

A Perfect Parting

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Date: 22 December 2024

[0 : 00] We're going to begin our service singing to God's praise in Psalm 98. He has remembered well the covenant he made with him, the house of Israel.

And all the nations of the earth have seen what God has done, our God who brings deliverance by his right hand alone. Acclaim the Lord of all the earth, shout loudly and rejoice.

Make music and be jubilant to him, lift up your voice. With harp make music to the Lord, with harp his praises sing. With trumpet and with horn rejoice.

Before the Lord, the King. Let earth, the sea and all in them rejoice triumphantly. Let streams clap hands and mountains sing together joyfully.

Now let them sing before the Lord who comes to judge the earth. He'll judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in his truth. Verses 3 to the end of Psalm 98 and sing psalms.

[1 : 25] His steadfast love and faithfulness he has remembered well. Amen. His steadfast love and faithfulness he has remembered well.

The covenant he made within the house of Israel.

And all the nations of the earth have seen what God has done.

His steadfast love and faithfulness he has remembered well. Our God who brings deliverance by his right hand alone.

Acclaim the Lord, O all the earth. Shout loudly and rejoice.

[2 : 38] Make music and be jubilant. To him lift up your voice.

With harp make music to the Lord. With harp his praises sing.

With trumpet and with horn rejoice. Before the Lord, the King.

Let earth, the sea, and all in them rejoice triumphantly.

Let streams clap hands and mountains sing together joyfully.

[3 : 44] Now let them sing before the Lord who comes to judge the earth.

He'll judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in his truth.

Let us bow in prayer. O Lord, as we bow in your presence tonight, we pray for the grace to worship you in a right way.

We give thanks, O Lord, that we're able to sing your word and to be reminded of your steadfast love towards us. We give thanks that your word reinforces that you are an unchanging God.

You are unchanging in your character. Unchanging in your purposes. And we give thanks for that great truth.

[4 : 49] It's often hard for us to understand what that is because we are always changing. Our attitudes change. Our thoughts change. Our thoughts change.

The very plans that we make change. Sometimes, not out of our own making, but we realize that we are constantly in a world of change. But you are the God who never changes, and we're thankful for that.

Because it means that your promises are absolute guaranteed that what you have said you will do. It is impossible for God to lie.

And so tonight we rest in these promises, assured that you are faithful to every single one of them.

We pray, Lord, that you will lift up our hearts, lift up our mind beyond ourselves, because we are so tied to who we are and what we are.

And help us as we are here tonight to focus upon you and to realize that ultimately life is not so much about ourselves, but it is about you and your glory in this world.

[5 : 57] And we pray that we might have the great end in view that we are reminded of, that our chief end or chief purpose is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

And we pray that that enjoyment might be discovered by each and every one of us. And help us to realize that it is only in and through the Lord Jesus Christ that we are able to find this fulfillment and

this enjoyment.

So we pray for the faith. Pray for the faith for maybe some in here who might not already have come to faith. We pray that they will. And pray for those who have come to faith, that they will come to a greater enjoyment of you.

And that every day will be a day where they will come to a greater knowledge of you. We pray that you will help us in our worship. And that you will deliver us from the temptations which so often flood our minds as we seek to worship you.

Because the evil one is never far away trying to distract us. And to take our mind off the truth. And to think of other things. And to bring tempting thoughts before us.

[7 : 09] And even to cast doubt upon who you are and what you are. And so we pray Lord that you will grant us that focus as we wait upon you.

We pray to bless this congregation. We give thanks for its witness and testimony over the years. And we pray that you will continue to bless us. That you will do in us and for us more than we could ask or think.

That you will grant your people a greater confidence in you. A greater strength in the Lord. We pray that we might have a greater focus upon you.

And a greater understanding of our responsibilities to you and to one another. We pray Lord that you will bless this congregation particularly at a time of vacancy. We pray your leading and guiding. We give thanks oh Lord that you have done so in the past. And we are persuaded that you will continue to do so. So grant us the patience to wait upon you. And grant us the wisdom that only you can give.

[8 : 13] We pray your blessing upon Colin who is the intermoderator. Pray your blessing upon Colin Murdo and Joanne. And we give thanks for his ministry here.

