

Going Backwards or Forwards

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Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

- [0 : 00] Well, we're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 96a. Sing Psalm's version, page 126. We're going to sing from verse 1 down to verse 9. And the tune is Free Church.
- We'll sing a new song to the Lord, sing praises to his name and his salvation day by day. Let all the earth proclaim. We'll stand to sing verse 1 to 9 to God's praise.
- Oh, sing a new song to the Lord, sing praises to his name.
- And his salvation day by day. Let all the earth proclaim.
- His glory and his mighty to every man declare.
- [1 : 18] And great and awesome is the Lord. With him no gods compare.
- For other posts and wood and stone, the Lord make heaven's high.
- All nations to the Lord have strife.
- All nations to the Lord have strife.
- The glory act is due. Glory and strength has strife to God and places near anew.
- [2 : 41] B B B B B B B B B B for them now.
- We're going to bow our heads in a word of prayer. Now let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for this day that we are able to gather in your name.
- We thank you that we are able to come to worship you and praise your name in song. Thankful for these words that we have sung together, remembering that we come and worship of you as the one who is God and Lord of all.
- And we pray today that young and old together alike, we may know your blessing over us. We may know your peace with us. We thank you for the Sunday school as they resume again today.
- And we do look back and thankful for the holiday times enjoyed, for the rest and refreshment in that, and just pray for this term ahead as it comes to the last term of a school year and a Sunday school year.
- [4 : 11] We do pray for help and strength to teachers in our day schools and all the staff and children as they go in there during the week, but also for our Sunday school teachers and all who help in creche and tweenies and in every way, Lord, with our young people, that we would know, Lord, your blessing from the young classes up to the Bible class, that you would be with us in all of these things.
- Thankful for all the children here and the families and just our community as a whole, Lord, that we would come to know your blessing and your peace with us. Teach us by your word.
- We thank you that it is a word that reminds us of the great power that you have. Even in that memory verse, we think of, if God is for us, who can be against us.

So may we know God with us, God on our side, God for us in all things. And we thank you that we can come to worship God in and through the name of Jesus, the one who came into this world for us, the one we worship and praise as our Savior.

We pray in his name, thankful for the power of the Holy Spirit too that ministers to us. So hear our prayers and continue with us as we ask all things for the forgiveness of our sin in Jesus name.

[5 : 24] Amen. It's good to be back into the routine once again of all the Sunday school classes meeting and coming together in this way once again.

I hope you all had a good holiday and enjoyed great weather we've had. It's been fantastic weather the last few weeks. So we've been blessed with that as well. But it's good to come together and remember to give thanks to God in all things.

And I want to ask a question today. And it's a question that maybe straight away something comes to your mind and you maybe think the answer is yes to the first question and no to the second one.

So first question is this. Who wants to be rich? Nobody. Woody. My goodness. That's not the answer I expected.

I'll ask again. Who wants to be rich? Hands up if you want to be rich. Oh well. There's a few hands going up now. Well. Second question then. Who wants to be poor?

[6 : 27] Hands up if you want to be poor. No hands going up here. Is there? Nobody wants to be poor but at least some people are honest. They want to be rich. They've got a plan. They're going to make it.

They're going to be rich in life. But when we think of rich what do we immediately think? We think money. Don't we? We think riches is all about how much money we have.

How rich are we as always? How much money we have? And what do you think when you think to be poor? To be poor we often think oh that's just to have nothing.

Maybe not even to have a house or anything. Maybe you have to live on the streets. These people they are poor. Well I want us to look at these two things in a very different way in a way the Bible teaches us.

Because if I was to ask you this who wants to be rich according to the Bible? All our hands would go up I hope. But also who wants to be poor?

[7 : 27] I think and I hope all our hands would go up. because listen to what the Bible says about being rich and being poor. It's nothing to do with money. That's only one way of looking at being rich and being poor.

The Bible looks at it in a very different way. And it speaks about being rich and being poor. And first of all I want to think of being poor. And we all need to be poor.

Because listen to what the Bible says. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. So what does that mean?

