

the son of your love Even in this moment So anew we pray That you would still our hearts Take from us any distracting thoughts

[7 : 56] So that nothing will hinder us From worshipping you The only living and true God We pray that you would take from us Any anxious thoughts We might have For your word exhorts us To be anxious over nothing But in everything by prayer And supplication With thanksgiving To bring our requests Before your throne of grace And how we praise you For the peace of God Of which we read of On the pages of Scripture As it transcends all understanding Safeguarding

Protecting The fragility of our hearts and minds Through Christ Jesus Our Lord Take from us anything That might come between us and you For we confess our sins And we pray that you would forgive us For our many wrongdoings Even in this very moment Our thoughts can wander We drift Keep us We pray Anchored now To your word And as we sing your praises Enable us to Fully engage In this act Of worship May your spirit Lead us As we

Read your word And engage with it Anew this evening Grant your blessing On the ministry of the gospel Here Within This congregation We pray that Your blessing Would be Upon All that is Undertaken Said and done In your name From week to week We pray for the Encouragement Of Calamurdo Smith And for The congregation's Interim moderator Colin McLeod May you bless Pastors And people Alike And may there be A felt Sense of Oneness And togetherness During these Days of Vacancy May you Draw near And may you Grant Much By way Of encouragement To all Who long To reach out With the good news Of the gospel Bless Every Endeavor We praise you For The Children Present This morning And for those Who are present This evening And for every Provision For Them For every Means Through which They have And are given An exposure To the good news Of the gospel All of which Revolves around Jesus Christ And him Crucified And so now We pray your Blessing on every Home and family Belonging to And associated With the Congregation We pray That you Would remember This town And the Island And grant That as In times

Past You would Come With Power From The very Throne room Of heaven Itself As In decades Past As in Ages Past When there Were Eras Of Spiritual Awakening Come We pray With Reviving Power Across Our Highlands And Islands And so Now We look To you Our Great God And Father You Are Infinite Eternal You Are Unchangeable In You We Live We Move And We Have Our Very Existence And It Is Your Presence We Crave And Long For Now Watch Over Us Forgive Us And You For All Of Our Sins For All We Ask Is In Christ's Name And For His Sake Amen Now

[13 : 03] We're Going To Read God's Word Together The First Of Two Scripture Readings Our First Bible Reading Is From The New Testament Scriptures From The Gospel Of Matthew Chapter 16 And At Verse 24 On Page 991 Matthew 16 And At Verse 24 Then Jesus Told His Disciples If Anyone Would Come After Me Let Him Deny Himself And Take Up His Cross And Follow Me For Whoever Would Save His Life Will Lose It But Whoever Loses His Life For My Sake Will Find It For What Will It Profit A Man If He Gains The Whole World And Forfeits His Life Or What Shall

A Man Give In Return For His Life For The Son Of Man Is Going To Come With His Angels And The Glory Of His Father And Then He Will Repay Each Person According To What He Has Done Truly I Say To You There Are Some Standing Here Who Will Not Taste Death Until They See The Son Of Man Coming In His Kingdom And There Follows The Account Of The Transfiguration Amen Let's Sing To God's Praise Psalm 73 The Scottish Psalter Version Of Psalm 73 On Page 351 We're Going To Sing On Page 316 Rather From Verse 23 To 26 And

The Tune Is Weatherby Nevertheless Continually O Lord I Am With The Thou Dost Me Hold By My Right Hand And Still Upholdest Me And So On To The Praise Of God B Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[17 : 53] Amen. That I groan near to groan, in groan I trust, that all my efforts I may be fair unto groan.

Our next scripture reading. takes us to the very passage we read this morning, Numbers chapter 10.

Now we're going to read from verse 29 to 36, but just by way of context for the benefit of those of you who were not present this morning, let me just read from verse 11. In the second year, in the second month, on the 20th day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony, and the people of Israel set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai.