And the encouragement that he is to us. And pray to bless them and their family. Pray for all the office bearers and all their differing responsibilities. We pray for all who do so much in this congregation.

And we see that week in, week out. That there are so many things happening. Good things happening. And so much work is on behind the scenes. And so we pray to encourage all your people.

Reminding us that no labour in the Lord is ever in vain. There are times we think it is. There are times we can become discouraged. But your word assures us that it is not in vain.

And that it will all receive its reward. All that is done in faith in due time. So we pray that you will bless. As we say your witness here. And we pray that for all the congregations in our town and throughout our island.

[9 : 17] And indeed throughout our land. We pray Lord that you will give a gospel boldness to preachers. And that you will give a gospel boldness to your people.

Because there are so many who do not know who you are. They don't know the first thing about you. And we pray particularly at this time of year.

That people who might have for the first time since maybe this time last year any thoughts about you. That they may indeed have stronger and greater thoughts.

And that your truth might be opened up here and there. And that people will come to know and to believe. We pray for those who are struggling in life. And we pray for those who face health battles. We pray that you will help them and undertake for them. Pray for those who are experienced or have experienced the loss of loved ones. Whether of recent times or in times gone by.

[10 : 24] But there is particularly at this time of year an emptiness. And an empty soreness within the heart. And we pray that you will give them comfort. Give them strength.

And give them a sense of your love towards them. We pray for all our young people. We give thanks for them. And we pray that in the young years of their life. That they will come to know you and to serve you.

And we give thanks Lord for every effort that is made. To teach our young in the way of the Lord. Pray for all our different families. And ask Lord that you will be with them.

And pray Lord for where there may be difficulties within the home. That maybe others aren't aware of. That you will come and that you will help. We pray for the elderly.

And those who are no longer able to get out. Those who suffer pain in their bodies. And weakness in their limbs. And maybe weakness in their mind. Pray for those who have mental health issues.

[11:22] We ask Lord that you will give them strengthening in their mind. And we pray Lord for our hospitals. For our NH staff. For all our emergency services. And our chaplains.

And we pray for our armed forces. And our chaplains there. And we pray for order within our land. Because we live in times where there is so much chaos.

And we pray Lord for wisdom to our leaders. To those in authority over us. All grant them Lord. The wisdom that is from above. That they will lead us in the right way. Help us then as we wait upon you.

And to do us good. And watch over each and every one of us. Be with the fellowship this evening. And pray your blessing upon it. And all those who are prepared for it.

We ask your blessing upon them. And grant us your grace. And have mercy upon us. Cleansing us from each and every sin. In Jesus name we ask God. Amen.

[12:20] I'm going to sing again from Psalm 89. And this is from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm number 89. And we're going to sing from verse 13. It's on page 3, 4, 5.

Thou hast an arm that's full of power. Thy hand is great in might. And thy right hand exceedingly exalted is in height. Justice and judgment of thy throne are made the dwelling place.

Mercy accompanied with truth shall go before thy face. O greatly blessed the people are. The joyful sound that know. In brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go.

They in thy name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly. And in thy righteousness shall they exalted be on high. Because the glory of their strength doth only stand in thee.

And in thy favor shall our horn and power exalted be. For God is our defense. And he to us doth safety bring. The Holy One of Israel is our Almighty King.

[13:26] 13 to 18, Psalm 89. Thou hast an arm that's full of power. Thou hast an arm that's full of power.

Thy hand is great in might. And thy right hand exceedingly exalted is in height.

Justice and judgment of thy throne are made the dwelling place.

Mercy accompany the need with truth shall go before thy face.

O greatly blessed the people are. The joyful sound that know.

[14:51] In brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go.

They in thy name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly.

And in thy righteousness shall be exalted be on high.

Because the glory of their strength doth only stand in thee.

And in thy favor shall our horn and power exalted be.

[16:09] For God is our defense. And he to us doth safety bring.

The Holy One of Israel is our Almighty King.

Let's turn now to read God's word in the gospel of Luke. Luke's gospel. Chapter 24, the last chapter.

