

# Going Up to Jerusalem

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read in Mark's Gospel, Mark chapter 10 and verse 32. This is for our wee whiry, Mark chapter 10 and verse 32.

So he said, And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to them, saying, See, we're going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles.

And they will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise. As we know, Jesus and his disciples, they covered many a mile together.

We find, when you go through the Gospels, that Jesus was always walking somewhere, and the twelve were with him. But very often there were also crowds following.

And I'm sure some of the roads and the tracks that they walked along, they've become so familiar that they would almost have been able to walk blindfolded. And of course the disciples enjoyed walking with Jesus, and so did many of the crowds who followed.

[ 1 : 2 0 ] Not, of course, everybody who followed was a follower of Jesus. Some were following for differing reasons. Some were out to find fault with him, to pick on what he was saying, in order that they might be able to bring accusations against him and such like, as we know very well when he was finally arrested.

But walking is one of the great pictures that we have in the Bible of what a person does with the Lord. We know that walking is one of the great exercises.

And when people walk together, people are usually, they walk as friends. It's not very likely that you would begin a walk with somebody you'd never met before, or somebody who's a complete stranger.

It tends to be somebody that you know. And when you walk, you usually talk. The Bible itself says, Can two walk together except they be agreed?

Supposing you had massive differences with somebody else, and you could never see eye to eye with a person, it's not very likely that you'd go walking with them. You'd probably end up all the time disputing and arguing, and that wouldn't be a very good walk.

[ 2 : 3 2 ] But by and large, if you go walking with another person or a group of people, it tends to be people that you know, people that you're friendly with. And that's a very biblical, a very spiritual picture, because it's one of the expressions that we find right throughout the Bible of what the believer does.

The believer, he or she walks with God. In fact, at the very beginning, if you go back to Genesis, it's the first picture, really, we have of the fellowship of God with his people, of how God came to walk with Adam in the cool of the day.

It's a beautiful picture there, just this picture of friendship, of fellowship, of togetherness, of unity, of oneness. And that is a picture of how it still is today.

And we, and every believer, all those who know the Lord and who love the Lord, we walk with Jesus all throughout life.

It's part of what you do. When a person becomes a Christian, there is never, although there are times, and we've got to be honest, there are times, a Christian isn't somebody who is always thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ, because we're involved in life, we're involved in loads, 101 different things.

[ 3 : 5 1 ] But the Christian is somebody who has an awareness as they go along that the Lord is with them. And very often, as we say, when you walk with somebody, you talk.

You're not analysing what you're talking about. You just talk. And so it is, as we go along in our Christian life, that very often, very simply, we're so aware that the Lord is there and we might be saying to the Lord, just as we go along, Lord, help me here.

I'm really not too sure what to do. We often ask God for wisdom, often even in relationships, of in case we say the wrong thing, or in case we do the wrong thing.

We often ask the Lord to guide us, maybe at work, or in studies, or whatever we're doing, that we will know the direction, the right way to take.

We ask the Lord for forgiveness. We're constantly doing that because so often we say the wrong thing and we do, we're so aware of just saying, and very often at the end of the day, you just go, oh Lord, forgive me.

[ 4 : 56 ] So many things today that I just got wrong and so many things that I did that were wrong, sometimes against people and directly against God. So there's this ongoing relationship with God where God isn't somebody who's distant and remote.

He has come close through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So it's a living, active relationship, a fellowship. And so the Bible terms it that we're walking together.

We walk with God. So this, as we say, is one of the things that the Bible highlights to us. So we find that Jesus and the disciples on the road and we read that on this road they were going up to Jerusalem.

And this marks the last time that Jesus was to go up to Jerusalem. And there's always going to be a last time in our experience and particularly things that we become familiar with.

We find it difficult when it comes round to the last time. There's always a last time. Last time in everything. And this was the last opportunity these people along the way were going to have of having Jesus with them.

[ 6 : 10 ] And it's very interesting, right, that we read that at the end of the chapter we find that poor blind man, Bartimaeus, who was by the side of the road. He was begging for him.