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Well to be poor in spirit means we are just depending on God in every way and for everything.

So we're poor in spirit. It doesn't mean that we're poor without money or without food or any of these things but to be poor in spirit is a good thing because it means that we are relying entirely on God for everything.

[8 : 31] So it's good to be poor in that sense because it means we're depending on God and that's what we should do with all our lives. And then when we do that we will be rich because it says we get the kingdom of heaven.

That means that God gives us everything that we need for now and for eternity as well that he will give us all of these things. And when we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and we are poor in spirit depending on Jesus that means then we are rich because another part of the Bible in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 Jesus says or we're talking about Jesus here for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich.

so there we see that Jesus was rich but became poor and that by him becoming poor we become rich because Jesus left everything aside all his glory everything that he could have done could have saved himself from going to the cross and all of these things but he said no I'm going to become poor for my people that they might become rich.

Jesus became poor that we might be rich so we are to become poor and depend on God for everything that we might be rich and have everything that we need not money but by faith have everything that we need through faith in Jesus who gives us everything that we need for life and more importantly for eternity.

So hands up who wants to be rich? Convinced a few more? Yes good. Who wants to be poor? A few hands should go up now as well.

[10 : 22] We want to be rich we want to be poor in Jesus. We're going to say the Lord's prayer together now. Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever amen we're going to sing again together to God's praise psalm 90 this time in the sing psalms version psalm 90 page 120 we're going to sing from verse 10 down to the end of the psalm and the tune is even tied psalm 90 at verse 10 and during this singing the young ones can go out to the classes our years amount to 70 in length or even 80 if we have the strength and yet our days in grief and pain are past they quickly end away we fly at last and then in verse 12 there the middle of that stanza teach us to number all our days are right so will our hearts be filled with wisdom's light we're going to be thinking about time today and this psalm tells us to make the most of the time that we have so psalm 90 verse 10 to the end we stand to sing to

God's praise! groan Our years are bound to seventy and land All even beauty, if we have the strength And yet are we still grief and pain our past Then we can end now, we will fly at last The power of your anger, new and old Your wrath, sans free, that's is the fear we owe

Teach us to number, all our peace are high So will our hearts be filled with wisdom's pride Reetard, O Lord, how long will you delay Have mercy on you, servants Lord, we pray O satisfy us with your love always Happy, wasting, rejoicing, over our days

In place of our affliction make us glad In joy for all the years you've made us sad To all your servants may your needs be shown And to their children may your glory own Now may the favor of Almighty go Have I known us which blessings over o'er

Already, our efforts, our efforts, our efforts Already, our efforts, our efforts, our efforts Because he's a big strength, he's one.

[15 : 37] We're going to turn to read God's word in the Old Testament and in the book of Jeremiah. The prophecy of Jeremiah. You'll find it around page 768 of the church Bibles.

Of course, Jeremiah chapter 7, we're going to read from verse 1 down to verse 29. Jeremiah 7 at verse 1.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord. Stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim there this word and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel. Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words.

This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave you of old, to your fathers forever.

[17 : 00] Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered, only to go on doing all these abominations.

Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord. Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel.

And now, because you have done all these things, declares the Lord, and when I spoke to you, you persistently did not listen. And when I called you, you did not answer.

Therefore, I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.

And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim. As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you.

[18 : 26] Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the Queen of Heaven.

And they pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke me to anger. Is it I whom they provoke, declares the Lord? Is it not themselves to their own shame?

Therefore, thus says the Lord God, Behold, my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, upon man and beast, on the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground.

It will burn and not be quenched. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat the flesh.

For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices, but this command I gave of them, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people.

[19 : 30] And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you. But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backwards and not forwards.

From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants, the prophets, to them day after day. Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck.

They did worse than their fathers. So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. For you shall call to them, but they will not answer you.

And you shall say to them, This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, and did not accept discipline. Truth has perished. It is cut off from their lips.

