

June communion 2013

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Date: 02 June 2013

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 01] Let us worship God, singing to us praise from Sing Psalms, Psalm number 40. We sang from Psalm 40 last night in the Scottish Psalter, but this morning from Sing Psalms, Psalm number 40.

It's on page 50. I waited long upon the Lord. He heard my cry and turned to me. He raised me from the slimy pit, and from the mire he pulled me free.

He set my feet on solid rock, a place to stand both firm and broad. He put a new song in my mouth, a joyful hymn of praise to God.

Many will look with godly fear, and on the Lord alone rely. Blessed are they who trust the Lord, who shun the proud, and gods that lie. The wonders you have done, O Lord, how many and how great they are.

Your plans for us are far beyond our power to number or declare. You did not ask that calves or goats be brought a sacrifice for sin.

[1 : 04] But you have opened up my ears. You did not seek burnt offering. Then I declared, Lord, I have come. It's written off me in the scroll. I want to do your will, my God.

Your law is in my heart and soul. Psalm 40, I waited upon the Lord. I waited long upon the Lord. He heard my cry and turned to me. He raised me from the sky he built, And from the mile he pulled me free.

He set my feet on solid rock, A place to stand, O firm and broad.

He put a new song in my heart, A joyful day of grace to God.

[2 : 43] Then he will live with God. And on the Lord alone rely.

Blessed are you who trust the Lord, Who shall the proud and watch the light.

The wonders you have done, O Lord.

How many are, how great they are. Your plans for us are far beyond their power, To the land that our redeemer.

You did not ask that paths or goals Be brought a sacrifice for sin.

[4 : 20] But you have opened up my ears today, O secret offering.

Let me pray. Let me pray. Lord, I have come. It's written of me in the scroll.

I want you to do your will. I want your love.

It's in my heart and soul. Let us bow in prayer. Gracious and ever-blessed Lord, as we gather together this morning, we pray that we may have a stillness in our hearts and that we might have a sense of worship.

May all other distractions be removed from us and may our focus be upon the Lord. We give thanks for not only an opportunity of coming together in worship, but especially to be able to enjoy the means of grace that has been set for us by the Lord.

[5 : 51] Even as we were reflecting last night of how the event that we are involved in today is tied into the history that the Lord has.

In fact, it's his history, his story, but that this is part of what he has given to the church and that we are involved in a very meaningful and powerful way, linking our past with our present and indeed with our future.

But we pray that as we are here at this very present time, we ask, Lord, to presence thyself with us so that we will have a fresh understanding of what it is to meet with the Lord God Almighty.

We give thanks, O Lord, for the great, wonderful truth that God has come to dwell with man, Emmanuel God with us. We marvel at the grace.

We marvel at the way that the Lord has come into this world. We were not in any way responsible for that.

[7 : 02] It was not due to our cry. It was not due to our thinking. It is all of God's purpose, planning, and grace. And so we pray that we may, in humble recognition of God's great love towards us, today have thankful hearts, hearts that will rejoice in the Lord, hearts that recognize God's bountiful provision for us, hearts that are filled with a sense of the glory of God, O Lord, we pray to help us as each one of us gather here today.

We pray for all your people who are at the table and ask that they might know the peace of God that passes all understanding. We pray that every distraction will be kept from us and that our focus will be upon Jesus.

We pray for those who are not at the table. We believe some could be. And we ask, O Lord, to deal and work in their hearts. We pray for any who are not at the table, who are still strangers to the saving grace of God.

We ask, O Lord, to work in their hearts so that they will see and behold the King. The desire will be created. The faith will be given. Help them, Lord, to come and embrace Jesus as offered in the gospel.

We pray to bless all who gather as we do up and down our land and throughout the nations of this world. We give thanks for the encircling praise that takes place globally.

[8 : 46] As some rise, others will be going to bed. There is such a time difference throughout this world, which means that on this day there will be perpetual praise ascending heavenward.