That was the way he was just dependent upon anything that anybody would give him. And Jesus was passing by and Bartimaeus made full use of that opportunity.

There might have been other people there. There might have been people who were lame and blind and paralyzed. There might have been people who had all kinds of issues and problems. We don't read of any of the others.

There might have been, but we don't read of them. But Bartimaeus made the most of that opportunity because Jesus was passing. Maybe others thought, oh, I'll leave it until the next time he comes. But he didn't come back.

That was his, this was his last time. And that's why it's always so important that we make the most of the opportunities that we have. Because even as we gather here today, just like loads of other people all over the world and all over our land, the Lord, we believe, is present.

[ 7 : 16 ] And it's always an opportunity to meet with him, to ask him. And if we've never asked him, to ask him to become king and lord of our lives. And so we find that as Jesus went ahead, we find that they would say they were amazed and those who followed were afraid.

So this is the picture that we have here. This was obviously going to be the last time that Jesus was going up to Jerusalem.

And it tells us that they were both amazed and they were afraid. And the reason being was that the last time that Jesus was up in Jerusalem, they had tried to stone him. You can read about that in the Gospels.

And so, obviously, there is both amongst the disciples who followed and amongst the general crowd who followed, there's this sense of amazement and fear that Jesus is heading back to the place which, not so long before, they had tried to stone him.

And you remember, we read about it in John's Gospel when Jesus told of Lazarus' death or Lazarus' illness and then his subsequent death. And he said that he was going up to Bethany.

[ 8 : 36 ] The alarm bells went off with the disciples because Bethany was just right beside Jerusalem. It was kind of just neighbouring. And they were saying, but why are you going there?

The last time we were there, the Jews tried to stone you. You know, you can't go there. But Jesus, of course, insisted. And I think one of the things we remember from that is that one of the disciples, Thomas, and it's highlighted in John chapter 11, Thomas is the one who, he went straight into that picture.

Thomas says when Jesus said, no, he said, I am going. And Thomas said, well, we might as well go and die with him there. And Thomas, this disciple, has got his name of doubting Thomas.

You remember when Jesus had revealed himself to the disciples and Thomas wouldn't believe, he got his name from that. But Thomas was always like that.

Thomas always looked on the dark side. Thomas was one of those disciples that was riddled with doubts and fears. And the bottle was always half empty rather than half full.

[ 9 : 50 ] And that's the picture that we have here when Jesus says, oh, well, I'm going up. You can almost see Thomas with a shrug of the shoulders, the despondency coming, oh, well, we might as well go and we'll just die with him there.

He already had the scene of Jesus being killed and them all being killed together. That was, that was straight into the worst scenario possible. And you know, a lot of people are like that and a lot of Christians are like that.

And one of the things we've got to remember is that when a person becomes a Christian, when a person comes to accept Jesus, to trust in Jesus, although the Lord is working all the time within a person and he is changing us more and more to become Christ-like in our thinking and our attitude and our motives and what we do, we're still, we're still who we are.

We don't change so that if we're somebody who tended to be maybe more gloomy or pessimistic or negative and tended to look on the dark side of life.

When you become a Christian it doesn't automatically mean that all of a sudden you become euphoric and jumping with joy and everything changes. Very often you retain sort of the same kind of person that you were.

[ 11 : 06 ] Although, becoming a Christian changes your perception and you have new goals, you have a new sense of purpose and identity, you know who you belong to, you know where you're going.

That's a huge impact upon your whole thinking and everything. But there's still this kind of the way you are. And lots of the Lord's people are like that and Thomas was like that.

That's just the way he was. And we've always got to accept that we're all different and it's good that we're all different. It would actually be quite a boring world, I shouldn't say a boring world, but if we were all exactly clones of one another.

because, as the Bible says, of companionship, of two together and of the difference, the difference is that iron sharpens iron. And we're often better because of other people's ways and dispositions and attitudes and all these things in life.

They all work together in making life a more enriching experience. And when you look at the lives of the disciples, they were all different. You had gloomy Thomas on the one hand and you had impetuous Peter on the other hand.