Cut off your hair and cast it away. Raise a lamentation on the bare heights, for the Lord has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

[20 : 35] Amen. And may God bless that reading from his word. Again, just bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, as we approach your word and as we come to hear it, we recognize that the many truths that we find in it are not always the truths that make us joyful and rejoicing, but the truths that open up the reality of our own hearts and our lives and our world in which we live.

Even as we think of this passage as we approach it today, we see so much in it that makes us wonder what God was doing, how he seems not to be interested in his people in some ways.

And yet by giving his word to them, he is reminding them that he is a God who cares and has concern. And we thank you that today you are such a God to us, that despite the wickedness we see around us and in us, that you are still a God who speaks to us and calls us.

You warn us through your word, that we are to be a people who turn to you. And that's through individually and collectively and even as a nation and as a world.

This is what we need, Lord, to hear the voice of the Lord calling us to turn, not to go backwards away from you, but to go forward in the joy and the strength of our Lord and our God.

[22 : 07] And so, Lord, teach us today by your word and through your spirit and be with us in all that we seek to do. So we thank you for your goodness and mercy on you each day, as we thank you for the privilege of worship, for the joy of our companionship, our friendship with one another in this life and in our church congregation.

And we do thank you for all our people, Lord, not just those here today, but also those tuning in in line, those maybe unable to be with us, but longing to be here.

We thank you that you surround your people where they are, that you comfort, uphold, and strengthen in so many ways. And, Lord, we come today, whether we are sitting in the pew or sitting at home, tuning in, we come with all our different cares and burdens, and we thank you that we can bring them to you, that you are a God who cares for us, who already knows our burdens, whether they are burdens of grief, whether they are burdens of ill health, whether they are burdens for family or friends, whatever burdens we carry, Lord, we thank you that though they are many, that your grace is always sufficient.

And we pray, Lord, that each one of us would know the wonder of your grace, of your power at work in us. Leaning upon you, Lord, is what we are commanded to do.

And so, Lord, teach us to do as we should. Teach us as we see in these words, Lord, that we are to listen to you. And so we ask your blessing and peace upon us.

[23 : 43] Remember us in all of these things. And remember us as a people. Even as we look, God, willing to the week ahead, we commit, Lord, every meeting around your word and in fellowship with one another.

As we think of the toddler group, we thank you for all the young parents who come in there and for all who help at it. And we just pray for a place of peace and stillness and calm in the midst of life and all that it brings our way, Lord.

We pray blessing in that. We thank you too for the WFM and for all the work they do here in our own congregation, but also our island group and our national group as well.

The amazing fundraising that goes on each and every year, supporting so many different works. And we do thank you and praise you, Lord, for the generosity in service in that and generosity in giving to it.

As we see the amazing amounts that have been raised over the years to help causes near and far. And so we pray blessing on the meeting tomorrow evening, as Peggy will speak there, that there'll be a rich time of fellowship together and blessing in it.

[24 : 51] Remember too, the holiday club's preparations are made for that. We pray for your guidance and your help and your wisdom in it as we prepare. And as we look ahead, Lord, to those who might help in it, Lord, we pray that you will encourage us in our hearts.

Thankful for all we've seen in the past and praying and committing this future endeavour into your hands. Thank you too for the craft group who meet on Tuesday evening and for all that they do as well in terms of encouraging one another and also helping many different people and groups as well, Lord.

And we pray that it'll be a blessed time for them as well. Remember our prayer meetings during the week too in Blackstil in the MA Hall on Wednesday evening and in the Seminary on Thursday.

We do pray that as we come together as a congregation and also as we think of Wednesday coming together as congregations in an area prayer meeting, we do pray for encouragement and thanksgiving in all of these meetings that we depend on you, that when we think of being poor in spirit, it reminds us, Lord, of how we are to approach you and dependence on you in all things.

And so, Lord, hear our prayers and continue with us in this day. Guide us in our worship, in our time of rest, in our time with family or friends and whatever we do, Lord, may we know your presence with us.

[26 : 18] So hear our prayers and we ask all seeking forgiveness for all our sins. We ask all in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Now, before we turn back to this passage, we're going to sing in Psalm 89, the Scottish Psalter version, page 344.