And we give thanks for that. We pray, Lord, into all the dark corners of this world where there is no gospel influence. Lord, bring that to bear upon these communities in these areas of darkness.

We pray especially for the areas of war and where there is bloodshed and hatred and violence and so much suffering.

Lord, there are times we just cannot get our head around what we see. And sometimes these things are too much for our heart to bear. But we pray that in all the mess that this world is because of sin, that the healing power of God in Christ might be brought to bear into many situations today.

We pray to encourage those who go into difficult places and difficult circumstances, those who are risking life and limb for the good and for the help of others.

[10 : 02] O Lord, protect them. We pray to bless the persecuted church and those who are risking their very life for the sake of the gospel.

O Lord, put a wall of fire around them. Be their daily and nightly protection. We ask, O Lord, that many of the enemies of Jesus today will become friends. And we ask, O Lord, that the power of God may come down from heaven mightily so that many souls will come to embrace Jesus Christ as Savior.

Bless young and old, we pray. Bless those who mourn, those who are sad, those who are struggling in life. We pray, Lord, for all the different situations and conditions that we find ourselves in.

Strengthen those whose faith feels weak. Strengthen those, Lord, who feel that they are so struggling that sometimes they feel they're going to make shipwreck of their faith.

We pray that even today will be a day where that faith will be strengthened. Bless us then, we pray. Have mercy upon us. Do us good and cleanse us from all our sin.

[11 : 10] In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. We're going to read now God's Word in Paul's letter to the Romans and in chapter 5.

Romans chapter 5. And we're going to read the first 11 verses. Romans chapter 5. And we read the first 11 verses.

ESV, that's on page 1135. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

[12 : 24] For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous passion, though perhaps for a good passion one would dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of a son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Amen, and may God bless to us this reading of his own holy word. We're again going to sing, and this time we sing in Gaelic. We have a Gaelic singing at their own in-house communion.

[13 : 39] Psalm 9, the ninth psalm, and we're going to sing verses 7 to 9. Psalm 9, verses 7 to 9.

Psalm 9, verses 7 to 9.

to 7. Jesus Christ, ch aman, ch Sea of entry, chunayd, chlan, chlan, chlan, ch gigantic, hoen, chlan, ach chih capacidad, chlen, coh chlan, chlan, chuy, chlan, chlan, chCe, chlan, chlan, chlan, ch■, chlan, chlan, chlan, chlan, chlan, chlan, chlan, chlan, chlan, chlan, 've it?

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Oh Duage Thank you.

[17 : 01] Let's turn again to the chapter that we read in Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 5, and reading from verse 6.

Verses 6 to 10. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous passion, though perhaps for a good passion one would dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us. In that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

So, today, of course, we are remembering the most amazing sacrificial love that this world has ever seen.

[18 : 11] We know that down throughout history, there have been many wonderful examples of sacrificial love. We, I'm sure, we're all aware of people who have actually lost their life trying to save a loved one.

It's very, very tragic, and yet it's a very powerful thing when something like that happens. And I'm sure we're all aware of people and families that have experienced that.

But here we see the ultimate giving, the ultimate sacrifice, the ultimate love. And as we come to view here what Jesus Christ has done for us, it shows us very clearly that Jesus did what he did.

And also, for who, the ones that he did what he did, we want to see who they were. There's two things really wanted to look at here to see what Christ did and who he did what he did for.

And the first thing we see here, though, of course, it tells us that for while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

[19 : 33] So that word or that expression there, at the right time, would indicate to us that there was an appointed time for Christ's work.

That Jesus Christ was fulfilling a particular timetable that was given to him. And we know that. Maybe we kind of mentioned that last night, but we know that there were times the Jews were plotting to take Jesus and they could never get him.

And he escaped from them or the situation changed and they were unable to get him. And the word would then tell us that the time was not right, that they couldn't take him because it was his time had not yet come.

And so it shows us here very clearly that the Lord has a purpose and he has a plan and that this is his timetable.