[ 12 : 17 ] And Peter was tended to be one of these positive men and he was always jumping ahead, speaking before he really thought of what he was saying and such like. That's the way it is.

And it's good that it's like that. But the other side of Thomas was, although he was gloomy, although he was pessimistic, although he was the kind of man who was often in a downer, he still loved the Lord.

Because you see this commitment to Jesus. Because he doesn't say, oh, if we go up there, that's it, Jesus will die and we'll die as well.

No, he says, let's just go up. So Thomas wasn't saying, I'm not going to go. Thomas is ready to go and he's ready to die with Jesus. So on the one hand, you have the gloom and the despondency, but on the other hand, there is that zeal and there is that commitment to the Lord Jesus.

And as we say, that's so often what we find within the Lord's people. And so we find that they go on and they go up and it was difficult.

[ 13 : 26 ] You know, I often find it so strange and I suppose there's no other answer to it other than the fact that we see just how perverse and twisted sin really is.

Because the Lord Jesus Christ, without a shadow of doubt, when we examine his life, was just such a unique person. And he went about, as the Bible says, doing good.

That's all he did. He went about doing good. What he said, yes, it was radical and it went in the face of so much that people believed and accepted in the day.

It challenged people and people often don't like being challenged. But his teaching, there's no question, was very often revolutionary and radical. But it was always administered with love.

The one thing that Jesus couldn't handle or stand were the religious leaders who were so hypocritical and were, they just, they lived by a law.

[ 14 : 27 ] There was no sense of love or grace about them at all. Jesus had a problem dealing with these people. But we find that his whole attitude and that he was, he was sinless.

He was perfect. And yet people couldn't stand him. By and large, a lot of the public did. But there were a lot who were so opposed to him. And he said, it doesn't make sense.

Because he went about doing good. Every day he was healing. Every day he was, he was administering help and grace and comfort. It tells us so often that Jesus was moved with compassion.

When he would see, we've looked at that before. Remember the definition, your pain in my heart. Compassion, that's what it is. When he saw how people were, he identified with their pain, with their suffering.

And this is why you just, you say to yourself, how come that they just couldn't wait to get rid of him? They just, there was just desperation, we've got to get rid of this passion.

[ 15 : 34 ] And that shows us just truly the perverseness and the twistedness that can be lying there in the human heart. and it's still the same today where there's, there are so many people if they could, there's one thing that they could do, it would be to obliterate the Christian faith, to remove all traces of it.

Don't want it in society. And again, I honestly find that so hard to understand because the principles, I know that there's probably religion in its broadest sense has been so often used for all the wrong reasons.

And you can use anything for the wrong reasons, but the, when you follow truly the Christian principles that are set out, they are set out for the good and the structure of society and for the well-being of people.

And that's why I find it so strange and it just points to surely the twistedness of sin that is within the human heart that wants to eradicate and remove that from society because God has given it to us for the well-being of society.

So we live in a day, it might not, there are certain parts of the world where it's incredibly dangerous to be a Christian. And for these disciples and the followers of Jesus, these were incredibly difficult days.

[ 16 : 59 ] And I'm sure that the disciples were, well we know, they were left very confused and perplexed when Jesus was taken and eventually put to death.

Of course that confusion didn't last for long because, but at this particular moment as they were going through this, they'd be asking all kinds of questions. Where's God in all this?

What's happening here? And when Jesus is beginning to tell them what's ahead because that's exactly what he does, he told them what lay ahead. We find that in the following verses.

And they were amazed and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was going to happen to them. And so, we home in on Jesus and the disciples.

If there was a film crew, if it was today and there was a film crew, and you saw Jesus, Jesus is walking ahead. The disciples are following immediately after and then this crowd.

[ 17 : 58 ] And if you had a camera following them, you would home in on Jesus and then it might move to the disciples and to the crowd and then home back in on Jesus. And as you looked at Jesus, there would be something distinctive about him at that moment.

There would be a determination upon his face because we're told in one of the other Gospels that he set his face like a flint to go to Jerusalem. In other words, Jesus knew what was going to happen.