And at verse 29, and Moses said to Hobab, the son of Reuel, the Midianite, Moses's father-in-law, what we are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you. Come with us, and we will do good to you. For the Lord has promised good to Israel, but he said to him, I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred. And he said, please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. And if you do go with us, whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same will we do to you. So they set out from the mount of the Lord for three days' journey, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them for three days' journey to seek out a resting place for them. And the cloud of the Lord was over them by day, whenever they set out from the camp. And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel. Amen.

And we know God will add his blessing to the reading of his own holy word. We'll now sing to the praise of God the words of Psalm 51 from St. Sam's verses 1 to 12.

[21 : 40] This great psalm of confession. Oh, my God, have mercy on me. In your steadfast love, I pray. In your infinite compassion, my transgressions wipe away. Cleanse me from iniquity. Wash my sin away from me.

Let's sing these words prayerfully to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Oh, my God, have mercy on me. In your steadfast love, I pray.

For you, my God, have mercy on you. In your infinite compassion, my transgressions wipe away. Cleanse me from iniquity. Wash my sin away from me.

For I know my own transgressions, I can see my sinful life.

[23 : 10] You, you, only I've all been lived, and an evil in your sight.

So your words are verified, and your word is justified.

From my birth I have been sinful, such an angel I receive.

Sinful from my first beginning, in my mother's womb conceived.

Truth, dear, and fall in my heart, wisdom to me you impart.

[24 : 16] Men's witness of purifying me, I'll be whiter than the snow.

Let the bones you crush be joyful, may I joy and gladness know.

From my failure I endure face, out of my wickedness.

Lord, create a pure heart in me, and a steadfast mind for you.

Do not take your spirit from me, cast me not away from you.

[25 : 22] Carry back the joy I have, keep my willing spirit glad.

And the melody there, incidentally, was Ottawa, which I omitted to mention.

Well, turn with me, if you will, for a short time this evening to the passage we read together from the book of Numbers, chapter 10.

Numbers 10, the words of Moses to Hobab in verse 29, Come with us, and we will do good to you. For the Lord has promised good to Israel. But he said to him, I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred, and so on.

[26 : 35] A man named Hobab. Now, this morning we considered verse 29 under two headings.

Hobab asked, Hobab assured. So just to recap, the Israelites, in verse 12 of this chapter, they set out in order to begin the conquest of Canaan.

We see them here, assembled, mobilized into orderly ranks with standards and banners lifted up. It is destination Canaan.

They are good to go, and they are now looking forward to the first leg of their journey towards the promised land.

But our interest, as we highlighted this morning, is in the very personal element to this narrative. It revolves around Hobab, Moses' Midianite brother-in-law.

[27 : 47] He is asked here to join the people of Israel, to enroll, to sign up, to subscribe, to accompany them through the wilderness, and play a crucial part, a meaningful part, in assisting Israel in navigating their way to Canaan.

But as we noted this morning, Hobab is not merely being called upon as a navigator, as a route finder, as a tracker. There is so much more to this.

Moses' invitation goes much deeper. This is a personal invitation with a powerful gospel dynamic to it.

Walk with us, Moses says. Journey with us. We will treat you well, should you do so. In fact, you will share in our inheritance, in the inheritance of God's goodness.

And this is his assurance, should he come along. It's compelling. Multiple blessings await Hobab, a promised land flowing with milk and honey, a better country, better by far.

[29 : 09] So the question we're going to address tonight is, how will Hobab respond? Similar to this morning, two headings, we're going to look at Hobab's answer, and we conclude by looking at Moses' appeal.

So what are we to make of Hobab's answer to the invitation of Moses? When I ministered in Barvis, I would sometimes watch very experienced surfers surf very large Atlantic waves just beyond the Barvis Macher.

It was not for the faint-hearted. I was once invited by a local surfer to give it a go. Come with us, he said.

I can't recall if he said, we will do you good. But my response was, no. I'm not doing it. Go on, he said.

And I simply borrowed Hobab's reply to Moses, and I said firmly, no. I will not go. You see, Hobab declines Moses' invitation to associate himself with Israel here.

