

Changing and Unchanging

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Well, let me extend a very warm welcome to everyone. As always, we welcome people to our services, and especially if you had a visitor with us today, we give you a very warm welcome, and we trust that together we'll know the Lord's blessing as we come together to worship him.

It's great that we've got more capacity now in the church with the restrictions lifted somewhat to one metre distancing, and I hope that that will lead to further increase in numbers as time goes on.

You'll find all the intimations, as always, on the bulletin sheet today. I'm not going to read through them at all, just to pick them up yourselves. They're also available online. Two things I want to mention particularly before we begin the worship. First is that there are two deaths in the congregation. The death of Miss Catherine Mackay, who's been a long-standing member in the congregation, passed away through the week. And also the death of our elder, Mr Norman MacLeod, whose death came more quickly than we anticipated. There'll be a tribute to Norman read at the time of his funeral. I don't have any time for the funeral yet, because the death has not yet been registered. But Norman will certainly be a great loss to us as a congregation, as one of our most senior and also active elders. His passing will be greatly felt within the session and yourselves as well. So please just look out for intimations about the time of the funeral in regard to Norman's passing. The other intimation also is about my colleague here behind me,

Reverend Kenny I. MacLeod. And as you know, this is Kenny's last service as the assistant minister in the congregation, though thankfully Kenny will be remaining in the congregation. So I'm sure, God willing, this will be far from being his last service as such. But it is his last service as assistant. And it hasn't been possible due to the COVID restrictions to arrange for a formal marking of his retirement. But I assure you that that is in the deacons court's mind. And it will happen whenever that's possible, because we do want to mark Kenny's contribution to the congregation over many, many years. I'm not going to take up time just now with it. It will be something that will be mentioned appropriately at that farewell, as it were. I do want to have a mention that he has contributed hugely to the life of this congregation over many, many years in two spells as assistant minister.

You know yourselves how much he is appreciated, not only for his preaching, but also for his pastoral work. And in many respects, the burden of pastoral works has fallen on him as assistant.

[3 : 1 0] And I'm grateful for him. And I'm grateful for these years we've been together as minister and assistant. They've been most pleasurable and rewarding for me. And I want to pay tribute, my own special tribute to Kenny, and for the way that he has carried out his duties so well over these many years. So more will be said in due course appropriately, whenever we manage to get his formal farewell arranged. But meantime, I know that you share in giving thanks to God for him, and giving thanks to him for his service to God. Now he's going to conduct the worship.

Thank you very much indeed, James, for your kind words. We're going to begin our service singing from Psalm 93, the 93rd Psalm. And this is from Sing Psalms, Psalm 93, from Sing Psalms.

The Lord is King, his throne endures, majestic in his height. The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength and might. The world is founded, firm and sure, removed it cannot be. Your throne is strong, and you are God from all eternity. The seas, O Lord, have lifted up, they lifted up their voice.

The seas have lifted up their waves and made a mighty noise. The Lord enthroned on high is strong, more powerful is he than thunder of the ocean's waves or breakers of the sea. Sing Psalm 93, the whole Psalm, the Lord is king, his throne endures.

The Lord is king, his throne endures.

[5 : 15] Port of the sea, his throne endures. The Lord is majestic in his sight. The Lord is bold in majesty, the Lord is set of light. The Lord is bold in majesty and hour is set of light. The world is founded, firm and sure.

Remove the power of me. Your throne is strong, and you are born from all eternity.

The seeds, O Lord, have lifted up, they lifted up their voice.

The seeds, O Lord, have lifted up their voice. I made a mighty voice.

The Lord, have thrown on high, it's strong, for powerful is he.

[6 : 57] And thunder of the ocean's wave, our ravers shall bless thee.

Your joyous, tragic, heart and burn, and changing is your word.

And holiness, and all to us, our endless days, O Lord.

Let us bow in prayer. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks for being able to gather in this way and to worship you. We pray that we may know your power, that we might know the reality of who you are, and that you will indwell us with a sense of that power.

O Lord, we pray that you will do us good, that you will help us, and that you will enable us to hear what you say to us. We give thanks, O Lord, for the Lord's Day, a day where we're able every Lord's Day to meet in this way.

[8 : 26] And although we were confined for close to a year, it's great to be able to get back and to worship, to meet together, and to be able to sing your praise and to rejoice in all that you are.

Help us, O Lord, to have you in our focus. Help us to see that not only are you our creator, but you are our guide, you are our ruler, you are our king.

And Lord, we pray for the grace to submit before you so that we may recognize your rule and your authority, that we might be persuaded that you are the living and through God, and that it is in you that we live, move, and have our being.

We give thanks, O Lord, for the way you have revealed yourself to us in the Word, and we pray that we might come to a greater understanding of the knowledge of God, something we can't work out simply by our own thinking, our imagination, even although the creation tells us and speaks to us so much about who you are.

So we pray, O Lord, that you will indeed make yourself known more and more through your Word, and that our hearts will be open to receive it. We pray to bless this congregation.

[9 : 36] We give thanks for it. We give thanks, Lord, for all that, even as I reflect over these last 22 years that have passed so quickly, we give thanks, Lord, for every good thing that has been done and all the blessings that have been enjoyed.

And even although there have been many sorrows, and we've been involved in many things that have hurt, most of all with the passing of loved ones, we give thanks, Lord, for your ongoing sustaining grace that has kept and helped even those with the deepest wounds in their heart and those who find that life is no longer holding out the enjoyment or the sparkle that it once did.