Psalm 89, page 344. We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 5 and the tune is Effingham. God's mercies I will ever sing and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known to generations all.

We'll sing from verse 1 to 5 to God's praise. Amen. God's mercies I will ever sing and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known to generations all.

For mercy shall be built, said I, forever to endure.

Thy faithfulness even in the end thou will be starly sure.

[28 : 14] I will, my chosen one, have they a calm and gracious thee, and to my servant whom I lot to give his warm high.

The kind thy seed is done we shall forever to remain and will to generations Generations of thy throne will not maintain.

The praises of thy wonders, Lord, the heavens shall express.

And in the congregation of saints I beg who is.

Well, we can turn back to a reading in Jeremiah chapter 7. And we're going to read again at verse 23 and 24. Jeremiah chapter 7 at verse 23.

[30 : 21] But this command I gave them, obey my voice, and I will be your God and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.

But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts and went backwards and not forwards.

They went backwards and not forwards. When we think of time, there's a number of different ways and sayings about time.

Things like, time and tide waits for no man. How time just never stands still for us. We can also use it in the sense of time is a great healer.

Time is used in all kinds of different ways to kind of think about life and think about our circumstances and what's going on with us or around us.

[31 : 24] A man called Carl Sandberg, an American poet, journalist, he once said this. Time is the coin of your life.

Time goes on. But it's also a question of how are we spending our time. None of us know how much time we have left.

But we all know that time is ticking on. Time is always marching on. So how are you spending the time of your life?

It's amazing how quickly time goes past. This is the last Sunday of April. We're already a third of the way through 2025.

2025 maybe sounds just like a year that when you were young just seemed so far away. It was like one of these movies about the future where 2025 we just, we thought things would be so different.

[32 : 51] We thought it was so far away and yet here we are. Time goes past so quickly. But what are we doing with our time?

As in Psalm 90 which we sang together, there was a reminder in that psalm about our time as well. Saying this, teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Teach us to take account of our days, our time, the coin of our life. That we may apply our hearts to gain wisdom. What wisdom do we have?

What wisdom are we relying on? So the most important question when it comes to time in our experience and time marching on is, am I pleasing God in my time?

The time that I have, the time that I'm spending, am I pleasing God? Am I right with God? Because time is moving on.

[33 : 54] And so in this chapter in Jeremiah chapter 7, we see Jeremiah bringing God's word to the people. And what God is saying is, he's talking about the stubbornness of their hearts.

And how they're spending their time. How they're not listening to the wisdom of God as you see in these verses. But going their own ways, using the time, the way that they see right and fit.

But what he says to them is, they're walking in their own counsel on the stubbornness of their evil hearts. In verse 24, they went backwards and not forwards.

As you read through Jeremiah, it's a very sad story. You think maybe the scripture is there to help us rejoice and be full of joy all the time.

But it's the reality of the world and the lives in which we live. And Jeremiah is a reminder on so much of the Old Testament and into the New Testament.

[34 : 55] Reminds us, it's not all about just the highs, but the lows as well. Of every area in life where we go wrong, where we drift away from God. And that that has consequences.

We see a nation here of God's people. The ones you expect to always be close to God. Instead of going forward with them, they're going backwards. They're going backwards just like they were sort of going back to the time when they came out of Egypt.

God has been with them over years and generations. And yet they're drifting away from them. They're rejecting his words. They're not listening to the prophets, the people of God who are sent to them with a word from God.

And instead they're listening to false prophets and other teachings and just doing their own thing. And in Jeremiah's day, that was sad.

But the reality is in our own day today, it's so sad as well that we are in such a similar set of circumstances. That we could apply these words in verse 24.

[36 : 01] But they walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts and went backwards and not forwards. That we can apply that to our own day.

Because that's the reality of God's word. It speaks to every generation. And every generation so often finds themselves in these situations.

People turning away from God and suffering consequences. But here in Jeremiah and today as well, the wonder of it all is that God is still crying out.

That God is still calling to his people to come. And you see it throughout this chapter as well. The verses that we read. In verse 1, the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord.