And that very clearly indicates to us that the Lord had planned everything in detail. You remember last night when it said that the plotting Jewish leaders were determined not to take Jesus during the feast in case it would cause an uproar, in case there would be a riot.

[20 : 53] And yet God's purpose, the Father's purpose, was that the Son would be taken during the feast. Because, of course, the Passover feast was all pointing to Jesus.

And so one of the wonderful things that the Bible shows us is that the whole way of salvation is something that God purposed and God planned and has revealed to us has purposed and planned it from all eternity.

One thing that we must dispel from our thinking is that God's way of salvation was a reaction to what happened in Eden.

That it was like a kind of afterthought on God's part. Not at all. There are no afterthoughts with God. We have afterthoughts.

Often that happens. And after something happens, a situation arises, and because of what has happened, we have to change our mind and change our plan. That was never so with God.

[22 : 00] The whole scheme of salvation is not God's afterthought. It's not even God's reaction to what happened in Eden.

It is what God purposed and planned from all eternity. And that shows us, it brings us back to try and understand to a certain extent the measure of his love.

Because we have difficulty often in understanding the depth of love. You see, our love is often impulsive. And our love, it can fluctuate and our love can change.

But that's never so with God. His love is, like himself, unchangeable. And so this is one of the wonderful things.

It's one of the most reassuring things for the church. Is to know that God's love is unchangeable. God cannot set his love upon a person or upon a people.

[23 : 00] And then remove that love. And change his mind. And fall out of love with people. God never falls out of love with those that he has set his love upon.

And that is one of the most reassuring truths that we can find. Because unfortunately, we often are guilty.

And it's a sin of bringing God down to the level of our own imagination. Even basing it upon the truth. We try and grasp who God is.

And so often we measure God against our own thinking. And that's always dangerous. We've always got to see what the Word says. And allow the Word through the Holy Spirit to fix this idea within our mind.

Without in any way trying to alter within our own mind. And bring God down to a level of our own thinking. But this is a wonderful thing is that before this world, before even the foundation of this world, we were loved by God.

[24 : 12] It's an amazing thought. And then Paul comes to highlight the sacrifice that Jesus Christ has made. And he does this by way of contrast to a certain extent.

Because Paul is highlighting here. And he says in verse 7, Now, I'm not going to try and show what is the difference between a righteous passion and a good passion.

I don't even think that that's the point that Paul is making here. But Paul is really saying it's not impossible for a passion to give their life for one who is righteous.

And possibly even more likely for one that is good. It's not impossible. It happens. And we know that that sort of thing has often happened. And sometimes somebody gives their life for somebody that they don't even know.

But normally, in the normal course of circumstances, when somebody is trying, maybe loses their life trying to rescue somebody.

[25 : 19] It very often is somebody that they know and they love. Occasionally, it has happened with regard to a stranger, someone they don't know.

And of course, the ultimate giving of life for people maybe that we don't know in many ways is what happens in war. But here, when we come to look at what Christ has done, it's really by way of contrast.

Because this section sets out before us the kind of people that Jesus laid down his life for. And we're told here that they were weak.

That's the first thing we're told. For while we were still weak, that is, without strength. And some people may say, well, that's very noble of the Lord Jesus to lay down his life for those who are weak, those who have no strength.

But this is not the weakness or the lack of strength that maybe a baby has. Or the weakness or lack of strength that maybe somebody who's very old has.

[26 : 27] This is a weakness and a lack of strength that is in somebody who has no inclination or no desire to be right with God.

This is the amazing thing. Somebody who is, as we'll see in a moment, somebody who is opposed to God. And we're told about this weakness, it develops because we're told that they are ungodly. Now, ungodly is very simply, in its simplest form, being without God. We often tend to think of the ungodly as those who really oppose to God.

You think of people who are ungodly and you say, oh, see, that person is so ungodly. Somebody who is really against God. Somebody whose life speaks to a certain extent.

