before the cross and while we're taking the supper after the cross we're also taking it before our full deliverance back into glory and so it's very important to be remembering what the lord is doing in fact you remember when history were on the borders of the promised land and the lord said to them you shall remember the whole way not a bit of the way but the whole way you shall remember the whole way the lord your god has led you to humble you testing you to know what was in your heart whether you would keep my commandments or not you shall remember the whole way and you know it's a good thing for us as we enter into a new year to remember as much as we can the whole way that the lord has led us up to this point and let us remember that what he's saying to us really saying to you and to me as well because he is that's what he's doing with us he's humbling us and he's testing us every day we're being humbled and we're being tested to see what's in our heart and you see we don't discover what's in our heart if everything is going sailingly well it's very easy to lose the the focus and forget exactly what it is but it's often in the difficulties and the trials we discover just what's really there so that's what the lord was doing he was breaking his trail and he breaks you and me as well and so he wants us to remember all these these experiences as we journey through this world so never forget god's work in your heart and in your soul and coming back to the supper the lord wants all his people and i emphasize that all his people to take the lord's supper it's for his people it's not for a select few it's not for elders and deacons and ministers yes it's for them but it's for all we're all one although we might have different offices and different work

within the church well just one one in christ jesus saved sinner and as jesus said in the parable of the sword there's different degrees of fruit bearing yes there's a hundredfold there are hundredfold christians you know them they're just they seem to be a place for the lord and their lives are so bright and there's others that are sixty-fold and poor they're not up there with us but they they that you you know they're christians and they do and they so work away and they plug away and they serve quietly away and then then there's a thirty-fold they're still christians too but they don't have the same maybe energy in the cause or the same zeal and is the that faith isn't as evident but it's still there the lord knows so every single christian every believer everybody who loves the lord jesus christ should take the lord's supper and i hope that this lockdown will challenge those who up till now who love the lord and have not taken the lord's supper who maybe are thinking well i'll do it later this has shown us how unpredictable our futures are and how unpredictable time is we would never have envisaged this we would never have envisaged missing communions but we have and so the lord is challenging us in these things and i would hope that for those who have never taken the supper that when we do get back that you were the first coming and yet you will say well i'm not going to allow this to happen again and i will take and i'll ask the lord to help you to do so because your own heart and the enemies of the cause will do everything to prevent you anyway this is one of the ways that we remember when god asks us to remember taking of the bread and the wine is one of the one of the ways that we do it of course we see uh the his wonderful world now verse four goes on to say we always think of his his

[34 : 29] wondrous works with regard to the splendor the glory the creation the power the majesty but you'll also notice that it is his wonderful works are displayed in his graciousness and in his mercy verse four the lord is gracious gracious and merciful that's amazing too we deserve nothing we disobeyed god we run away from god god will be 100 right and just within himself to just leave us say get on with it you make your bed you've made your bed lie in it but that's not what he's done in his amazing grace and in his amazing mercy he has made provision for our needs he has made the most wonderful at the most wonderful cost to himself a savior to save us from our sins john newton sang amazing grace one of the most wonderful uh pieces of uh pieces of uh song ever written by anyone amazing grace and i think it's one uh a hymn that's bedded deep within our hearts but you know he could have written another one amazing grace but also amazing mercy but of course it was the the the the in his in amazing grace god's mercy is seen as well as well but i love in verse five where it says he remembers his covenant verse four we remember his works now in verse five it says he remembers his covenant we remember his works he remembers his covenant see god is a covenant keeping god and god has made a covenant in order with us for our salvation but let me rephrase that god has made a covenant that involves us in order to save us but he has made the covenant god the father has made the covenant with god the son if it had been simply with you and with me that covenant would have been shattered because we couldn't keep our our side of it but the covenant was made made on our behalf by jesus christ with god the father how thankful we are and you see when god makes a promise and jesus christ the son makes a promise they will keep it you and i make promises and sometimes we even forget that we ever made such a promise sometimes we the promises we forget them sometimes we haven't the ability to fulfill what we promised but our lord always remembers his promise he remembers it and verse six shows us how god shows us how god's power gave the land of promise to his people and that's exactly what god's covenant does with us as well because god promised covenant and he promised abraham and isaac and jacob that the land of canaan was going to be their land that was the promise and the wonderful thing is that these people so believed it and you see an example of that with joseph joseph when joseph was dying what was one of the last things he did he gave command concerning his bones and what command what command that is in other words joseph was saying he called and he says see when i die and i'm buried god is going to take you out of here all of you and he's going to take you to canaan i want you to take out my body again and take it and re-bury it in the promised land that was great faith joseph believed that

the time came of course when joseph and that's what israel did the children of israel they took the body of joseph with them and re-buried it in canaan but you see that was because god had promised an inheritance and he does that for us he promises and he fulfills and he gives us because of his isa covenant keeping god and just as god gave us the the land of promise so he's bringing us into the land of promise and he has an inheritance for you and for me as well we're journeying to it and just when you will go through the bible and see how faithful god was in fulfilling

his word and giving them what he promised so he will be absolutely faithful to his covenant and he will give us what he promised as well so that's one part of the wonder and beauty of it all verses seven and eight that now show the link between god's works and god's word and you see it is through god's word that his work is discovered genesis one in the beginning god said let there be light and there was light and that light the glory of that light the work that was made manifest of what god had done was the fulfillment of his word and his works are always speaking of his word it's true in your life and mine as well the very fact that we became christians just as god said let there be light at the very beginning god said into your life as well let there be light the light of the gospel let the light of the gospel go right into that heart and that's what happened you saw you believed and you follow that light and that light is now in you and your life becomes a display of god's work so his word and his work are inseparably bound and one displays the other and then it goes on to tell us that he sent redemption to his people we can never thank him enough for this holy and awesome is his name reverend the so the the king james we are to revere and reverence his name to hold it in holy awe and then we see about the fear of the lord tells us there at the very end the fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom beginning means very simply the the the main principle as it were the main principle of our life and the fear of the lord and you know the more that we hold the lord and in reverence and then all a developing fear grows in our heart a reverent fear our living fear and that produces wisdom we will be we will live in the right way we will be guided in the right way this is the wisdom that is from above it's all tied and all linked together this is a wonderful psalm and may this psalm as we have it here be the one that indeed challenges us and thrills us and brings us forward as we go in and work our way through this year that we've just entered into lord our god we pray to bless us and pardon us we pray for from our sin may your light shine into our lives do us good and cleanse us from our every sin we pray in jesus name amen we're going to conclude singing from this psalm

and it's from the scottish soldier psalm 111 and we're going to sing from verse 6 he did the power of his works unto his people show when he the heathen's heritage upon them did bestow his handiworks are truth and right all his commands are sure and done in truth and uprightness they ever more endure he sent redemption to his focus covenant for a he did command holy his name and reverend is always wisdom's beginning is god's fear good understanding they have all that his commands fulfill his praise and jewish for he these verses from verse 6 to the end of the psalm he did the power of his words unto his people show the power of his people show when he the heathen's heritage upon them did bestow his handiworks are truth and right all his commands are sure and done in truth and uprightness they ever more endure he sent redemption to his hope his covenant for him in the kofa holy his name and reverend is always faith till

Now may the grace, mercy and peace, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.

Thank you very much for watching with us this evening and we pray that God will bless you. Amen.