And we pick up a reading at verse 25. We know, of course, that this is where Jesus has joined the two on the road to Emmaus.

And so we pick up on what Jesus is saying at verse 25. And he, that's Jesus, said to them, O foolish ones and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

[17:26] Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going further, but they urged him strongly, saying, Stay with us, for it is two or three evening, and the day is now far spent.

So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem.

And they found the eleven, and those who were with them gathered together, saying, The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon. Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

[18 : 43] As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, Peace to you. But they were startled and frightened, and thought they saw a spirit.

And he said to them, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your heart? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see.

For a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see that I have. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

And while they still believed for joy and were marvelling, he said to them, Have you anything here to eat? They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

Then he said to them, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

[19 : 46] Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, blessing God. Amen, and may God bless to us this reading of his own holy word.

We're going to sing again and sing Psalms in Psalm number 24. It's on page 28, Psalm 24, from the beginning, verses 1 to 8.

[20 : 58] The world and all in it are gods, all peoples of the earth, for it was founded by the Lord upon the seas beneath. Who may ascend the hill of God or in his temple stand?

The one who shuns false gods and lies, who's pure in heart and hand. He will find favour from the Lord and from his Saviour grace.

Thus are they blessed, O Jacob's God, who truly seek your face. You engine gates, lift up your heads. You doors be opened wide. So may the King of glory come forever to abide.

But who is this exalted King? What glorious King is he? It is the Lord of strength and might, the Lord of victory. 1 to 8, Psalm 24, the world and all in it are gods.

Amen. The world and all in it are gods, all peoples of the earth, for it was founded by the Lord upon the seas beneath.

[22 : 17] Who may ascend the hill of God or in his temple stand?

The one who shuns false gods and lies, who's pure in heart and hand.

He will find favour from the Lord and from his Saviour grace.

Thus are they blessed, O Jacob's God, who truly seek your face.

You ancient gates, lift up your heads. You doors be opened wide.

[23 : 19] So may the King of glory come forever to abide.

But who is this exalted King? What glorious King is he?

It is the Lord of strength and might, the Lord of victory.

Amen. Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 24.

Luke chapter 24. Luke chapter 24. And at verse 50. Then he led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands, he blessed them.

[24 : 33] While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Now as we know at this time of year, there is great focus upon the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and this morning, Calamurda was looking at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, his second coming into this world.

And tonight, I want to focus on Jesus's leaving this world. This which happened between his coming first time into the world and also between his return again.

Now as we know, at a human level, partings are never easy. Whether the parting is just for a short time or whether the parting is going to be forever.

Partings are always difficult and it doesn't matter. Of course, we know that final partings are things that we never really get over. But even parting for a short time is never an easy thing.

[25 : 46] And usually, we find the reaction is a very heavy heart and people are sad and down. But we find the very opposite here because this parting has brought in the disciples of Jesus great joy.

That's what we find, that they return to Jerusalem with great joy. And at one level, we might find that very strange because here they are parting from the person, the one who filled them with the greatest delight, the one that they loved above all others in this world.

And so, we might say to ourselves, it's a kind of a strange reaction. But they are filled with joy because what they had experienced and what they were told produced joy within their heart.

Now, there was such a contrast between Jesus' coming into this world and his leaving this world.

And yet, in some ways, there was also similarity because only very, very few witnessed the arrival of Jesus into this world when he was born.

Very few. And again, it was only a handful that witnessed his actual ascension. And of course, when Jesus returns, it couldn't be more different.

[27 : 08] His first time coming into the world, as we said, very few were witnessed to his actual birth. To his leaving this world, only his disciples saw him leave.

But when he returns, everybody is going to see him. There won't be one person alive when the Lord Jesus Christ returns that will have the slightest bit of doubt that this is the Son of God, that this is the Lord Jesus Christ.

On that day, there will be no scoffers, there will be no mockers, there will be no agnostics, there will be no atheists. Every single person will be absolutely convinced that this is the returning Son of God.

And that couldn't have been more different to how it was at the beginning because, as we know, when Jesus was born into this world, he was born in an outhouse. There was no room in the inn. There was no place for Jesus in the world. It's very symbolic in many ways of how it was. There was no room in the inn because, from the very start, this world had no place for Jesus.

