

The Self Isolation of Jesus

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[0 : 00] Good morning and thank you for joining this live stream broadcast by Stornway Free Church. It's good to have you together watching and listening to the Word of God.

We trust that God will once again bless us through this medium. We're thankful to God that we have this medium by which we can broadcast the Gospel and share together in the Gospel's teaching. Wherever you are throughout the world today, if you're watching, please be assured our prayer is that God will bless you through this service. I'm going to begin by a reading from John, the Gospel of John chapter 17.

And from the beginning, that is verse 19. This is Jesus' great prayer in the upper room before he, shortly after this, went out and faced this trial and then the cross.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you.

[1 : 04] Since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. Now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

I have manifested your name to the people you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.

For I have given them the words that you gave me. And they have received them, and have come to know in truth that I came from you. And they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them.

I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine. And I am glorified in them.

[2 : 05] And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world. And I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one even as we are one.

While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost, except the son of destruction, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth.

Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake, I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

[3 : 13] And we pray God will follow with his blessing our reading of that portion of his word. Let's now engage in prayer, and let's join together in praying to call upon the Lord.

Our gracious and eternal God, our Father in heaven, we bless you today that we have the opportunity of worshipping you in this way. And we thank you that we are able to join together through the technology that you have made available to us in your goodness.

Help us, O Lord, at this time to draw near to you, and to seek the blessing of your Holy Spirit, so that we may be guided in our thoughts and in our words, in our petitions and prayers and praise, in the reading of your word, and in our study of it together.

We thank you for your Spirit's ministry. We thank you, O Lord, that you bring enlightenment of mind, conviction of sin, acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as the Saviour, into the hearts of your people. We thank you that you, as the Holy Spirit, are the sanctifier of those who are brought to know you as their Father. We thank you, O Lord, for the way in which, as we have been reading, you sent your Son into the world, so that he might take our human nature, and through that we come to take our sin, and our death, and our liability, and all, O Lord, that we ourselves deserve.

[4 : 44] We thank you today that he is risen from the dead. We bless you that every passing Lord's day, we are reminded of his victory over death.

Lord, we pray that that will remain with us throughout each day, so that we may come to live in the power of his resurrection, as we look forward to his coming again at the end of the world.

Bless us, then, we pray, today as a congregation. Bless all who belong to us in our homes and families, wherever they may be. Bless all, O Lord, who are participating in this service, and other services of worship, through this and other means today.

Pray that your kingdom will advance, that your glory will spread abroad on the earth. We pray, O Lord, in the times that we live in, so difficult, so challenging, so strange in many ways, we ask that in your gracious hand, this itself may prove to be a means of blessing ultimately to people, that we may, O Lord, find ourselves and all those around us, that we may find ourselves coming to contemplate what is most important in life, that we may see, O Lord, that our time in this world is short, and that you have given us this time that we may prepare for eternity.

Lord, we pray that through this difficult providence, many will come to reflect on the privilege of belonging to your church, of belonging to those people who worship you, and to come together from time to time to testify to the world that the Lord is, that the Lord is not only existing, but also a rewarder of those who diligently seek him, that he is the saviour of sinners.

[6 : 31] We ask today, Lord, that we may know in our experience of that in our own souls. Bless, we pray, all whom we commit to you today.

Once again, we think of our world and the many people in it who are sorrowing over the death of loved ones and the difficulties and the anxieties caused by the spread of this virus.

Lord, our God, we pray that you would hear the prayers of all who seek your own intervention in this matter. We know that it is your providence, that you have your own purpose in it.

We pray that you would, Lord, enable us to overcome this virus through your grace and through the ability you give to those who have the skills required for a vaccine and for further care of those who suffer from it.

Lord, we pray that you would protect life, that you would enable us to follow the directions we are given so that we may think of the interests of others, not only of ourselves, but of their well-being too.

[7 : 41] We do pray, O Lord, for all in the world who today are isolated in difficult situations. We pray that you would bless those, Lord, who not only cannot leave their homes, but sometimes isolated to their own rooms in their homes.

We ask that you would bless them. Bless, we pray, to those who are at the front line of this emergency and who give so willingly of their time and who take the risks involved in nursing others. Remember them all, we pray, not only in hospital and care homes, but in our paramedics and in other emergency services. We commit them to you and we thank you for them and pray that you would continue to protect and watch over them.

Grant, O Lord, these mercies to us, we pray. Hear us now and bless us throughout this day and pardon our sins for Jesus' sake. Amen. At this stage, I'm going to just say a wee word to the children.