So God was speaking. And then in verse 3 you see it again. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel. God has something to say.

[37 : 05] And that's still true today. This is what God is saying to us today. And just as the people then were being challenged, are you going to go forwards or backwards?

So it is the same with us. How are we spending our time? The coin that we have. How little time we have.

That's ticking away that we are spending. But how are we spending it? And what are we doing with it? Are we going forwards or are we going backwards?

Are we listening to God or are we not? And so as we consider what Jeremiah says here. I want us to look at these verses under three headings.

The first is a false hope. A false hope. That's what the people had here. A false hope. Then secondly we see the direction they were going.

[38 : 03] And then thirdly we see the call that was put to them. And we're looking at this in light of the coin of our own life. And asking ourselves, what is our hope?

What direction are we going? And are we listening to the call that God is giving? How are we spending the coin of our life?

Firstly we see the false hope. Jeremiah was a prophet. A man sent by God to bring God's word to the people of his day.

And like many prophets, they wouldn't listen. Even though he brought them a message of hope and help. A call to repent and turn. Yet they still thought that they were wise enough themselves.

That they could manage just fine by themselves. But as Jeremiah is bringing this word to them, he is bringing it to a people who had loved God.

[39 : 05] If you go back to chapter 2, verse 2. See what it says there about the devotion that they had.

I remember the devotion of your youth. Your love as a bride. How you followed me in the wilderness. In a land not sown.

I remember the devotion of your youth. The love as a bride. And so as he's writing to them, he's writing to a people who God has known.

That have loved him. They've trusted him. They've listened to him in the past. But they're not listening now.

And that's the key. And ask yourself this today. Are you someone who grew up loving God? Loving God with a sense of joy and gladness.

[40 : 06] And hearing God speaking to you. And thinking of the wonder of the gospel. A love like described there. The love of a bride.

That joy. But that love has gone cold. For whatever reason. And there can be many different reasons.

That love has gone cold. Circumstances. The way things have gone in life. Has made you question things. Question God.

Providence. Providence. Hard providence. Things that come our way that are so difficult. And we don't seem to marry in to a God of love and care and compassion.

When we hide tragedy in our experience. Our difficulties. And our love for God just seems to grow cold. Or sadly. Sometimes people.

[41 : 03] Can cause us to lose our devotion to God. People hurt us. People say the wrong thing too. As Christians. We are guilty as any.

Sadly people. Can cause offense. So we can think of circumstances. Providence. And people. But we cannot blame God.

Because we live. In a world that is full of sin. And pain. And grief. But where are we putting our hope. In the midst of it. You see the people here.

That love and devotion that they had. They thought they were seeing something better. In others. Or in other teachings. They didn't see a God who cared. Or was concerned for them.

And so they turned away. But any hope that they had away from God. Was a false hope. And the forgetfulness.

[42 : 01] That was coming into their experience. Here of just forgetting God. Was making their hearts cold. And hard. Towards God. And yet God is reminding them. Here that they need to return to him.

And you see it in a warning here. As well. Of how they still think. They're right with God. When you look at verse 4. Do not trust in these deceptive words.

This is the temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord. It's repeated there. Three times. There's something important about this. So what is it meaning?

Deceptive words. This is the temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord. This is their false hope. They think that.

Although they're away from God. The fact that they're still. Coming to the temple of the Lord. Makes everything okay. And everything right. And our love and devotion for God.

[43 : 02] Can come into that kind of situation. But I'm still going to church. I'm still going to church. I'm still going to church. And therefore I'm right. But it's a false hope.

If you're only coming to church. And not coming to God. To God with that sense of love. And devotion.

And dependence on him. So they had a false hope. I go to church. So God will save me. No.

I give to the church. So God owes me. No. It's about our devotion to God. Our love to God. A love that can so easily grow cold.

And we become dependent. On a false hope. And not upon God. Himself. And so it is into the midst.

[43 : 56] Of this false hope. That he is calling. That the Lord calls them. But they don't listen. And you see there in verse 13.