[28 : 19] From the very start, the world didn't want Jesus. And nothing has changed because there's no creed and there's no faith that has suffered more mocking and persecution than the Christian faith.

and down throughout the centuries right to this very day. And you remember that, I suppose, where you see the focus more than anywhere else is when the crowd were offered to choose between the most loving, caring, tolerant person that ever lived in this world or else the riotous terrorist who struck fear in every heart, Barabbas.

They chose Barabbas. At a human level, you see, it's utterly mad that they chose a man who was a terrorist, a man who caused total unrest within the community over against the most caring, generous, loving person ever to walk this world.

their choice was basically anybody but Jesus. And sadly, that's still the way it is. Get rid of Jesus, crucify him.

But the ascension of Jesus was really quite a remarkable thing. And the disciples had become used to seeing remarkable things in the life of Jesus Christ.

[29 : 53] They had seen him walk on the water, they had seen him feed the 5,000 from five loaves and two fish. They had seen him heal the paralyzed and the deaf and the mute and the blind.

They had seen him cast out demons, they had seen him even raise the dead. They had seen him walk on, as we say, walk on the water and they had seen him just by the word calm the water.

Three of them had seen him transfigured and they had seen him crucified and they had seen him reappear before them.

And so, in many ways, what happened was very fitting for the life of Jesus. What they were able to witness this extraordinary departure out from this world.

Now, we know that there was a 40-day period where Jesus, before this final ascension, was appearing and reappearing to his disciples. And it wasn't just to the immediate 11.

[30 : 58] He also appeared to Mary. He appeared to, as we saw, the two on the Emmaus Road. He appeared to many of the other women as well. And Paul tells us that he appeared to 500.

And it is often believed that in that 40-day period that Jesus was returning over, back and forward, to the Father, but returning again to the world until his final ascension.

And in this period of these 40 days, he used that period to encourage the church, to teach the church, to restore, like, for instance, Peter, and to prepare them for the future.

And Luke tells us, in fact, in Acts chapter 3, he presented himself alive to them after his sufferings, by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking to them about the kingdom. You see, the early church had to be witnesses to the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had to be witnesses to the real fact that Jesus is a living saviour.

[32 : 10] saved. Because if Jesus is a dead saviour, he's not a saviour at all. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, Paul tells us we're still dead in our sins.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, there is no gospel message. And that's one of the great distinctions. There are many distinctions between the Christian faith and the other faiths. But when you look at the leaders of the others, they died and they're buried and they remain buried. But our saviour died, was buried and defeated death and rose again.

And so the church has to be witness to this fact that we have a risen ascended saviour. Now the thing is that nobody saw the risen Jesus apart from his followers.

Nobody of the world, no unbeliever was witness to the risen saviour. He only appeared to his people. And in a sense, that's almost how it still is.

[33 : 14] Because until naturally, we cannot, I know it's by faith, but naturally, we cannot see Jesus as we are. We hear about him, we know about him, but we've never seen him in a way where we're able to lay hold upon him and believe in what he has done, that he has done it for us, and that he has by his work saved us from our sins.

It's only by faith that we're able to see him. Naturally, we can't, and naturally, we don't even want him.

We don't think about him too much. We might think a wee bit, but we don't have this desire to have him as our Lord. as I said, they saw no beauty in him that they should desire him.

So it is by faith, and by faith alone, that we're able to see Jesus. And the thing is that I think every believer wishes that they could see Jesus better.

If you're a believer here tonight, I'm sure deep down in your heart, that's what you say, oh Lord, help me to see you better. And I'm sure you think that everybody in this church has a clearer sight of Jesus, that they're able to love him more than you, that they're able to see more clearly than you.

[34 : 42] It's a thing you long for, but I think it's something that plagues us all. We see, we're told, but through a glass darkly. It's a very dim vision we have, but we have seen enough to accept and to believe.