[30 : 42] And it's a firm no. In no uncertain terms, he makes it very clear to Moses that he is not prepared to sever his personal tie with his own property and his own indigenous people.

He kind of digs his heels in, doesn't he? When he says no, you get the impression that he means no.

As if to say, with all due respect, Moses, I'm not going. No ambiguity. No hesitation. This appears to be a resolute no.

I will not go. Now, three things hinder Hobab. Note here, when he says, I will now depart to my own land and kindred, it's clear that, yes, three things hinder him.

He's preoccupied with land, livestock, the two overlap, and loved ones. Land, livestock, and loved ones.

[32 : 04] That resonates with us, doesn't it? We are a crofting community, essentially. The land, livestock, and loved ones, all three, go deep.

You see, there is much to sacrifice here for Hobab. And he's just not prepared to let go. Because to follow, he must forsake.

So he resolves not to go. He may be apprehensive, afraid about letting go, because his attachment to the land is strong.

But Moses is saying, there's a better land. There's a better country. Come with us. But Hobab has duties.

He has responsibilities. He has personal family ties. He can't just walk away and leave everything behind.

[33 : 14] He may also be concerned about his personal and professional reputation. What will his Midianite family and community think of him?

Should he now associate himself with the people of Israel? What will people say? What will people think of me?

After all, the Midianites and the Israelites had a frosty relationship. It wasn't without friction.

So at best, they coexist at this time. So it seems that the cost implications are just too great for Hobab here.

So I want to ask at this point, if perhaps some of us here tonight feel a measure of sympathy for Hobab. Do you feel his pain?

[34 : 17] Do his personal circumstances here reflect your own? Perhaps for those of us who are Christians here tonight, we can reflect on a time when perhaps we were first challenged with the invitation of the gospel.

That moment when we perhaps heard the words of Numbers 10 29. And you too initially responded with a firm, I will not go.

It's not happening. You heard the gospel anthem of the church, come with us. We will do you good. And yet you responded by saying, no, I will not go.

Why not? Well, perhaps if some of us are prepared to reflect, maybe it had a lot to do with our attachments and ties at that time.

You see, there's much to walk away from when you become a follower of Jesus Christ. There's much to sever and to sacrifice. What will my family and friends say?
[35 : 43] You see, Numbers 10 reminds us of this great truth that we see across the landscape of the four gospels as Jesus calls his followers.

To follow, one must forsake. And this is a recurring emphasis on the pages of the Bible. It's no different here.

Hobab is being invited to walk by faith. What is faith in Jesus Christ? Look at that word and break it down into five elements.

F-A-I-T-H. You've probably heard it before, but we'll say it again. Forsaking all. I trust him. This is what is being asked of Hobab.

How will Hobab respond? When you're reading through Matthew's gospel, we read a little from Matthew's gospel tonight from chapter 16.

[36 : 52] We'll come back to a number of key reference points there in a moment. But if you begin in Matthew chapter 4, as Jesus commences his ministry, he calls, in the first instance, Peter and Andrew, just as they're casting their nets on the Sea of Galilee.

Come, follow me, Jesus says to them. To follow Jesus, they must forsake their ties to the Sea of Galilee.

And that attachment is strong. They are fishermen. And they did. At once, Matthew tells us, indeed, with immediate effect, they left their nets and followed Jesus.

But let's go from the positive to the negative. Because when we come to Matthew chapter 19, we realize that this is not always the case.

There's a Hobab in the mix. In the form of a self-righteous, rich, young ruler who struggles to forsake his ties to an affluent lifestyle in order to follow Jesus.

[38 : 18] Come, follow me, Jesus says to this rich young man. But Matthew tells us that he went away sad because he had great wealth.

He does a Hobab. He says to Jesus, No, I will not go. You see, Christian discipleship is best summed up in the words of the Lord Jesus in the passage we read from Matthew chapter 16, verse 24.

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow me.

Now, it's fair to say, is it not, that Hobab seems to have an issue with self-denial. And it's something that you and I often struggle with if we're honest with ourselves.