How it speaks of this. And now because you have done all these things. Declares the Lord. And when I spoke to you. Persistently you did not listen.

And when I called you. You did not answer. God is calling. And yet they're not listening. It's still the temple of the Lord.

The temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord. But it's not God. They're not listening. And you see the same emphasis there. In verse 24.

They did not obey or incline their ear. But walked in their own counsels. And the stubbornness of their evil hearts. They went backwards. And not forwards.

[44 : 53] There was a stubbornness. In them. They're relying on something. Or someone else. A false teaching. A false hope. That cannot save them.

But they think. They have peace. Have you ever seen the programs. About the tragic tsunamis. It was a boxing day one. Or the ones in Japan. In March 2011.

It's so frightening. Watching them. And just how subtle. And gentle. Everything seems at first. It's not like there's loud noise.

Or something. Major. Happening immediately. It just looks so gentle. And so subtle. The tide. Coming in. And people are almost awestruck.

By it. They're just looking. And they think. Maybe. Oh. But we just go back. A little bit. We'll be okay. Or I'll just go back. To my house. And get. My possessions. Or something.

[45 : 49] You know. They're just this. They don't know what to do. But what begins. So gently. And subtly. With the water. Then lipping over. The barriers. Over the piers.

All of a sudden. It just becomes. A raging torrent. Of water. And that's the way. Life is. Sometimes. We can have peace.

That seems so gentle. But we don't realize. There's this tide. Of this flood. That's going to overwhelm us. When we are putting our trust. In the wrong things.

Instead of going away. To the high ground. Where they be safe. They just watch on. As if. It's not going to come near me. Only to be overwhelmed. That's what false hope is.

It's thinking. You have peace. And safety. But all of a sudden. You're overwhelmed. Going backwards. Instead of forwards. With stubborn. Evil hearts.

[46 : 46] That's what. He's getting at here. And that's what we come to. Secondly. We see just. The way their direction. Is going. And when we think of. Our own direction.

When we think of. The coin of time. That is our life. And how we're spending it. Well what direction. Are we going. Jeremiah's. People in Jeremiah's day.

They did not have. The hope. Of God. They weren't trusting in him. What about ourselves today. Do we have the hope of Christ. Is Christ our cornerstone.

Is Christ our security. Our foundation. Is he the one. That we are choosing. To love. And devote ourselves to. With all our hearts. They weren't listening here.

So they went backwards. Instead of forwards. But what about ourselves. Well the decisions. That we make. They define the direction. That we go. And that's what you.

[47 : 44] So often find. In Jeremiah. A challenge. To them. In chapter 6. The previous chapter. At verse 16. He says there.

This is what the Lord says. Again. God is speaking. He says. Stand at the crossroads. And look. Ask for the ancient paths. Ask where the good way is.

And walk in it. And you will find rest. For your souls. So there. God is speaking. Look. Where are you going? What direction? Walk. In the right way.

The good way. And you will find rest. For your souls. What was the response. Of the people. But you said. We will not walk in it. There is stubbornness.

There is hardness of heart. There is a love for God. That if it was there. It is now cold and hard. We will not walk in it. What a brazen attitude.

[48 : 40] And yet. In our own hearts. We can have the same thing. God tell me what to do. No. We will not walk in that. I will not walk in that way. It's rejection.

And the same is here. In verse 23. Where he says to them. Walk in all the way. That I command you. That it may be well with you.

But they did not obey. Or incline their ear. They wouldn't listen. No matter how often. God is saying it. The stubbornness. Of their own evil hearts. They listen to that.

And so again and again. We are being challenged. To choose. To choose. Just like you go back. To Joshua. As he spoke to the people then.

Choose this day. Whom you will serve. Whether you will serve. The false gods. Or the bales. But what did he say? But as for me. And my house.

[49 : 40] We will serve the Lord. He had a definite answer. We will serve the Lord. Not. No God. We are not going to walk in your ways. They are too hard.

Or there is a better way. Or we know best. We will serve the Lord. And that's the challenge. That Jeremiah is giving to the people.

