

New Year's Day Service - God's Promised Presence

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Date: 01 January 2023

[0 : 00] We begin our worship this morning by singing to God's praise. We will be standing for our singings apart from the second one. The second singing is a Gaelic singing and the words are on the notice sheet.

But the first singing, Psalm 90. We're singing Psalm 90 in the Scottish Psalter, page 350 of the Psalm book. Singing from verse 13 down to the end of the Psalm.

Turn yet again to us, O Lord, how long thus shall it be? Let it repent thee now for those that servants are to thee. With thy tender mercies, Lord, as early satisfy.

So we rejoice shall all our days and still be glad in thee. We'll sing from verse 13 to the end of the Psalm to God's praise. Turn yet again to us, O Lord, how long thus shall it be?

Let him repent thee now for those that servants are to thee.

[1 : 24] O with thy tender mercies, Lord, as early satisfy. And then hence be born, as early satisfy. So we rejoice shall all our days and still be glad.

and then hence be upon us, O Lord, how long thus shall we?

O let thy work and power appear, thy servants face before, and show unto their children dear, thy glory evermore.

And let the beauty of the Lord our holy us upon, our mighty works, established now, established in the Lord.

Amen. Let's come to God in prayer. Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[4 : 07] Amen. Our Father in heaven, as we come to worship you this day, we thank you that you are the God of all our days and all our years. Even as the psalmist reminds us here, he speaks of the sorrows that we may have experienced in the past, the days wherein we have had grief, the years wherein we have seen ill.

But yet, O Lord, he reminds us that we can look to you and seek your face, and that we may know your glory upon us, the beauty of the Lord shining upon his people.

And we thank you for your promise to meet with us anew, that as we come into your presence, Lord, we come to magnify and praise your name.

And so we ask, O Lord, today that we will come in through reverence and fear of you, but come with a sense of thanksgiving and rejoicing that you are God.

And so help us, Lord, as we begin a new year, to commit our ways to you, to seek your face, O Lord, and to seek your blessing upon us, young and old alike, that we will know, Lord, your leading and your guiding every step that we take, that we would know, Lord, your establishing of your works in our midst, that all that we do as a people, that you will bless our work, Lord, for it is your work.

[5 : 33] And so we ask, O Lord, that you will be with us all, families, friends, loved ones, and all our community at this time, that we will know, Lord, your blessing and your peace with us.

We thank you for all our young folks here today. We thank you for a time of holiday for them from school. We pray that you will bless them and watch over them even in these days and as they return to school in the coming days as well.

May they be glad, O Lord, in their young years. May they delight in you. May they know you as their Lord and as their shepherd. May you direct their steps and their paths, O Lord, that they will seek to walk with you.

We ask, Lord, that for us all together as a people, that you will show us your ways and teach us your paths, and lead us in them. So, Lord, we commit ourselves into your care and keeping in our service of worship today and throughout this day.

May we give glory and praise to you. Go before us, we ask, O Lord, and pardon all our sins, as we ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

[6 : 40] That was good to have a number of young folks here today. I hope you're enjoying your holidays. I hope you're having a good time. You'll be looking forward to going back to school this

week. I'm going to read a verse to you just now.

Just listen to what these verses say. It's verses from the New Testament, Mark's Gospel, reading in chapter 13 and at verse 35.

It's often a time of waiting for many different things just now.

And did anybody last night think to themselves, I'm going to stay awake until the bells come, until midnight comes, and we say Happy New Year to everyone.

Did anyone manage to stay up until midnight? Yeah, a few people nodding their heads. Did anybody fall asleep waiting? Maybe a few parents will put, oh, there's one hand going up at least.

[7 : 51] Maybe a few others as well. You decide you're going to stay up and hear the bells coming in and say Happy New Year to everyone. But by the time maybe 10 o'clock or half past 10 comes, you just fall asleep.

And what happens if you fall asleep? Well, you miss everything, don't you? You miss out on what's happening all around you. And that's what these verses are telling us about here.