There was once a preacher, an author, his name was Henry Drummond, and he said this, The entrance fee into the kingdom of heaven is nothing, but the annual subscription is everything.

[39 : 39] And this is where we see Hobab. Moses is saying to him, Hobab, there is so much to gain.

Hobab is saying to Moses, Ah, but there's everything to lose, is there not? This is Hobab's challenge, and perhaps it's yours tonight.

So let's move on. Let's come to Moses' appeal. Because this really takes us to the nitty-gritty of what is unfolding.

Credit to Moses in verse 31. You will notice that he is not one for taking no for an answer. What are we to make of his appeal in verse 31?

What does he say to Hobab? Hobab, please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us.

[40 : 54] Please, Hobab, I beg you, don't abandon us at this critical juncture. He pleads with him not to walk away, not to depart, not to detach himself, not to go back.

There's something distinctly missional about Moses in this instance, isn't there? You see, missional outreach is reaching out to someone with the gospel.

It's as simple as that, and we see it here. Moses leads by example here in Numbers 10.31. Notice how he reaches out to Hobab, and his appeal, as we've just read, it's personal, but it's incredibly persuasive.

Notice, too, that it's intentional, it's purposeful, and it is passionate. This is one-to-one evangelism at its very best, and no, we're not on the pages of the New Testament.

This is Numbers chapter 10, and it's bulging with the gospel, isn't it? Notice, too, that Moses, here in verse 31, calls Hobab to serve.

[42 : 27] Now, this is crucial to our understanding of Christian discipleship throughout the Bible. The Lord Jesus himself sets the sacrificial bar of service.

The Son of Man, he says, came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Now, when you think of Hobab, it's important for us to think of someone who is distinguished. He's a prominent figure in the Midianite community.

He's a man of standing, and yet, his commission is to serve. Service, not status.

No platform, no pedestal, no superiority, no standing, no pomp, no ceremony. Hobab's, Moses' appeal to Hobab is to serve.

[43 : 38] And that word in this verse really is important. You see, a servant, generally speaking throughout the Scriptures, is by definition devoted to another to the disregard of his own interests.

It's the vocabulary of slavery. And who is the ultimate bond-servant in the narrative here? It is, of course, Moses, the servant of God himself.

Moses is the one addressing Hobab to serve. Moses is indeed one who is owned and dedicated to serve his Lord and his Master, the Holy One of Israel.

Now, it's important for us to recognize the importance of this little but significant word, serve. You will serve as eyes for us.

Because, you see, this kind of vocabulary really goes against the grain of contemporary thinking these days, doesn't it? A self-orientated, self-focused, self-centered, self-elevating, 21st century take on life.

[45 : 10] Shameless, self-promotion dominates just about every social media platform these days. It's at the core of our individualistic culture where there's a constant striving for self-fulfillment.

And yet, when you turn the pages of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, what is it that strikes you immediately? Serving Jesus Christ is central to the gospel narratives.

You see, discipleship begins as it does in Matthew chapter 4. We referenced it earlier. It begins with follow me and continues with the same discipleship dynamic throughout.

Follow me, serve me, live for me from the beginning of your Christian life to the very end. It struck me recently reading Paul's letter to Titus.

Paul is an old man. The sun is setting fast over his days. It's now 65 AD.

[46 : 27] He writes to Titus, the great apostle Paul. And he begins this letter, yes, in the evening of his years.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. As we read this narrative tonight, I want us to ask ourselves soul-searching questions.

What, who are we living for? What is your great goal in life? Is it self-gratification or self-denial?

Is it higher status or higher service? Hobab, Moses says, you know where we should camp in the wilderness and you can serve as our eyes.

Notice something else that Moses does. Focus on and he focuses on Hobab's knowledge and awareness and experience all of which makes him a resourceful and effective person to have.

[47 : 42] In other words, his gifts can be put to good use within the fellowship of Israel. Service and gifts overlap in the Christian life and both are to be not for our benefit but for the glory of God.

You see, Hobab can input and assist as few can. That's the point here. He can act as the very eyes of Israel and play an active part in this journey.