I'm going to read from Luke chapter 9 and from verse 62. Jesus said to him, this is somebody who came and said he would follow him, but he wanted first to do something else.

[8 : 54] He says, Jesus said to him, no one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. This is a passage where Jesus met different people who would want to follow him, but then some indeed had started to follow him and wanted to follow him further, but then made excuses and wanted to go and do some other things, first of all, before they would actually follow him and especially this man who came to him and said that he would do this after, first of all, attending to things that he needed to do at home.

Furrowing and ploughing are important in farming. When you come to plough the ground, nowadays it's done with huge tractors. In the old days it used to be done with horses and it was a very skillful job when horsemen, ploughmen, used horses to plough the ground. And one of the things that was always looked for was that the furrow, that's the groove that's made in the ground as they plough the ground and turn over the ground so that you can sew something in it, the furrow needed to be as straight as possible. And very often, sometimes they still have them but in the old days they very often have competitions for those who work the horses to take a piece of ground and plough a piece of the ground and somebody else would plough another piece. And the competition involved who would make the straightest furrow, who would have the best kind of ploughing using the horses. And it was important to have the furrows as straight as possible. [10:36] And Jesus is making use of that by saying no one who puts his hand to the plough, just a person who was going to start ploughing and he's put his hand to the plough, he's saying no one who does that and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.

In other words, he's really saying to us if we start out and have our minds upon following Jesus, we mustn't be distracted by looking back or be distracted by anything else really that would take our eye off Jesus himself.

And our sermon today is really going to be very much about Jesus himself. It's important that we keep our eye on him. And when I was working in farming, not only in ploughing but also in mowing grass in a field, one of the things that I was told was in order to keep a straight line, you put something in the distance where the furrow is going to end or the far end of the field and when you're driving, it would be the same when you're working with horses, you keep your eye on whether it's a white bag or something or else that you can see at the far end of the field and if you keep your eye on that and not get distracted, you will plough a straight furrow.

If you look behind you and try and see, I wonder if the furrow that I've done, I wonder if it's straight enough. As soon as you turn behind you, you're going to wobble and the furrow is not going to be straight.

And what Jesus is saying is this, if your mind is set upon following Jesus, don't let yourself as children be distracted because I know in my young days when I was going to Sunday school and I would hear about Jesus and I would be impressed by hearing about Jesus and who Jesus was and what he had done, but as I began to get older, I got distracted by other things and I took my mind off Jesus and for many years that was the case.

[12:29] And I don't want you to be like that. I want you to keep focused on Jesus himself. Don't get distracted. Don't look behind you so that you're taken up by other things that might distract your mind from Jesus.

Whatever you're doing, make Jesus the center of your life. Make Jesus the one that you keep your eye upon. As Hebrews chapter 12 puts it, that's the image of running a race.

Looking unto Jesus. Looking to him ahead of you. And every time you come to read the Bible, look for Jesus. Look to focus upon Jesus himself.

So, no man who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. Don't let yourself be distracted. Maybe friends want to distract you. Might be the devil who's trying to distract you.

Might be your own thoughts that are trying to distract you from Jesus. Keep your mind. Pray to God to keep your mind focused on Jesus himself.

[13:36] Let the furrow of your life and of my life be as straight as possible. Let's now say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your 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 and the power and the glory forever. Amen. I'm going to read once more now in this time.

I'm reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians. I've decided to read this passage because it's going to be part of our sermon in a moment. So from Philippians chapter 2 I'm going to read from verse 4 to verse 11.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a

servant, being born in the likeness of men.

[14 : 56] And being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Again we pray for God's blessing to follow this part of his word. Now if we turn back I'm going to refer to this passage in Philippians throughout the sermon but we turn back and base our thoughts on John 17 and verse 19 we can use that as the basis and come back to take some of the words of Philippians 2 as well.

So John chapter 17 and verse 19 Jesus saying and for their sake I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth.