They're saying we have to stay awake, but not for the bells coming at midnight, but for the Lord's coming. Do you know how long you will spend waiting in your lifetime?

It's said that if you live to the age of 70, you'll have spent three years of your life waiting. That might be waiting for someone to come.

It might be waiting in a waiting room like at a doctor's. It might be waiting in a queue in the shop. It might be putting on hold on the phone when you're trying to phone through to a company.

[8 : 51] It might be waiting on the plane or waiting on the ferry because they're late. We spend so much time waiting. And someone said that if we live to the age of 70, we spend three years waiting.

Can you imagine that? If you look at it like this, on New Year's Day 2020, if you'd started waiting then, you'd have been waiting until today. Sitting, doing nothing.

Just waiting. Sounds crazy, doesn't it? But waiting doesn't mean we do nothing. And that's what the gospel here is telling us. We're not just to wait for the Lord to come and do nothing.

We are to wait on the Lord, looking to Him, trusting in Him, and doing everything for Him. Believing in Him and then serving Him with all our heart.

Not knowing when He's going to come, but we wait. We stay awake. And that means that we stay awake. We do work for Him. We keep active. We keep busy for Him.

[9 : 52] Because He promises He's going to come. Just like the bells of midnight came last night, the Lord is going to come. We don't know when, but He's saying to us all, stay awake.

So let's not fall asleep today. Let's stay awake, looking to and trusting in the Lord Jesus. Well, we're going to say the Lord's Prayer together now.

So we'll 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 sing to God's praise again. This time we're singing in Gaelic from Psalm 73.

[10 : 53] Two verses from verse 23. We're going to sing verse 23 and 24.

I'll read them in English as well. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me. Thou with thy counsel while I live, wilt me conduct and guide.

And to thy glory afterward receive me to abide. In English as well. Dean Tiesel low. Can I sing sing? wiewend ■■ jackets autographed Squishawca?

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trials Spikeert hyder The peace. The peace.

[12 : 08] O rei e serivai o■■■ e wi■cejkom kumele suoscach imagine CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS In your hand, and our hearts, and our God of King.

We're going to turn to read God's Word together now. Matthew's Gospel. The Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28.

We can read the whole of this chapter together. Matthew 28, from the beginning. Now after the Sabbath, towards the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

Behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow.

[15:00] And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the woman, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

He is not here, for he has risen as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead.

And behold, he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him. See, I have told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them and said, Greetings. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid.

Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me. While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.

[16:05] When they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, Tell people. His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.

And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So they took the money and did as they were directed. This story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted.

And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth is being given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

Amen. And may God bless that reading from his word. Let's again join our hearts together in prayer. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, as we read in these passages before us, Lord, that we are a people who so often stumble along the way, a people who so often have maybe many doubts and fears and anxieties.

[17:34] We thank you that we are reminded that we come to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is risen, who is ever living, to make intercession for his people.

That even today as we come and offer up our prayers together at the beginning of a new year, we have that great assurance and that great hope that we are heard through him.

For we come to the one whose name is above every name. We come to the one who is eternal, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. And we thank you that just as all things were made by him and through him and for him, that you continue to uphold us through him, that in him we live, move and have our being.

And today as we worship and praise your name, as we seek your face anew, we ask, O Lord, that we may see you and worship you. Take away any distractions that are in our minds today.

Take away the thoughts maybe pressing upon us for the week ahead. That in this time together, our attention, our focus will be upon you. And that your spirit will be with us to bless your word to us, to bless us in our hearts and in our souls.

[18:57] We do thank you, Lord, that at the beginning of a new year, when we see so many things that can be new for us, and we maybe, Lord, pray for change in our world and in our nation and in our own personal lives as well.

We see so many things that we want to be different. We pray for our world and its chaos with the many events going on around us in so many different parts of the world.