And you say, oh, that person, that person really is opposed to God. And we tend often to think of that person as being ungodly. But when you think about it in its simplest form, being ungodly is being without God.

[27 : 38] And a person, in its simplest form, can come to church, can read the Bible, can even pray, can live a very upright life.

And still be, as the Bible would say, ungodly. That is not having God. And that really is a, it's really an awful condition to be in.

And the thing is that that is how we were when Jesus Christ came into this world. We are ungodly and we are opposed to God.

That's how, for you today sitting at the table, there was a day when you were in that category. You were ungodly. Today, that has changed. But then we're also told that, in verse 8, that we're sinners. That's when we were sinners that Christ died for us. You see, it wasn't when we were righteous or godly or good or noble, but while we were sinners.

[28 : 43] And a sinner really, in a sense, you could almost say a sinner is a serial offender. It is somebody who is perpetually coming short of the mark. Somebody who is failing to live according to the standards that God has set.

That's a sinner coming short, breaking the law of God. And that's where we are. Every single one of us, we are always coming short of the standards that God has set in his holy law, whereby we would glorify God.

All the time, missing the mark. Every day, every night, coming short. So we see that Jesus came to die for the weak, those who have no strength, who are ungodly.

Those who are not only ungodly, but sinners. But it's even more than that. We see that he came while we were still enemies.

Now, prior to that, it tells us, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And then it says that since therefore we have been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

[30 : 04] And that is what will fall upon all sinners, is the wrath of God. It's a fearful concept.

And maybe today, there might even be people in here, and they say, well, I'm not really a sinner. I don't class myself as a sinner. I might say, okay, I'm not perfect.

I don't think anybody would have the brass to hold up their hands and say, you know, I'm perfect. I don't think anybody would do that. But it is possible for people to say, but I'm not really a sinner.

Well, the word of God shows us that we are, we're all sinners, every single one.

And as a sinner, we're under the wrath of God. And, you know, if God reveals to us just in a little, if God reveals himself just to a tiny, tiny degree, it's one thing we straight away will acknowledge, that we are deserving of his wrath.

You know, when God's Spirit begins to work in us, that's one thing God's Spirit does. It reveals, he reveals to us that we deserve his wrath. But while we are estranged from God, we don't recognize that.

[31 : 23] So, there's this dying for the ungodly, dying for sinners, but also we see that while we were enemies, and that's our real condition, that we are enemies.

Now, again, maybe people say, well, I don't feel an enemy of God. Well, that's not what the verse says. It doesn't say, while we felt enemy, while we were feeling like enemies, Christ died for us. It doesn't say that. It says, while we were enemies. And that is our condition. You see, we were opposed to God. And if, just take it in the United Kingdom, if you have somebody who will not submit under the authority and under the rule of the authorities of our land, who is opposed to everything that the authorities of this land stand for, you would say to yourself, well, that person is an enemy.

That person is working against the kingdom. That person does not, should not, does not belong to our kingdom, has no sympathy with it, has no desire to submit under its rule and under its authority. And it's the same with a person out of Christ. We do not want, that's how we were by nature. We did not want the rule of Christ within our life.

[32 : 44] Yeah, there was part of us, there was a sort of like an insurance policy part that says, oh, I would kind of like to get right with God at some stage, but not just now, because I want to be ruler of my life, and I want to be in control of what I do.

I do not want to submit to the rule and the authority and the lordship of Jesus Christ. Well, if that is our thinking, if that's our heart, then it shows that we are enemies, that we're opposed, that we're pushing him away.

So, when you put all this together, we begin to see how quite remarkable it is that Jesus dies for us when this is the way that we are.

We are ungodly, sinners, enemies who are weak without strength. Here is the love of God.

Because, you know, the amazing thing is that we couldn't deal with it ourselves. We were lost unless we got help from outside. There was nothing within us that could help ourselves.