Here as well. The response though. Is rejection. And turning away. And there is this. You see it. That there is.

An underlying problem here. That has been going on. For a long time. Because he speaks. In verse 22. About being brought out of Egypt. And being speaking to your father.

So it's like a generation. Past has been spoken to as well. As speaking to this current generation. So this stubbornness of heart. It's just something that's been.

[50 : 34] Almost increasing all the time. You see the progression from chapter 2. Which is. I know the love that you had in your youth. But now the stubbornness of your heart.

And it's this direction that they're going in. They think they're going forwards. But they're actually going backwards. Because they're going away. From God. And that's what we see today.

As well. You can look at. A church. A congregation. Like ourselves here. Or a denomination. Or the church throughout our land. And think. Oh there was days.

When there was such love. And devotion to God. Where there was praising. And worshipping of God. Throughout all the land. Where so many gathered. Every Lord's day.

When they were looking for more and more. Coming in. And praising God together. And yet today. That love has grown cold. Are we at fault as a church?

[51 : 36] We often blame others. We blame the day we live in. We blame all kinds of things. The direction politics are going.

And the media. All of these things. But do we really examine ourselves? Are we at fault? Are we at fault? My heart. Am I at fault?

That people aren't coming to church? Are our congregations at fault? That people are not coming to church? Is there a denomination at fault? That people are not coming to church?

We have to examine ourselves. Have we caused people to turn away? We have to look at all of these things. And ask.

Are we listening to God? What direction are we going in? First and foremost. Not the world around us. But ourselves.

[52 : 29] What direction are we going in? What direction am I going in as a Christian? How is my love to God? My devotion to God?

And how is that working out in our congregation? How is it working out in our denomination? And in the church of God throughout the world? Do we show the love of Christ?

Do we reflect the one who was rich yet for our sakes became poor? How are we living for God? Because if you go forward here again.

And God is warning them here in Jeremiah's day. You're going backwards and not forwards. Well if you jump forward again to the day of Haggai. And you see there the problems of the people.

They're not even relying on the temple of the Lord there. You see they're relying on their own homes. They've turned away from God completely. In Haggai chapter 1.

[53 : 27] Haggai comes with a word that says. Is it time for yourselves to be living in your panelled houses? While this house remains a ruin. Now this is what the Lord Almighty says.

Give careful thought to your ways. To your direction that you're going in. So it's almost like they've abandoned the very temple that Jeremiah is speaking about here. That they were showing so much dependence on.

Now it's just we're just living completely away from God. The temple's in ruin. That's the direction. That's the trajectory. Because they were not listening to God.

And that's the warning to ourselves. What are we like in our day? What are we leaving for a generation to come after us? What are we passing on?

Have we listened to God and shown the love of Christ in everything that we do? Or has the devotion, the love that we had grown cold?

[54 : 23] And we're relying on ourselves. Our own stubborn, evil hearts. We need to return to our first priority. The kingdom of God.

Seek first. Look to God. Look to him. Individually and collectively. So how are we spending the coin of our life?

What are we doing with it? Are we using it for the glory of God? Are we rejoicing in him? Well, the final thing we see from here is the word that God speaks.

And what is he saying to them? He's saying you have a false hope. He's saying you're going backwards instead of forwards. But what else does he say?

Well, he's saying in the midst of this, it's time to turn. It's time to turn. Jeremiah, as he was speaking to the people throughout his days, was calling on his people to return.

[55 : 33] Their priorities were themselves. Their priorities were the temple of the Lord. The place that they thought, well, if we're going there, we'll be okay with God.

But God had slipped down the list. How were they spending their time? And what did it mean for their soul?

That is always the warning that comes again and again. And here he's saying, walk in the ways I command you. It's the ongoing theme throughout God's word.

Walk in the ways I command you. You go back to Deuteronomy. You go back to the time when these people were coming out of Egypt into the promised land.

And the warnings were given there. Deuteronomy chapter 5, verse 33. Walk in all the way the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you possess.

[56 : 40] This was all about God's relationship with his people, his covenant relationship with them. That's what you see in verse 23 of chapter 7 here.