And Jesus didn't just walk into the cauldron of suffering that was ahead of him, like you'd use the expression with your hands in your pockets and just almost whistling, not caring, that he was kind of like some kind of superman and he just, he wasn't affected by anything that was going to happen and all the pains that were in front of him.

No. We read about his fears. We read about his strong cries. We read about his pleading, Lord, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me.

All these things. So that is why back here, Jesus' face is like a flint. There's like this determination. I have to go up.

[ 19 : 13 ] I have to go ahead with this. I have to go through with all this. That's why I'm saying if you have a camera and you're picking up, that that's how Jesus would have been looking at this particular moment.

determination etched across his face. I have to see this through. I have to go to Jerusalem. And so we see that Jesus is focused upon this particular place that he's going up.

And it tells us that as they were on the road going up to Jerusalem. Now we know that you have to go up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is elevated.

It's a high point in the land. land. So literally you are going up to Jerusalem. But it's also I suppose a very spiritual thing.

Now as we know when you follow through the Bible the pilgrims always made their way up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the centre. It was the centre of worship. It was a place where the temple was.

[ 20 : 15 ] And everybody made their way up. You know there was like for the great day of atonement and there were times at the Passover that you would find everybody would be making their way up. The city would just become filled with people as they made their way up like at the time of the Passover.

So there was this the pilgrims were always making their way up and that's why you read in some of the Psalms it's talking about going up to Jerusalem. A lot of the pilgrim Psalms are dealing with this theme of travelling on.

And spiritually it is so with us as well because that's what we're doing. we are pilgrims and strangers that's what the Bible says. Now sometimes we can get very very settled where we are and that doesn't mean that we don't tie ourselves down in this world and that we're not involved in everything that happens in society and our work and our leisure and our families all these things of course we are.

But there's always this sense that well this is this is not where we're going to be forever. We're as it were passing through. And so there is this sense of the pilgrim but there's also this sense of that we're going on to as the Bible calls it the new Jerusalem and we are going up there.

Now I don't know where heaven is but the one picture that we have is that it's up because we always have the picture of God looking down when Jesus rose from the dead and when he ascended he ascended up into heaven.

[ 21 : 49 ] He rose up bodily, physically before the disciples. The Bible talks of three heavens. The first heaven is the skies where the just the air above us where the birds will fly and such like.

And then the second heaven as the Bible would talk about would be where we go right up into where we have the planets the stars the sun the moon and then the third heaven is where God lives where the redeemed are where all the saints in glory today are and that's what Paul talks about that he was as it were transported where he was brought he was given this great sight as it were into the third heaven into these marvellous things.

So there's always this idea spiritually as well of ourselves going up there's that beautiful version in Thessalonians which tells us at the end and the dead in Christ will rise first.

As I've said this I often think of this verse the dead in Christ will rise first then we who are alive who are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air so we will always be with the Lord.

I find that one of the most extraordinary verses in the Bible and it's one that I often think about particularly I've said this before when I'm at the cemetery because often your work involves being at the grave and I often think imagine imagine if the Lord came just now all these graves would open I often say that at a funeral that the grave in a sense just like a bed it talks the Bible talks in these very terms because when you pull the turf over it's just like pulling a duvet over people talk about the finality of the grave it's not it's a temporary residence of the body and I know that we know the awful thing of death and its corruption and decay and all that but the graves are going to open I find that extraordinary people say do you understand that no I have no idea I cannot understand how it's just going to be the most spectacular awesome fearful thing but it's going to happen that one day the graves will open and the dead are going to rise up they won't be dead anymore and people will say how come that a corpse a decayed corpse the dust we're told that death will go back the body goes back to the dust how on earth can that come again into our body

[ 24 : 46 ] I don't know but the God who took from the dust to the ground at the very beginning and created us made it and made us in our own image he formed us from the dust to the ground if he

did that at the very beginning with what had never been before it's not in any way inconceivable that he will do the same again with what had been before and so it's by faith that we lay hold upon these things but faith makes it real and you believe it and you know it to be true so I often think about it at the grave what if today what if it's just now that he comes and all these graves it doesn't matter whether you're at Agnish or Gress or down in Sandwick all the graves open all the bodies rise up and then we who are left we will rise up as well into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air it's an amazing thought amazing picture but that's pointing to the going up but Jesus isn't just looking at a particular place