And I would go as far as to say that it's only somebody who has the Lord Jesus Christ in their heart that is troubled by these thoughts. Because a person who doesn't have Christ isn't troubled by the fact that they're not able to see him clearly, that they're not able to love him in the way that they do. It's an evidence of the very fact that Christ is within you, that you have this desire to see him more clearly and to love him more clearly.

Now, Jesus, as we see here, he spoke to them and he taught them and he opened their minds to understand things that they hadn't been able to understand before.

This, in a sense, was kind of their finishing school where Jesus was opening their mind to understand truths that he had taught them before, but they hadn't grasped.

[35 : 58] And in many ways, it's similar to ourselves as we go along in life. There are many things when we start out in the faith that we don't properly understand.

In fact, even as we go on in the faith, there are things that we don't understand. But I'm sure along the way, often you've said, I get it now. I'm beginning to see this now.

Well, this was a dawning moment for the disciples because they were able to understand. We know how limited their understanding was. They hadn't, even Peter, James, and John hadn't grasped the significance of Christ's mission.

Yes, they believed in him as the son of God. They believed completely in him as the Messiah, but they hadn't grasped that he had to die. Peter, in fact, tried to talk him out of going to the cross.

He's saying, put these thoughts away from you. We've said it often enough before, Mary of Bethany was the one who fully understood the mission of Christ. Remember where it tells us that when Peter and John went to the grave, it tells us Peter ran into the grave, but John stood at the grave and he believed.

[37 : 13] It was like there was a dawning of how this, yeah, I understand now, all Jesus is teaching. It's all coming together. You know, it's often like that for us.

Well, here was a special moment for the disciples as Jesus was teaching them about, this was kind of like their finishing school. And those, we all have to be taught because we're all serving the Lord. Wherever you are as a believer, you're serving the Lord. And we all have to have a level of understanding and a level of teaching, a level of knowledge, because we have to impart to others. But those who are sent out, they have to be taught.

Moses had his time of learning. Paul had his time of learning. The disciples had three years with Jesus, but here it is, here now, Jesus is teaching them.

And that's what we read about there from verses 44, 45. then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and so on. And what a wonderful insight was given then.

[38 : 18] And then we find Jesus heading out as far as Bethany. And this was, Bethany was on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. And as we know, it's often been suggested that Jesus rose, ascended from Bethany, from the vicinity of Bethany, as a mark of the devotion of Mary of Bethany.

Jesus didn't ascend from Jerusalem. They had put him to death. He didn't ascend from Nazareth, where his home was. They'd rejected him. He didn't ascend from Capernaum, where he did many mighty works.

They again rejected him. But he ascended from Bethany, which was the home that he loved, the family that he loved, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Many have suggested it is as a token to that home that it is from this vicinity that he ascended.

Now, of course, many of the significant events in Jesus' life took place on hills or on mountains. His famous sermon, we find in Matthew, termed the Sermon on the Mount, still termed that to this very day.

[39 : 31] It was on a mountain that he was transfigured. It was on a hill that he was crucified. We find, in fact, that there were many times we find Jesus going up into the mountain to pray.

We find many of the Old Testament saints that the mountains were significant to them. We find that the Lord appearing to Abraham on the mountain. We find Moses spending 40 days and 40 nights with the Lord on the mountain when the table of the law was written out by God's hand.

We find that Elijah was recommissioned, as it were, and again it was on the mountain to go back to work for the Lord. So here is Jesus with this little group and it tells us in verse 50, and he and lifting up his hands, he blessed them.

And while he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. Lifting up his hands. These are the hands that fed the thousands, sins, the hands that had blessed the children, the hands that had healed the sick, the hands that had been stretched out in invitation to sinners to come to him, the hands that had been nailed to the cross.

These are the hands that are lifted up and stretched out over them. And many people think that this is simply the benediction, like we have in parting.

[41 : 02] You know how we pronounce a benediction in parting. And while definitely that is true, I think there's more involved than simply a benediction. Because the whole of scripture and the Old Testament has been described as God's picture book where we see in type and in symbolic way the life of Jesus fulfilled.

And when we go to Leviticus, we read in chapter 8 of how Aaron was set apart to be the high priest. He was to be over all with regard to the whole sacrificial system.