And we think of the natural disasters over this past year, even over these past days, as we've seen the severe storms in America, the snowstorms there, as we've seen and heard over these past months of earthquakes and natural disasters of different kinds, as we've seen, O Lord, the terror of war in our world, the fear it's brought not just to one nation but to many nations, the fear of escalation of it, the fear of the world in which we live and the power that belongs to so few in it.

But yet, O Lord, we look to you, the one who has all power and authority in heaven and in earth. And we pray, Lord, that in this coming year, we will see your hand upon us as a people, as nations of this world, that we will see your hand in power, turning us from the ways in which we are going and turning us towards you.

O Lord, how we pray for you to come in a day of your mighty power, in a day of your reviving power, in reviving your people, that we will worship you and trust in you with all our hearts.

[20 : 42] We pray that for our nation too, O Lord, which has seen so much change in our midst as well. As we think of the passing of our queen earlier this year and a new king being installed, we pray for him, Lord, that you will guide him, that you will uphold him, that you will bless him, that you will use him, Lord, for your glory, that you will turn his heart towards you, that he will honor you with his words, that he will honor you with his actions, and that all he would do would be to glory in your name.

Lord, how we pray that you will do that for our king and also our prime minister and first minister and all who rule over us. O Lord, that you would make these places of power and authority, places of praise and worship, that we would even, as we look back in our land, as we have seen and heard of days when prayer was called for, that we would see these days once again, when our nation would be still and to know that you are God.

We pray for our own homes and our families and our communities too. In the year that's gone, O Lord, we've maybe seen so much personal change as well. And we know that today is often a day of much emotion, looking back and all the grief and sorrows that so many have had, looking back and the joys and the high points too, but giving thanks for your constancy in it all, that you are the God who is with his people, that you will never leave us or forsake us.

And so may you bless all our people, bless our communities, we pray, Lord. Comfort those who need you, comfort those who are cast down in their hearts and their minds and in their souls.

We pray, O Lord, that you will lift them up, that they will come to praise your name as the God who is good. We pray, Lord, for our ministry here as well as a people, that you will bless the preaching of your word in this coming year, that it will build us up, O Lord, that it will encourage us and strengthen us as a people to stand up to the challenges that we face and to be a people who will stand up for the name of Christ and offer a prayer constantly to you, that you will turn the tide once more against us, that we will see, O Lord, your name praised.

[23 : 08] Help us in our outreach, that you will bless our every endeavour to go out with your word, that we will be a people who seek to do and to seek to do to your glory all things.

May you continue with us, we pray, throughout this day and as we commit all to you, may you guide us, Lord, and be our Lord and our shepherd each and every step of the way, guiding us by your light and by your spirit as we ask all things for the forgiveness of our sins, looking to you, the one who is able to pardon, the one to whom we give all glory and praise, looking to the name above all names, the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, for his sake.

Amen. Well, again, we'll sing to God's praise. This time, we're singing in Psalm 71 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 71, page 311 of the psalm books, we're singing at verse 14 down to verse 18. These words remind us again of looking to the Lord and trusting in him for all that lies ahead.

But I with expectation will hope continually and yet with praises more and more I will thee magnify. Thy justice and salvation my mouth abroad shall show even all the day for either of the numbers do not know.

[24 : 40] From verse 14 to 18 to God's praise. Amen. But I with expectation will hope continually and yet with praises more and more I will be magnified.

thy justice and salvation my mouth and watch shall show and I will constantly go on and I will constantly go on instead of all the Lord and thine your righteousness divine alone