Jerusalem but he's also reflecting on the whole purpose of his coming here and that was to die because the whole of the Bible is all focusing on this central issue central event the coming of Jesus was on a particular mission and this is where the so often that the Old Testament when you go through the Old Testament all the sacrifices are actually pointing to the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ the whole temple structure and the tabernacle structure was set out in a way that spoke of Jesus now the problem was that at the time when Christ came and before that many of the rabbinical schools were teaching that when the Messiah would come he would be a yes he'd be a revolutionary but he'd be a great political leader and that he would restore once again the greatness of Israel so that they would become what they had been like in the times of David but the Bible when you really study it it shows that when the Messiah comes he's going to be the suffering servant you go through Isaiah chapter 53 he was despised and rejected of men he was the one the whole of Isaiah 53 is awesome and you could almost say it was somebody an eyewitness of the life of Christ and so the Old Testament is pointing in this direction to a suffering Messiah but he is going to establish a kingdom but it's a spiritual kingdom and that's why it says in the Bible that the kingdom of God is in you people today look for they tend to think where is God's kingdom well God's kingdom is within his people because he has come to reign as king in it so Jesus was so conscious of all this and everything this is why he's working all together and this is where we see his great love because at this particular time we said he set his face as a flint to go to Jerusalem the human side of Jesus wrestled with what he had to do that's why he said Lord if it possible let this cup pass from me but his love to his father and his love to us was such that he wouldn't turn back it's an incredible love his commitment to himself to his father and to us was such that he gave and he gave and he gave that's what it says in verse 45 here for the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many next week God willing that's what we will be remembering when we come to the Lord's Supper we're remembering the death of the Lord Jesus Christ we're remembering why he died we're looking at the personalness of it that he you know that verse he tasted death for everyone and that means for every person who has come to accept the

Lord Jesus Christ it was as if there was nobody else in the whole world but you it was so intimate so personal and he says I've done that for you and all he asks us to do in turn is that we will remember him how do we remember it we remember by taking of the bread which is broken signifying his broken body we take of the wine which signifies and highlights his blood poured out for us he says take this do this in remembrance of me because you know so often we forget things you know I think we said that before but and rightly so we see in the war memorials for those who have given their life the supreme sacrifice lest we forget be awful if we forget those who who died in order to give us the liberty democracy that we have today and Jesus is saying the same thing I want you to do this just in case you forget

[ 30 : 34 ] I want you to keep this at the front of your thinking I want you to remember me well I hope that all of us will remember and if already that you're not your hand is not in the hand spiritually of the Lord I would ask that even today that you would say Lord take me by your hand and you know this it's a hand that will never let go never ever ever let go there are sometimes there are awful pictures of people that have been trying to save even say the likes of drowning or what not where they've been trying to hold somebody to grasp somebody in the water trying to pull them trying to save them trying to save them on a cliff but they haven't the strength they haven't the power and the person is lost it's very distressing thoughts but Jesus' hand will never that's one of the things no one no one he says can pluck them out of my hand it gives you a guaranteed safety and a purpose and an identity in life let us pray oh lord our god we give thanks for being able to reflect just for a little upon who you are and what you have done and why you did it we give thanks oh lord that we're not looking at things just from a historical point of view but that we're seeing that they are just where

we're at today what happened long ago impacts and affects us where we are right now lord we pray to bless us and take each of us away from here and to wherever we're going in safety that you will watch over us and that you will guide us and keep us and bless us lord do us good have mercy upon us and forgive us our every sin in jesus name amen we're going to conclude singing in psalm number 48 the 48th psalm and the last two verses psalm 48 the last two verses verse 13 14 48 verses 13 and 14,

Hucke fanier e pav en fria. Hucke fanier e pav en fria.

Hucke fanier e pav en fria.

Hucke fanier e pav en fria.

Hucke fanier e pav en fria.

[ 35 : 42 ] Hucke fanier e pav en fria. Hucke fanier e pav en fria. Amen.