[33 : 54] We were utterly dependent upon the help of another. We were utterly dependent upon the plan of another. This salvation today, which we are commemorating and remembering, was not some idea that we came up with where we went to God and where we pleaded to God and said to the Lord, Lord, you need to help us.

It didn't come about like that. As we said, it's all his initiative, all his plan, all his purpose. So, the only hope we had was receiving help, as it were, from the outside.

And that's where God came. God came into this world. God came in this great, as we say, demonstration of his love.

Some people may say, ah, well, if we would repent, all a person needs to do would be to say to God, well, I'm sorry.

But, you know, even repentance is something we are incapable of ourselves. I don't know if people realize that. But we cannot even repent of ourselves any more than we can work up faith in ourselves.

[35 : 14] We cannot. It is all from him. Faith and repentance comes from him. He is the one.

This is all part of his grace towards us. And so, that's one thing that I want us to think upon today as we come to the Lord's Supper, is that it is all of grace.

It's all his doing. The glory all belongs to him. We are not at this table because of anything good within ourselves, anything that we can claim, whether through birth, through deeds, through anything.

We are there purely and simply because of him, his grace, his love, his purposes towards us. So, really, it's quite an extraordinary thing.

And so, it tells us what God did, that God shows his love for us. Now, that word means really that he proves his love. He demonstrates his love so clearly to us.

[36 : 24] And this is the amazing thing. So, when we come to see this love, when we see this love in action, that this love is a demonstration of who God is in himself and what God has done in sending his Son into this world.

Now, we talk about the coming of Jesus Christ into this world. We term it the incarnation. God, the second person of the Godhead, taking human nature, where Jesus was born into this world.

And when you think about it, that is the most amazing, glorious event, surely. But you know the extraordinary thing about what Jesus did?

When he took human nature to himself, the Son of God, you would say to yourself, surely the Son of God, as he journeyed through this world, would be given the greatest honor and dignity possible. Surely his dwelling place would be palaces. Surely wherever he went, there would be fanfare before him and people bowing down, that he would be the center of adoration and worship through all his journeys in this world.

[37 : 40] But as we know, that was not the case. In fact, it was, we could say, almost the very reverse. Because Jesus Christ uses his flesh, not as a case of self-promotion or of exalting, but he uses it as a means of humbling.

Because down and down and down he went. Everything about Jesus is down. We've been looking at Jonah and we saw that.

It was every step about Jonah, as he was running away from God, was down and down and down. And in a sense, Jesus, who has been made a curse for us, who has gone in our place, his whole life in this world was down.

Down from the heights of glory. Down into the manger in Bethlehem. Down into the wilderness and the temptation. Down into the agonies of Gethsemane.

Down into the horrors of Calvary. Down into the very tomb. Down into all that constitutes hell upon that cross. Down, down, down.

[38 : 57] And he did that all for us. And it really is quite extraordinary. And you see the great emphasis that is placed upon the death of Christ.

You'll see this over and over again. For while we were still weak at the right time, Christ died. That's what it tells us in verse 6. Verse 8, while we're still sinners, Christ died for us.

Again, verse 9. Justified by his blood. The blood from his death. Verse 10. Reconciled to God by his death. So there's this great emphasis upon the death of Jesus.

And as we say, that's what we're remembering today. But then we see finally, there are three things that are highlighted here. Just a word on each. That has resulted from his death.

That we are beneficiaries because of this. And we see the first thing is that we were justified. We've been justified. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood.

[40 : 08] You notice what it says? We have. That's what it says. But God shows his love to us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified.

In other words, it's something that has already taken place. Justification is an act. It is something that has taken place.

And justification is a legal, it's really a kind of legal term. And it is where God looks upon us in Christ.

And as he looks upon us, he says that passion is just. It's like in the court of law, where a passion has been pronounced just.

Here we are as a, we're here as criminals. We are here to receive sentence, you would say. But because of what Jesus has done, and because of our accepting of what Jesus has done, when we come into that moment of accepting, where we are that moment when we're born again, we are, we're justified.