I will record for even from my years so far by thee I have been taught taught and hither to I have declared the wonders thou hast taught and the glory be be not when I whole land be headed grow till to this age thy strength and power to all to come my show my show can we turn back to our reading in Matthew's Gospel chapter 28 we're going to look at the last few words of this chapter just to set in its context we see here the account of the resurrection of Jesus something that we're hearing a study on in our Lord's Day evening services the wonder of the resurrection and the hope that it gives to God's people and it was something that brought much fear to the people even then to think that Jesus is risen but he is and we thank God that he is and as he rose he gave this great

commission to the disciples and indeed to his church at verse 16 verse 16 now the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them and when they saw him they worshipped him but some doubted and Jesus came and said to them all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you behold I am with you always to the end of the age particularly these words at the end and behold I am with you always to the end of the age these are words that you have maybe heard many a time before maybe even just now in the last evening or so you've heard these words repeated or read them again online not the words we've read there but the words that were spoken at the turn of the year in the Christmas broadcast of 1939 by King George VI in that broadcast he said this or he said these words that he was quoting and I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown and he replied go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God that shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way so I went forth and finding the hand of God throgged gladly into the night and he led me towards the hills and the breaking of the day in the lone east he quoted these words that were from a poem by Minnie Haskins and this was a time when our nation was on the cusp of the second world war

things were taking hold in our world at that time that would bring much terror and fear to so many over a number of years yet these words were spoken to give hope to a people in the midst of all that was taking place that as they were going forward at that time that they would see that there was much that was unknown to them but that they were trusted that they were to entrust it all to a God who was known and who knew all that was to come and as we begin a new year ourselves just now there's much that is unknown for us be it in a personal level there's maybe much uncertainty in our own lives at this time be it as a church, as a denomination again there's so much that we do not know just what lies ahead for us as a nation as we've seen so much change over these past years and the great uncertainties that there are around us all the time there's much that is unknown to us and in our world that is in constant chaos there's much that's unknown to us but it is known unto God

God knows everything that lies ahead of us and so we look to him and we seek his face as we go forward into this new year and it's going forward seeking to know this promise that he gave to his disciples long ago that we go forward as a people who are seeking to worship and honour his name in our worship that we give and in our worship as we do as we go out among the people of our towns and villages as we seek to share the gospel with all around us that we'll be bold for it because we have this promise behold I am with you always even to the end of the age New Year's Day is often an emotional day for so many people I'm sure we have all maybe shed or will shed a tear at some point last night or during this day because looking back it often brings back many different emotions to us some recent some maybe from more distant past even today as we think again of the reminder of January 1919 and the great disaster that struck our island with the sinking of the Islay or something that's been remembered today again we can look in a near past and a near distant past there's so much that brings so much emotion to us things that have changed and are always changing so we go in this sense of uncertainty but are we going forward looking and wanting someone to lead us even as these words that King George offered up to a nation so long ago do we have that desire in our own hearts today that as we go into the uncertainty into the unknown that we will put our hand in the hand of God and that we will go forward with him we have one who is the light of the world and we have the one who we are to go forward looking to and seeking to know his blessing and his grace with us as we go forward remembering that he is with us even to the end of the age

[34 : 09] God with us that is the heart of encouragement that we have in these words before us and they were a people who needed so much encouragement as you think of the disciples as you think of the women who were at the tomb as we read in this chapter as well they were a people who needed encouragement they had been through so much in following the Lord Jesus they had seen many times of great blessing and they had seen many times of great trial as well culminating in seeing their Lord crucified the most horrendous end to our Lord's life as in our eyes and yet all planned by God all with a purpose for God the lowest point in their eyes is really what we see as the highest point that Christ died for our sins but that he is risen and as they met with the risen Christ we see here in verse 17 that they met with him and they worshipped him on the mountain on which he had directed them to but it says there too that some doubted some doubted they were still

wondering what's going on what's happening what is the purpose in all of this and again it reminds us of our own hearts as well even as we come to worship God today there could be an element of doubt in our own hearts what is God's purpose in this world just now what is his plans and purposes for us as a people in this world when so many things don't seem to make sense but he gives them these words words and words with great authority

Jesus came and said to them all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me he has all authority in heaven and earth and that is still true to this day and this authority is the highest authority of all and as we see here this authority it leads to a command go therefore and make disciples of all nations go into this world in the darkness of it go and make disciples of all nations show my name abroad far and wide that my name will be glorified and praised teach them to observe all that I had commanded and then he gives them this promise I am with you always even to the end of the age and so for a short time I want us to think of this promise that he gives the promise of his presence and that this is the presence that we would seek and look for going forward ourselves into this new year and the first thing about this promise is the who of this promise who is it that is giving this promise when Jesus says