And in chapter 9 we find his first official duty was to present the offerings on behalf of the people before the Lord. And we find him presenting the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offering the different animals.

And then it tells us when he had done all that that he lifted up his hands to bless the people. And as he did that, that fire from the Lord devoured all the sacrifice and the glory of the Lord appeared.

Because the Lord was at this very moment bearing testimony to the fact that he was accepting the sacrifice that the high priest Aaron had made on behalf of the people.

[42 : 39] And is that not a picture exactly of what we have here? Because Jesus is the great high priest and he has come to do everything that the father gave him to do.

And he isn't just the high priest offering the sacrifice, he is a sacrifice. He is a burnt offering, he is a sin offering, he is a peace offering, and through his offering the wrath of God has been removed.

And God is declaring over all, I am well pleased, fully satisfied. And so there is a sense of the completion and the acceptance of God in the raising of the hands of Jesus.

But we mustn't also lose sight of indeed that benediction blessing. Yes, it is all finished. God and man are reconciled together.

The veil of the temple that separated the glory of God was torn from top to bottom. God and man are now reconciled together. And so Jesus, he raises up his hands and as he blesses them, we find this extraordinary thing that he's carried up into heaven.

[44 : 00] That's what we're told, that he parted from them and was carried into heaven. And you know, it's a beautiful picture, the idea, the picture of Jesus rising up with his hands in blessing over the church.

In Acts chapter 1 verse 9, it tells us, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. And this word lifted up indicates that the ascension is actually the work of the Father.

And then Luke 24, 51 tells us they worshipped him. You know, I think it's one of the most beautiful scenes. There's a lot of scenes in the life of Jesus I would love to have been witness to, to have been there.

But I think this is as good or as wonderful as any. that moment where the Lord Jesus lifts up his hand in blessing over his people.

And he's carried on up into heaven. And we find that the church in response to this falls down before him and worships him.

[45 : 11] And that has always got to be the response of the church. It's this worship as the Lord continues to bless. and it tells us that a cloud took him out of their sight.

So some people ask why had there to be this ascension like this? Well I think very simply Jesus is showing, having appeared over this 40 day period, that he is now finally, that's him, that he's gone to glory.

day. And the cloud, the presence of the cloud, of course again is also symbolic because we find so often in the Bible the presence of the Lord is accompanied by the cloud.

In the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness, you remember there was the cloud by day and the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, which spoke of the presence of the Lord. The fire to give them light and the cloud there to protect them and the cloud there as a guidance. When the cloud stopped, they stopped. When the cloud moved, they moved.

[46 : 20] This was indicating the presence of the Lord. You remember again at the dedication of the temple when Solomon had built the temple and dedicated that it tells us that the temple was filled with a cloud which spoke of the glory of God.

When Jesus returns, it tells us in Revelation he will come in the clouds of heaven. So Jesus, as he disappears into the cloud, we find again in Acts that tells us that two angels appear and tell the disciples something wonderful.

This Jesus taken up to heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. And what a moment that's going to be.

It tells us that Jesus will descend from heaven. And it won't be a private descending like the ascension was private only for the immediate few.

But we're told in scripture that this is going to be the most public event that the world has ever witnessed. Now we know that nowadays through the way that things are able to be broadcast, that there are sometimes things are broadcast all over the world.

[47 : 38] but here is something and I don't know how it's going to happen. But it's going to happen that Jesus is going to descend from heaven and every eye will see him. Everyone.

Everyone. And there's going to be two distinct reactions to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're told that those who have rejected him will call upon the rocks and to the hills to cover them, to fall, to hide them from the glare, from the face of Jesus.

But his people are going to say, even so come Lord Jesus. That's going to be the reaction. There's going to be delight, anticipation, thrill in the hearts of his people as they see the descending Jesus arrive back into this world.

That's why the church does say, even so come Lord Jesus. Christ. So what does the ascension of Christ mean for us tonight? Well, very simply as we conclude, as we said earlier, the ascension is proof that everything that Christ was given to do, he did.

The ascension is proof that all the enemies Christ came to defeat were defeated. The enemy of sin. When you think of all that sin is, it's twistedness, it's deceit, it's guilt, all these things, Christ took all

that upon himself.