So what is Moses saying to him? Well, again, come, not as a passenger, but come as an active participant, Hobab.

Again, this is vital to our understanding of discipleship as we read this narrative in Numbers 10 in parallel with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

You see, the kingdom always requires of you and I a hands-on approach. Folded hands are of no use in the kingdom. Proactive, not inactive.

[48 : 59] Doing, not dithering. Hands to the plow, no looking back. And so Hobab is given every encouragement by Moses here to enroll, to sign up, and to accompany Moses and the people of Israel through this wilderness journey ahead and play a strategic, meaningful, vital, key part in assisting Moses and the people of Israel and to give of his insight and knowledge and experience to the glory of God.

God. But let me just say what I said this morning very briefly. Moses' appeal goes so much deeper than just having Hobab on board as someone who would be useful to have.

As we said, this points us firmly to a very powerful moving gospel invitation. You see, Hobab is personally asked to step forward, to come forward, and associate himself now with God's people, to follow the ark of the covenant, to follow the pillar of cloud, to follow not just the people of God but the Lord God himself.

And he's assured here too that God has a purpose, for him. Listen to what Moses says in verse 32, Hobab, should you come, and can you hear the decibels rising in Moses' voice?

Hobab, should you come with us, then you too will be a recipient of blessing as much as every other Israelite you see around you here.

[50 : 56] You will not be excluded should you come with us. We will treat you well. Indeed, you will be grafted in, you will be adopted into the family of God, Hobab.

What's ours will be yours, the same inheritance, no less. That's what Moses is saying in verse 32, just as that little word serve is so significant in verse 31, the word same carries tremendous weight in verse 32.

Now isn't Moses a great evangelist? He's persistent, isn't he? He reaches out to Hobab once again, and with urgency he makes his appeal to him to commit once and for all.

You see, the Israelites, well, they're good to go. They're ready to depart. They await the signal from Moses, but Moses will not lift his hand until he's finished with Hobab, and he's not finished with him yet.

This incident, again, I say it, it's bulging with the gospel, isn't it? You see, this call, this appeal to Hobab to take to the path of discipleship is powerful, but it's also ponyant.

[52 : 24] There's an urgency to this. There's tension in the air. Why? Because it's like standing in the last chance saloon. The clock is ticking.

It's time to go, and there is no more time to lose. This is it. Decision time, Hobab. Now, can I stop there and ask as we read this, if you have not as yet resolved to trust in Jesus Christ, will you resolve to do that now?

Will you resolve to live for Jesus? Will you resolve to sever any ties you have tonight that might be holding you back from trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal savior?

Will you come into the fellowship of the gospel with God's people? Will you say, the world behind me, the cross before me, no turning back?

Because when all is said and done, there remains one important question. Who asks that question? It is, of course, the Lord Jesus himself.

[53 : 51] The question that is put in the passage we read from Matthew 16, verse 26, 6, what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his own soul?

We can paraphrase that ever so slightly because in this verse that I've quoted from Matthew 16, 26, Jesus turns the word good in Numbers 10, 29 on its head.

As if to say, what good will it be for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul?

Does that paint a picture of you tonight? It certainly paints a picture of Hobab. So, to be or not to be?

That is the question. What did Hobab do? How did he respond? What is the outcome?

[55 : 07] Well, let's look at verse 33 because it sheds some light on how all of this concludes. So, they set out from the mountain of the Lord.

The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them to seek out a resting place for them. The cloud of the Lord was over them when they set out from the camp.

What is so significant about the pronouns we come across from verse 33? Well, do the pronouns they and them not include Hobab?

Well, I'm persuaded that all five pronouns do just that. he has come forward.

He's in. He has taken that next step. He's in the fellowship of Israel. Had he not, then surely the passage would have spelt this out for us.

[56 : 24] If there had been a parting of the ways at this decisive point, then this would in all probability be highlighted.

But we mustn't stop there because we need to go beyond the law of probability, don't we? And the Bible does. There are two further references to Hobab, or at least Hobab is being alluded to.