We're very used to the term self-isolating and many people have had to self-isolate due to this virus the coronavirus that's now throughout the world and self-isolating means if we have symptoms that may indicate we have the virus it's not just for our own protection but especially for the protection of others the interests of others that we self-isolate that we take time out and keep ourselves at a distance from other people and confine ourselves to home especially if we have symptoms like that so self-isolating is very much part of the situation that we're facing at the moment but we can apply that term also to Jesus and to his time in this world and that's what I want to look at because my thoughts this week really began to think about self-isolating and whether or not this could be applied to Jesus and indeed it can if we apply it in a way that I'm going to outline today so let's look at first of all the self-isolation of Jesus what did that entail and then more briefly secondly we look at the self-isolation of Jesus who was that for who did he do that for the self-isolation of Jesus what did that entail well the principle involved in this

I don't mean isolation in terms of Jesus isolating himself from other people nor Jesus isolating himself to take time out for prayer sometimes he did that and sometimes he found it very very difficult to do that because so many people were crowding to hear him and to see him and to take up their thoughts with him I don't mean that sort of isolation I mean rather self-isolation in the sense of Jesus willingly isolating himself more and more from what's mentioned at the beginning of John's gospel as he calls it Jesus being with God remember we say the word was with God and the word was God the word was with God he's talking about Jesus the son of God he was with God he was in the closest possible relationship with God the closest possible fellowship with God being God himself

[18 : 28] God the son when we come to John 17 here we read through the beginning of the chapter there where Jesus says to the father I glorified you on the earth and now father glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed the glory he had with the father before the world existed that's what Jesus left that's what Jesus deliberately and willingly self-isolated himself from more and more until as we'll see in a moment it reached its furthest extreme in the death of the cross in other words Jesus willingly took this to himself consecrating himself setting himself apart for the benefit of his people was something that took him further and further away from the glory he had with the father from the fellowship he had with the father it's a journey from glory to Golgotha all the way from heaven with the father from that closest fellowship possible all the way through until he reached

Golgotha until he reached the cross and the death of the cross and it was self-isolation let's always remember friends that this is not something that was forced upon Jesus yes the father sent him into the world through this chapter itself he speaks about being sent by the father and we know that that was the mission the father sent him into to the work that he had to do in this world but Jesus came willingly every single step of this journey from glory to Golgotha and back to glory was willingly taken by Jesus he self isolated himself for the benefit of others bringing upon himself the death of the cross that's the principle involved and now it also involved actually carrying that out it involved him becoming the servant the servant we read there in

Philippians chapter 2 where Paul is saying that although Jesus was in the form of God that's fully God means God in every sense he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing or the old version made himself of no reputation taking the form of a servant equality with God was not something he considered to be grasped now that doesn't mean he didn't have it he had equality with God he was God in every sense fully God but what Paul is really saying

here is that Jesus did not make that equality with God a reason against becoming a servant it's the most incredible thing to think of God becoming a servant to think of God becoming subject to commands subject to authority but Jesus as God did exactly that he was fully God but he didn't say because I am fully God because I am the son of God and fully divine I cannot go into that world of sinners I cannot take upon myself anything that would lower my dignity I can't lay I can't lay aside the prestige of my royalty and my royal status in order to save sinners for that undeserving of it he didn't say that he didn't hold on to that prestige if you like he remained God he was still God all the way through his life on earth but he became the servant he did not he did not count equality with God a thing to be held on to against becoming a servant but he made himself nothing taking the form of a servant in other words just as he was fully God the form of God so he became fully the servant in the form of a servant that's something that's quite incredible in itself that Jesus self-isolation meant leaving heaven the prestige of the royalty and the status he had there in order to come into this world and not just come into this world and not just to take our nature to himself but to do it by becoming the servant it's so important that we focus on who Jesus is and what he has done throughout all the stages of our human life particularly at times of crisis such as we're facing now in John chapter 13 you find an illustration of this before I move on to the next point an illustration of this very point that I've just made

Jesus actually self-isolating leaving heaven leaving the prestige of the throne of heaven coming to be a servant in this world the servant indeed in John 13 you remember he there washed the feet of the disciples but you find that in that passage there there's a reference to him laying aside his outer garments and clothing himself or girding himself with a towel that is a servant's garment he laid aside his outer garments this is in verse 4 of John 13 he laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel he tied it around his waist and then he began to wash the feet of his disciples and that's why Peter was so bewildered and Peter was objecting to this because he knew him as the Lord and Master and he was right in saying that as Jesus said later on why was this Lord and [24 : 46] Master lowering himself to the point of actually washing the feet of these disciples surely it should have been the other way around that's what Peter was thinking but of course Jesus corrected that but the point I want to make is this he laid aside his outer garments and he took the towel and girded himself with it but when he was finished washing their feet in verse 12 when he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments he resumed his place he resumed his place at the table the son of God laid aside the garments of royalty he put them off he continued to be God but he became the servant and he wore these garments of the servant all the way through his ministry on earth until it was done and when it was done as we read in John 17 what did he say to the father now father I have finished the work which you gave me to do and now father glorify me with your own self with the glory