I am with you what does he actually say who is it that's actually going to be with them it is a wonderful promise and one that we have to see the great power that's behind it the authority that's behind it the great I am I am I am with you always we have to look at the name that is here there is a name there before us in the words I am it's a name that is powerful and when you look at the names given in scripture whether it's in the Old Testament or the New Testament you often find that names had great significance names told us a lot not just about the person but about the one who was giving the name as well and so often throughout scripture you see a name given and then the name explained now we all have a name ourselves but what does our name mean?

we all have a name given to us at birth and if I was to say to you my name is Calamurdo Smith what does that mean to you?

maybe it doesn't mean much maybe it doesn't explain much about me and as people come to us and we are meeting new people we are often asking questions of one another but the most common question isn't just what is your name?

[39 : 00] we will often ask as well ko asa hau? where are you from? ko na dunyai? who are your people? because that tells us more and I could tell you so much more about my name by explaining where I am from and who my people are then you might know so much more about me and be recognized as belonging to a certain place and a certain people and when you look in the names in scripture as well you find so often that names given by God have so much meaning behind them you think of Abraham whose name was changed by God in his covenant with him in Genesis 17 verse 5 it says no longer shall your name be called Abraham but you shall be called Abraham for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations his name has great purpose God gave him a new name because he will be the father of a multitude of nations so many as the stars in the sky and the grains of sand on the seashore would be the people of God

Moses was given a name Exodus 2 verse 10 it says she named to Moses saying I drew him out of the water a name that had a meaning behind it purpose behind it Peter in the New Testament was given a new name he was Simon but Jesus said to him I tell you you are Peter which means rock and he said and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it names have so much meaning in scripture and so Jesus himself was given a name as well he was given many names as we thought in this past week of the birth of Christ we have seen the name given to our Lord and Saviour you see it in Matthew chapter 1 verse 23 it says the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they shall call him Emmanuel which means God with us Emmanuel God with us and here as we look at this verse verse 20 of chapter 28 chapter 28 behold I am he is the one who will be with us Jesus' name means Emmanuel God with us that is the promise that we have here Jesus' name means God will save God is salvation God is with us to this end that he is a God who will save his people I am and you see this name begins back in the Old Testament when Moses is commanded to go and lead God's people out of Egypt Moses asks God who will I say has sent me and God says tell them I am has sent you

God himself God with us I am and then in the New Testament when you see the life of Jesus you see how often he says I am the I am sayings of Jesus I am the bread of life I am the resurrection I am the life I am the way the truth and the life he is the great I am and so here as we look at this passage and this verse in particular who is it that is going to be with us as we put our trust in him I

am God with us just as he was with Moses just as he was with Joshua who was in fear and trembling as well and taking over the leadership from Moses but God said to him be of good courage for I am with you I am there is so much in that name for us

God with us that is the promise as we go forward trusting in him I am is with us God is with us the second thing we see here is the when we have the who and then we have the when I am with you always I am with you always always it is good to have friends and community around us going into a new year it is good to be able to share with people to have people we can share so many things with and especially at a time of year when many feel lonely or sad to be able to gather around one another and share with one another to be there to encourage and to help to help but there is no one who can be with us always there is no one who is always there for us even our closest loved ones there are times when they just cannot be there with us but yet we have this assurance here that I am is with us always always so as well as the promise of the presence with us there is also the promise that he is going to be with us always every step of the way that is a promise the Lord gives to his people that as we put our trust in him he will go with us always it is a repeated promise throughout scripture of so often never will I leave you never will I forsake you he says to his people again and again and this is not a promise here just for the early church he is not saying just to the disciples