[41 : 16] This is what happens. We are justified. And God pronounces us as just. And you know the wonderful thing is that as he pronounces in the courts of heaven, pronounces us just, and we remain just, we will always be just.

So that when the great, when that awful day comes, when we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, the pronouncement of us as just in heaven, when we were justified, will be the pronouncement that will be made on that day.

Just. God doesn't change the verdict. And you may say to yourself, but I'm still a sinner. That's a different matter. This is God's declaration of what we are and our standing before him.

And we are also, of course, not only the sentence of death has been removed, but the righteousness of Christ has been placed to our account.

But we also see that we have been saved. We're saved from and saved to. This is one of the wonderful things that Jesus has done for us.

[42 : 29] He has saved us. And again, it is something that is regarding our past. It is something that deals with our present and something that affects our future.

Because this salvation affects everything. It affects our past regarding our justification. It affects our present regarding our sanctification, our ongoing being changed into the image of Jesus Christ. And it affects our future, where we will be saved into, brought into glory, and even our body will be saved from the grave eventually.

So this is a full salvation, but specifically we're told here that we will be saved from the wrath of God. And we're saved from the wrath of God by Jesus.

The wrath of God is a fearful concept. And it's that which will fall eventually upon all who are out of Christ.

[43 : 32] It is where sin will be given free reign. That is a thought. Where there will be no barriers and no restraints.

Where sin will mushroom and explode without barriers. Where there will be nothing to hold it back. Because here in this world alone, we're told in Romans that the wrath of God has been revealed

from heaven.

That wrath is still mingled with mercy. And that God's amazing grace is still governing and covering this world despite all the pain and sorrow.

If God were to remove his restraints, if God were to remove his grace, this world would be a fearful place.

Well, that's what will happen when God reveals his wrath. Where all the restraints and all the barriers will be taken away. But this is what Christ has done.

[44 : 43] He saved us from that. How did he save us from that? He took it on himself. That's how he saved. Imagine. That's propitiation. Where he took that wrath.

That's what he was doing when he cried, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? God forsook him. And God poured his wrath upon his son for you, for me.

Amazing grace. And then finally, we see the third thing is that we are reconciled. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son.

Amazing thing. This is where the enmity is taken away. And this reconciliation has been made. It's not just that we have been reconciled to God. But more importantly, he has been reconciled to us. That's the most important thing. You know, when you're without Jesus Christ, it says, while we were enemies.

[45 : 53] Enemy. It must be a fearful thing to be an enemy of God. That's where we are without Jesus. But through the death of Jesus, God's attitude to us has changed.

His relationship to us has changed. We are now reconciled. We have become friends. Indeed, we have become children.

We are family. And all of these things, this is what we're remembering today. That's why I want us to, that's why it's so important that before we come to the sacrament, we reflect upon what Jesus did for us.

That's what I want us to focus our mind and our heart upon, all these different things, being justified, being saved, being reconciled, at the set time, at the appointed time, God working all the time for you and for me from all eternity.

It's mind-blowing. It's extraordinary. But it is extraordinary grace, extraordinary love. And Paul's final argument really is this.

[47 : 10] If you doubt God's love to you now that you're on the inside, how can you? If God did all this for you when you were on the outside, when you were an enemy, when you were ungodly, when you were a sinner, when you were estranged from him, if he sent his son to die for you, then to bring you in, do you think for one moment he's now going to turn around and abandon you?

Impossible. It is wonderful working love. And may I say to anybody in here today who's outside the kingdom, you have heard so often about this amazing love.

Won't you come in? Won't you ask the Lord to come into your heart and deal with you just to break whatever's holding you back so that you will come to experience yourself personally the great love of God in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray. Lord our God, we give thanks for being able to reflect for a little upon this wondrous love and God's great purposes to us and for us in Jesus.

Uphold us and keep us and guide us in what remains before us. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Amen. We're now going to...