Obey my voice and I will be your God and you will be my people. That relationship is there. That love is there. Listen to me. Obey me.

Walk in my ways. And we will have that love. We will have that bond. But they would not listen. So Deuteronomy gave, Moses gave that warning to Deuteronomy long before.

In chapter 26 of Deuteronomy as well. And the Lord has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised. And that you are to keep all his commands.

Treasured possessions. You are his people. But there is also that if you keep his commands. And so what the Lord is asking is for acceptance of his lordship.

[57 : 41] That's what he is asking of us today. As you spend the coin of time that you have. Is the Lord Jesus Christ your lord? Is he the one that you are loving with all your heart?

Serving with all that you are? Is he the first and foremost thing in your life? Are you listening to him?

Because Jesus himself gives us a warning. A warning if we are looking or trusting in other riches or anything else in this world. He says in the Gospel of Mark.

Chapter 8 verse 36. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world. Yet forfeit his soul. What are you spending your time on?

We speak about the swiftness of time as it passes. It seems like yesterday it was a new year. New year's day.

[58 : 42] It may seem like yesterday since you were in primary school or secondary school. It may seem like yesterday you were starting your first job. Excited about life and all that lay ahead.

Time is swiftly going by. Can you say today it was me? I managed to do it all by myself. Or do you see apart from God we can do nothing?

The people here were forgetting God. Has your love for God grown cold? Maybe you loved him in the past. That love has just gone cold and hard over the years.

How are you spending that coin of time now? How much have you got left? We don't know. But today as we think of time going past.

What are we doing with our time? When does a new year start? We ask that question we would say the first of January. It's obvious.

[59 : 51] And that's one way of looking at it. But we could also say a new year starts the hour we first believe. And that's that version of an amazing grace.

The hour I first believed is a new beginning. And so even think of today as the start of a new year. The start of listening to God.

Of a love being rekindled in our hearts. Of a love of trusting God. And a poem that's often referred to at the beginning of a new year in the sense of 1st of January.

We could think about it today. Something that applies for the time of our life. Dear Master for this coming year just one request I bring.

I do not pray for happiness or any earthly thing. I do not ask to understand the way thou leadest me. But this I ask. Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee.

[60 : 59] I want to know thy guiding voice to walk with thee each day. Dear Master make me swift to hear and ready to obey. And thus the year I now begin a happy year will be.

If I am seeking just to do the thing that pleaseth thee. That's the command that Jeremiah is giving here. To come and listen to God.

Do what pleases him. Not ourselves. Because if we just seek to please ourselves we're going backwards. But if we seek to do the thing that pleaseth God.

Committing our lives to the Lord Jesus. Then we go forward. We go forward knowing that the coin of our life is being wisely spent. That the time that we have is being put to good use.

And is being used for the eternity that is before us all. So let us hear what God is saying. Let him be the God that we walk with.

[62 : 01] Forwards. And not back. Let us listen to God the Lord as he calls us to follow him. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven.

We do thank you for your word. And just pray blessing on it. That you would help us to seek wisdom in you. And to lean upon you. That you would counsel us Lord by your truth.

And that you would lead us in the ways and paths of life divine. And to know your goodness and mercy with us each step. So hear our prayers and continue with us as all we ask.

We ask in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. We are going to conclude by singing in Psalm 37. The Scottish Psalter version. Psalm 37 page 254.

We will sing from verse 23 to verse 27. A good man's foot steps by the Lord. I order it aright. And in the way wherein he walks.

[63 : 04] He greatly doth delight. We will sing from verse 23 to 27. The tune is Evan. When we stand to sing from verse 24 to 31. det, from 31 to 31, det, He does delight.

Although he call, yes, shall he not, he cast a luxury.

Because the Lord with his own hand have holden mightily.

I have been young and now I'm old, yet I never see the just man led, nor God did see, for they have beggars be.

He's ever merciful and raised, his seed is blessed therefore.

[65 : 01] Keep her from evil and due good and well for evermore.

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

Thank you, Father, Thank you.

Thank you.