I had with you before the world was he was going to resume his royal garments in heaven but he took out humanity with him and he continued to be the God man and is today the royal king having resumed the throne having finished the work on earth there is Jesus self-isolation but it's more than just becoming a servant it's also being the obedient servant that takes us back to Philippians again if you just cast your mind across to Philippians 2 he as we saw he did not count equality with God something by which he refused to become a servant but then it goes on to say being found in human form in verse 8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even the death of the cross I think it's better the death of the cross rather than death on a cross it's this death the death that he died the death of the cross having become the servant by taking our nature he then went further on in the course of his ministry towards and unto the death of the cross itself it's not just the pain of that cross that you think about it's the shame of that cross the shame of being made a curse as Galatians 3 verse 13 puts it incredibly having the sin of his people imputed to him and having the sin of his people imputed to him that meant the death that they deserved also becoming his and he took it willingly he self isolated to that extent you see we can put it this way he didn't have any sin of his own but he took the sin of his people his self isolation was not to keep himself clear of the virus of sin if we can call sin a virus it's much more than a virus but let's call it that his self isolation from heaven coming into this world being the servant going towards the cross dying the death of the cross that was not to stay clear of the virus of sin it's the very opposite isn't it he took that to himself and therefore he took the death that belongs to God's judgment of sin and that's what he willingly made his own that's the death of the cross as

Galatians 3 verse 13 puts it Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us you see that in the cry of Christ from the cross my God my God why hast thou forsaken me that is the ultimate self-isolation the ultimate in Jesus willingly self-isolating himself coming from the glory of heaven from the garments of royalty to the death of the cross to my God my God why hast thou forsaken me that's the ultimate in self-isolation that's as far from what John 17 says what he said in the prayer the glory which I had with you before the world was that's as far from that glory that death of the cross that exclamation my God my God what it entailed for Jesus we cannot go into it but that's as far from the glory he had with the father as it's possible to get today our focus is on

Christ on Jesus the self isolating savior who came and took to himself all that that meant for him in the bearing of the sin of his people becoming the servant the one who obediently went to the cross and fulfilled all that was required of him and predicted of him in the death of the cross and having accomplished that he then was raised from the dead and God highly exalted him as Philippians 2 continues to say so the self-isolation of Jesus what did it entail it entailed a journey from glory to Golgotha it entailed becoming the servant by taking human nature it entailed making himself nothing divesting himself of the royal garments of heaven girding himself with the garments of a slave and fulfilling right through to the furthest point away from the glory he had with the father this is the

Jesus we believe in today this is the Jesus we worship today this is the Jesus through whom we have come to know the father today this is the Jesus who's sitting on the throne of the universe today this is the Jesus who oversees such a providence as this coronavirus is not outwith his hands outwith his authority outwith his will outwith his control he is sitting on that throne today supreme in the dignity of his godhood in the dignity of his perfect manhood the dignity of his lordship that's who we worship the Jesus who self isolated but who did he do it for the self isolation of Jesus who was it for well he says here in verse 19 of John 17 for their sake I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth for their sake for these disciples who were with him at the time but they obviously as the chapter goes on where Jesus says

[32 : 06] I do not ask for these only but also for those who will believe in me through their word in other words for all who would come to believe in him he did this for their sake they with him then are a sample of those that would also follow him believe in him and trust in him right through to the end of the world he took this virus of sin for sinners as Paul says in Romans while we were yet sinners Christ died for us he didn't wait until we were something other than sinners which couldn't be in any case he took the virus of sin for those who were already infected and facing death and condemned indeed to death and he did this so that we might be totally healed from it which is what is the case in our forgiveness in our acceptance with God in our being in Jesus

Christ reconciled to God for their sake who is Jesus for yourself today is he for you the self isolating saviour I don't mean do you understand that this is what he did you do understand that the bible tells you that but have you come to embrace him have you come to give yourself to him knowing what he has done for you and for your likes and for my likes is he today someone that I know and you know is absolutely crucial in our lives to save us from the consequences of sin to cure us from the virus of sin to finally bring us to be with himself in heaven where sin cannot enter Christ today the self isolating saviour it was for the sake of people like you and I who don't deserve him who don't deserve what he did and yet who desperately need him and whatever this world needs today not just in terms of this virus but all the needs of human beings we need