[45 : 30] I am with you always just for a short time until you get the church established until you manage to get things going yourselves then I will leave you to it he is not just saying this is for a short period of time he is not saying either I will come and I will be with you now and again I will come and be with you from time to time as I see your need he is not saying that at all he is not saying well I will be with the church in certain places in certain parts of the world at certain times this is the great I am the one who is able to be always present with all his people everywhere and at all times it is always and everywhere and that is something great for us to remember too that as we go on looking to him that he is with us always to remember that every time that we meet as God's people he is with us to remember that every time even when we are not with others as we are seeking him he is with us that great reminder in Matthew 18 verse 20 for where two or three come together in my name there am I with them he is in the midst to bless and we see that he speaks these words to his disciples to pass on to his people down through all the generations that he will be with his people always but you notice this is in the midst of a command being given as well so the when is not just always but the when is also as we are going forward in his name go therefore and make disciples of all nations go be a people who do in my name and then you will know in an even greater way my presence with you you see it throughout scriptures again so often you think of

Moses as he was going to the people the children of Israel and as God said I am has sent you what was he doing he was sending Moses to lead a people Joshua too was to be a leader of the people and he was given this promise be strong and courageous for I am with you he is saying go and do and you maybe say to yourself ah yes but they were people who were specifically called they had a great task to do for the Lord but so does every believer every Christian has a task from the Lord the Lord in Haggai later on in the Old Testament as the people are again downcast and dismayed and all that they are seeing around them the Lord calls on his people to work in Haggai 2 verse 4 it says be strong all you people of the land declares the Lord and work for I am with you declares the Lord Almighty he gives his people a task and he is still giving his people a task today he still gives his church a task today to go to all the nations of the world to be his witnesses to be the people who declare his glory and they go and we go with this promise that I am with you always a preacher in America was telling a story about having been speaking to a mailman once and the mailman was sharing with him about how he felt such a great sense of security as he was out and about delivering the mail and the preacher asked him why do you feel so safe you are all by yourself you are going out delivering the mail and sometimes into very dangerous parts of the city well the postman the postman said to him well because I know all the resources of the government are pledged to support my work even if all I am delivering is just a simple postcard in my bag no one dares touch me because of the power that is behind my protection every police force will come and guard me if someone would do so much as come near me there was this security in his work there was a protection over him and one of our greatest fears as we go about the Lord's work is our own natural fear how can we do it we feel weak we feel we have no strength of ourselves we cannot do it ourselves but that story with the postman reminds me about ourselves on the business of God that as we deliver as we deliver this great gospel to others as we stand up for this gospel before

others that we have this promise

I am with you always I am with you and so may 2023 be a year when we are bold when we are bold to go with the gospel when we are bold to commit to the gospel when we are bold to stand up for the gospel in the midst of all the attacks that come our way in the attacks to God's name through our governments and through so many people in this world who seek to destroy and put away the name of God and the name of Christ may we be bold to stand up to speak out to stand up for the truth of the word of God and why can we be so bold because of this promise I am with you always he will never leave us he will never fail us

God is with us whatever we do so let us seek to be a people who do who go about the Lord's business with this great assurance that he is with us that he is with us the third and the final thing I want us to see here is how long the how long I am with you always to the end of the age even to the end of the age the disciples themselves had spoken about the end of the age when would it come so many of them felt it was coming soon but the reality is that no one knows not even the Lord Jesus himself was able to tell them just when it would come Matthew 24 verse 3 the disciples talking to Jesus saying tell us they said when will this happen and what will be the sign of your coming at the end of the age but Jesus goes on to say verse 10 at that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other but he said he who stands firm to the end will be saved there is this great uncertainty as to when the Lord will come we don't know we don't know but just as we were saying with the young ones earlier we are to stay awake to stay awake to be on our watch for when that time will come and while we have time to be about the Father's business to be a people of faith because he says