[49 : 07] He has come and he's defeated the enemy of death with all its fears and with all its darkness, with all its separation because he's taken the sting out of death.

We know unless the Lord returns first that we will die. But while it is natural to fear, death, we know that the sting of death has been removed.

He has defeated Satan, that malicious, ferocious enemy that we have. He has defeated him. He has defeated hell, that place of outer darkness and eternal separation, so that all who trust in Jesus are delivered.

And he's also ascended into heaven to make continual intercession for us. We've said it before, the intercession of Jesus is not Jesus at the right hand of the Father pleading on our behalf saying, Father, forgive them, they can't help it.

Father, forgive them, they're sinners and they're unable to break these habits. not no, he intercedes by presenting what he has done on our behalf.

[50 : 28] That the Father is looking on the fulfilled work of Jesus which is shown by a continual intercession on our behalf. He's also gone to prepare a place for us.

Now he did that when the first part of the preparation of that place was leaving heaven, coming into this world. That preparation involved living for us in this world.

That preparation involved dying for us in this world. Preparation involved rising from the dead and ascending into heaven. And all the meantime he is preparing us for that place.

And one day the Lord is going to say, it's time to come home. Your place is ready. You don't know when it'll be, I don't know. But if we love the Lord Jesus, that call will come one day.

Time to come home. Your place is ready. Because Jesus has gone to heaven to prepare that place. And it tells us the disciples worshipped him and returned with great joy.

[51 : 34] And they were continually praising and blessing God in the temple. It's very interesting that the gospel according to Luke of 24 chapters, Luke begins in the temple, telling us about Zachariah.

Remember John the Baptist's father? Zachariah was offering the sacrifice when the angel came to tell about that Elizabeth was to have the baby. That's where it begins in the temple.

And 24 chapters later, it ends in the temple with the Lord's people praising God. And in between chapter 1 and chapter 24, 24, we have the most remarkable account of the greatest life that was ever lived in this world, the life of Jesus.

What does the life of Jesus mean to you tonight? Is the life of Jesus a life that has changed you? Is it a life that you're so thankful for?

Or does the life of Jesus just simply interest you? Or does it not really mean much at all? Well, if you've never really thought about it, it's time you started thinking about it.

[52 : 54] Because his life is the only life that can change you and fulfill and make your life what nobody else and nothing else.

can make it. Let us pray. Oh, Lord, our God, we give thanks for the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We give thanks for the great account of his life, of his death, of his resurrection, and of his ascension.

And we give thanks that he continues to make intercession for us. And how thankful we are for everything that your word reveals to us of him.

We pray to bless us in each and every one of us. Take us to our home safety and grant us your grace in all that we're about. Lord, we pray your blessing on the fellowship tonight and again on all those who have, as usual, done so much behind the scenes.

Grant us your grace in all that we do and forgive us our every sin in Jesus' name. Amen. we're going to conclude singing in Psalm 68 from the Scottish Psalter.

[54 : 05] Psalm number 68 from the Scottish Psalter. And we're going to sing verses 18 to 20. Psalm 68 verses 18 to 20.

Thou hast, O Lord, most glorious, ascended up on high, and in triumph, victorious, led, captive, captivity.

Thou hast received gifts for men, for such as did rebel, yea, even for them, that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell. blessed be the Lord, who is to us of our salvation God, who daily with his benefits as plenteously doth load.

He of salvation is the God, who is our God most strong, and unto God the Lord from death the issues do belong. 18 to 20, Psalm 68, the Scottish Psalter.

Thou hast, O Lord, most glorious. Thou hast, the Lord most glorious.

[55 : 17] Ascended upon high, and in triumph victorious led captive, captivity.

thou hast received gifts for men, for such as did rebel, yea, in for them that got the Lord, in midst of them might dwell.

Blessed be the Lord, who is to us of our salvation God, God, who daily with his benefits as plentifully doth Lord, he of salvation is the God, who is our God most strong, and unto God, the Lord from death, he is to belong.

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

Amen. I'll go to the door on my left here. Amen. Amen.

[58 : 15] Amen.