So if you've got your Bible in front of you, just turn, if you will, a few books forward to the book of Judges. Judges chapter 1 verse 16.

Now, we're turning to the book of Judges because the book of Judges provides more compelling evidence to support our conclusion.

Judges 1 16, as I said a moment ago, alludes to Hobab. Let's just get a handle on the historical context.

[57 : 44] We are in the realm of the ongoing conquest of Canaan, so we're some 40 to 60 years on from the events that are unfolding in Numbers 10 at Mount Sinai.

What do we read in verse 16? And the descendants of the Canaanite, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the city of Palms into the wilderness of Judah.

Now, this speaks of Hobab's kindred, of Hobab's people. The Canaanites were a subgroup of the Midianites.

And this would strongly suggest that his whole family have followed in his footsteps. But we're not done yet.

There's one further reference and you only have to turn a page or two. We come to chapter 4 verse 11 and you will see there that Hobab is actually mentioned.

[58 : 54] You will notice that more specifically it refers to the descendants of Hobab Moses' brother in law.

Now Heber, the Canaanites, had separated from the Canaanites the descendants of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses and so on.

Now, again, this is years later. Here we are in Canaan during the leadership of the judge, prophet, and mother in Israel, Deborah.

Two very significant reference points, all of which take us back to Numbers chapter 10. So, had Hobab not followed and his line and his people, his immediate and extended family, then he would not be mentioned.

So, we conclude that Hobab indeed, back in chapter 10 of Numbers, subscribed, yes, he sided with Israel.

[60 : 24] He takes that step forward and he walks alongside Moses, grafted into the commonwealth of Israel.

you might ask the question, was he disappointed? No. Yes, there are challenges ahead. If you're going to turn the pages of Scripture from Numbers chapter 10 onwards, it doesn't always make for good reading.

You're going to read of periods of rebellion and plagues and disobedience, but you're also going to read of times of great blessing. You're also going to read of the faithfulness of the covenant-keeping God of Israel.

You're also going to read, yes, of how sin abounds, but you will read of how grace does so much more abound in the history of Israel.

And we believe that Hobab is a recipient of grace and mercy and peace as he walks the path, the way of the wilderness with the people of God.

[61 : 43] No eye has seen, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2, 9, no ear has heard, and no human mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love him.

I'm sure Hobab may well have said that God did immeasurably more than all he could have asked for or imagined back then at Mount Sinai, according to the power at work within the people of God. To him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen. Let's pray. Our heavenly Father, we praise you for the message of the gospel.

We thank you this evening for the very compelling tone of the narrative we have engaged with.

[63 : 13] And it speaks to us now, thousands of years later. Perhaps we are standing where Hobab stood.

We pray that we would be constrained by the love of Christ to take that next step and to walk with your people.

And for those of us who can look back to that time where perhaps we stood, where Hobab stood and took that next step so we reflect with gratitude and so we would raise our Ebenezer and we too can stand next to Samuel and we can say hitherto, thus far the Lord has helped us and so may we continue to trust unreservedly in the sufficiency of your grace for the remainder of this day and for all our days.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Well, let's conclude our service as we sing Psalm 36 from Sing Psalms.

The tune is Huddersfield verses 5 to 10 on page 44.

[64 : 51] Your steadfast love is great, O Lord. it reaches heaven high. Your faithfulness is wonderful, extending to the sky.

Verses 5 to 10 to the praise of God. Amen. Your steadfast love is great, O Lord, it reaches heaven high.

Your faithfulness is wonderful, extending to the sky.

Your righteousness is very great, like mountains high and steep.

Your justice is like ocean depths, both man and beast you keep.

[66 : 14] high precious is your sacrifice love, what haunted exit brings, for high and loof my sheltering the shadow of your wings.

The feet within your hearts and they come streams of your delight, on with your soul shall fly, in your life we see light.

those who know you as their God, your steadfast life, loving heart, may take your righteousness to those of pure and upright heart.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit remain with us all. Amen.

Amen.