I am with you always even to the end of the age the Lord's strength will never fail us the Lord's strength will always be with us as we sang in Psalm 71 we are reminded there of our own lives verse 17 for even from my youth O God by thee I have been taught and hitherto I have declared the wonders thou has brought when we are young when we are vibrant whether it is in years whether it is in years or in faith there is a sense of strength in the Lord but as we go on we maybe feel more weary and in verse 18 of that Psalm the Psalmist says and now Lord leave me not when I old and grey headed grow till to this age thy strength and power to all to come I show there is a sense of prayer in these words Lord leave me not now when I am frail in myself weak in myself leave me not till to this age thy strength and power to all to come

[55 : 03] I show there is this longing in the Psalmist to keep going all his days in the strength of the Lord and that is not just a promise and a desire for that Psalmist it should be our desire too that the Lord would be with us even to the end of the age when is the end of the age is there an end of the age well the word reminds us that though our time here is temporary there is eternity always before us and for God's people they would ever sing his praise to all eternity he will be with us always throughout all the ages throughout all of time throughout all eternity so the question today is how are we going forward into this new year are we going forward putting our hand into the hand of the Lord trusting him there is a story there is a story about a cathedral that was built in Italy and on this cathedral back many years ago there were three entrances into the cathedral three great doors and above each door were words inscribed into the stone and pictures above them as well over one door the door was an ornately carved wreath of roses and the words underneath said all that all that which pleases is but for a moment on the other side there was another door and above this door was sculpted a cross and below this cross were the words all that which troubles is but for a moment a moment but then there was a third door in the middle the largest of the three doors and above this door was the inscription that only is important which is eternal now for many of us will be going through one of these three doors going into the new year we'll be going forward through a door thinking of all the pleasures of this world all that we're enjoying and it's reminding us it's but for a moment others are maybe going into this year with many troubles many sorrows many sadness in their hearts but again there is a reminder as there isn't God's word it's but for a moment the best way to go forward is looking to God and trusting in Him for that which is permanent is eternal and God is unchanging and unchangeable and we are to look to that God as we go on into this new year yes there will be joys along the way along the way we make the most of them but we don't depend on them yes there will be troubles along the way as well but they are for a moment too but with God and Christ Jesus

His Son is what is eternal and it's to what is eternal that we are to look and to trust and to trust the one who is the great I am and the one who has promised His people and His church I am with you

always even to the end of the age may He be with us going forward today and always that we would seek His face and know His blessing with us let us pray let us pray our Father in heaven we rejoice that you are a God of so many promises promises of blessings in this life help us to enjoy them not selfishly not making them our priority in life but giving thanks to you for them we know too Lord the many troubles of this life give us strength to endure them and to come through them by your grace and by your mercy remembering too that they are but for a moment but help us above all to know Jesus Christ our Lord the one who is eternal and the one who gives the hope of eternal life through faith in Him may we look to Him and go forward today and always knowing Him and seeking to serve Him and knowing that great promise that I am with you always even to the end even to the end of the age guide us and keep us we pray and pardon our sins in Jesus name

Amen Amen We are going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 46 in the Scottish Psalter page 271 I'm going to sing from verse 7 down to the end of the psalm The Lord of hosts upon our side doth constantly remain the God of Jacob's our refuge us safely to maintain at verse 10 be still and know that I am God among the heathen I will be exalted I on earth will be exalted high we sing from verse 7 to 11 to God's praise to God's praise The Lord of hosts upon our side doth constantly be within

O God of Jacob's our refuge has saved me to maintain come and behold come and behold what marvelous words are high the Lord ye Lord come see what there so is come see what there so is come see what there so is come see what the beyond the earth had brought unto the ends of all the earth of all the earth

Hai Till peace eternes The holy grace Thus here we pass Then find the child's heart Be still and know That I am God A God, Marie, the light Where we exalted Lord, cannot deny On earth Will be exalted

[63 : 37] High Out God, dear In the intriguing-to- spar.

That Roncharis Kingrezyes. Come to the refuge, I ever will abide.

After the benediction, I'll go to the main door. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.