Christ more than anything else we need his salvation we need to benefit the fruit of his self isolation so that we will come in embracing him and trusting ourselves to him to benefit from all that he has done so that they also may be sanctified in truth now the word sanctified there is exactly the same word in Greek as the word consecrate for their sake I consecrate myself that means Jesus setting himself apart we've gone into something of what that entailed for himself setting himself apart for them that they also may be sanctified in truth and it means exactly the same from that point of view setting ourselves apart that we may be set apart by God and setting ourselves apart too but sanctified for us means more than it did for him because it means being made holy isn't it strange and isn't it glorious that for

Jesus consecration meant becoming sin that's what 2 Corinthians 5 21 puts it God made him to be sin for us the one who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God through him and it's the opposite for us our consecration is away from sin not toward it as it was for him for him

he took sin and he consecrated himself to that the sin of his people he paid the price of that in the death of the cross and for us the benefit of that is that we might be sanctified that we might be made holy that we might be cleansed from sin that we might be delivered from sin from its penalty from its presence from its defilement and the process is by means of God's truth that they may be also sanctified in truth and earlier on in verse 17 he said sanctify them in the truth your word is the truth a blessing today to have the word of

God to have the means by which God himself sanctifies us but you know there's a self-isolation for us in this as well it isn't simply the fact that God sanctifies his people that he sets them apart in Christ that he sanctifies them by the ministry of his spirit working in their hearts all of that is there but Philippians 2 and verses 12 to 13 also remind us that we are to ourselves engage fully in the work of sanctification we have our part and our role to play in that but it says work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you both to do and to will of his good pleasure it's God who works in you that's the foundation of everything that's the source that's the fountain from which everything else flows but part of what flows from that is that we ourselves are therefore motivated impelled enabled to work out our own salvation what does that mean it means self-isolation from sinning it means turning away from sin it means putting you back to sin and being determined as much as possible to leave it behind you until this world is over until life is done until you have what

[38 : 14] John 17 verse 24 mentions in place father I desire that they also I think it's better there as well that it's the word will instead of desire father I will this is the will of Jesus in prayer father I will that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am so as to see my glory that you have given me to be with him to be like him to have that glory in his presence that's the end result of the self-isolation of Jesus isn't he worth everything whatever demands are made of us in this world what are they compared to the demands that were made of him whatever we're willingly called upon to do isn't it small compared to what he willingly did for us and so isn't the self-isolation of Jesus today and all that it entailed is it not the most precious thing in all the world to you does it not mean absolutely everything to you do you not say but for it you would be lost and I would be lost and condemned forevermore glory be to the father to the son to the holy spirit let's pray lord of god we come before you today to give thanks as we reflect briefly upon your coming into this world and what it entailed lord we are dependent on your word in order to enlighten our minds as to something of what that meant for yourself we thank you lord that as the father of your people you sent your son so that he might take the sin of your people to himself we thank you lord for that complete service for that self-isolation that led to the cross and especially entailed the death of the cross we thank you today oh lord that we can come to benefit from it and do so through faith in his name bless us we pray now throughout the rest of this day and continue to work in our hearts to sanctify us to cleanse us and to make us more and more holy increasingly so as to be like you receive our worship we pray cleanse all that is of sin for Jesus sake amen let's now conclude we're going to sing in conclusion from psalm 118 that's in the sing psalms version 118 from verse 23 this is a passage of psalm 118 that speaks about the day that God has made that's the day of salvation we could say that the self isolation of Jesus really lies at the very foundation and heart of this day of salvation and the lord's day itself is a type or representation of that for us and the benefits we have in it the lord himself has done all this it is a marvel in our sight this is the day the lord has made in it let us take great delight we'll sing to tune dover's tale from verse 23 the lord himself has done all this the lord himself has done all this it is a marvel in

our sight this is the day the lord has made in it let us take great delight save us oh lord we humbly pray oh lord we pray grant us success he's blessed who comes in God's great name you from the lord's house we will bless the lord is God and he has made his glorious light upon us fall let us approach the altar shores and celebrate the festival you are my God I'll give you thanks you are my God I'll give you praise oh thank the lord for he is good his steadfast love enters always now may the grace of the lord Jesus Christ the love of God the father and the communion of the holy spirit be with you all now and ever more amen thank you so much for watching for participating in this service of worship do join us again later this evening God willing at 6:30 when the service will be led by reverend kenny i mcleod meantime thank you again and may God truly bless you all