The silence in the home is often deafening. And so we pray for those who struggle with the loneliness and struggle with the emptiness that has been brought about by death.

Lord, our God, we give thanks for all the gifts that are so evident within this congregation, some more public than others, some working away very quietly behind the scenes.

But there is so much being done that if somebody was to look in and to try to measure out all that has been done, it would be quite extraordinary.

[10 : 54] And so, Lord, we give thanks for the willingness of so many people to serve you and seeking your honour and your glory in what they do. Lord, we give thanks for that.

We give thanks for Mr. McKeever as minister of the congregation. We give thanks, Lord, for leading him here. And we pray that you will encourage him and bless him. And I have to bear testimony of the privilege that it has been to serve with him.

And we pray that it might please you to make clear and to guide the next assistant here so that your hand will be upon that.

We know ourselves the way that we would like things to go, but we have to leave that all to you, to your wisdom and to your knowledge and to your leading and your guiding. Lord, we pray for those who mourn.

Remember, we do remember Katrina Mackay with great fondness, a quiet, gentle Christian lady who loved and served you many years.

[11 : 57] We pray, Lord, that you will bless her niece who's coming home from America. And we remember the family of the late Norman MacLeod. And again, we have been devastated to hear of his passing.

And Norman's contribution was enormous to the well-being of this congregation and indeed to the whole community and far beyond. And he was someone whose loyalty and support and encouragement was really quite amazing.

And again, we bear testimony to how much he did and he worked and served to the very, very end. Nobody realized how ill he actually was.

And so, Lord, we give thanks, as Paul did in the church in Philippi, for every remembrance of him. And so we pray for Christine and the family. We commit them to your care and keeping.

And ask not just in these days, but in all the days ahead, that they will know your strength and your grace. Lord, we pray for Delangi as well. And we commit to your care.

[13 : 02] And we remember all those who are laid aside just now. We ask for healing and help and restoration. We ask, Lord, that you will build up those who have been cast down, that it might please you to heal those who are ill and that you will be with those who are troubled in their minds, those who are struggling.

Lockdown has had a huge impact upon many people's lives. And from the youngest to the oldest, we ask, Lord, that you will bless and you will help. Watch over us, Lord, we pray, as we wait upon you.

We pray that the gospel will go out with power, not just here, but everywhere throughout this world today. That it will be a great day in the kingdom of God. And that many souls will come to faith in Jesus.

And that many will be delivered from the power of darkness, a darkness maybe that they have no idea that they are in until the light of the gospel begins to shine in and to show them who Jesus is and what Jesus can do.

Bless us then, we pray, and grant us your grace. Help us to wait upon you. And forgive us in Jesus' name we ask. Amen. Before we read just a wee word to the young folk, I've been telling you over the time how much Joshua, he loves planes, diggers, all these things.

[14 : 25] But I think it's mentioned before that he's always looking up to the sky, always scanning the sky in the hope of seeing a plane. And on Friday, he was up at our house, and then all of a sudden he went, oh, listen, listen, what's that noise?

He often does this when he hears something, what's that noise? And of course it was a plane. And he said, it's a plane, listen, listen. And he says, I can't see.

And the plane, obviously, I think it was low flying, but it was on the other side of the house and we couldn't see it. And then he said, oh, the plane's going the wrong way.

Well, I said, I don't think the plane is going the wrong way. I think the pilot knows exactly where he's taking the plane. It's just that he was saying it was the wrong way because he couldn't see it.

And I was thinking often in life, that's what we think. And sometimes when the way things work out in life, we say, this is going the wrong way. This is not right.

[15 : 28] But we've got to remember that God's plans and God's ways are often different to our ways and our plans. And God's way is always the right way, even if at times we think it isn't.

There was a time in Jacob's life where he actually said, all these things are against me. But they weren't. They were actually, God was working them all for Jacob's good.

Then a little later on, Joshua again shouted, oh, look, there's a plane. And sure enough, there was another plane. And this one we could see. And we just gave a quick look.

Yep. But he doesn't like this quick look that people do. He doesn't like you just giving a glance. And sometimes he'd say to his father or mother, Mimi, Dada, look with your face.

And so that's what he says. If you just give a wee glance, look with your face, look. And you know, when he says that, it made me think, that is exactly what God is saying to us about his word.

[16 : 43] Because when you look with your face, you're not just giving a little glance, you're really looking. And that's what God wants us to do when we come to his word, is to really look.

Not just a wee glance. Not just say, oh, aye, okay. But to really read. And ask God to open our heart to understand what it is that God is really saying to us.

So remember, when we come to God's word, and any time, whether it's in church or at home, remember, look with your face. In other words, give attention to what is being said.

Let's say the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[17 : 46] For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. We're going to read God's word now in Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 13. Hebrews chapter 13.

Let brotherly love continue.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

So we can confidently say, the Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man can do to me. Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.

[19 : 07] Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods which have not benefited those devoted to them.

We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin, are burned outside the camp.

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore, let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.

For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God.

That is a fruit of lips that acknowledges name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

[20 : 23] Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, deciding to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good, that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. I want us to consider, just for a little, the verse 8. It says there, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

I find it very difficult to know what to take as a text today, considering at an official level, anyway, this is my last service as your assistant here over these last 22 years.

[21 : 50] And it has been a great privilege for me to have tried to serve you. And I've always said it, you're a great congregation. I say, as I said to David, before he came to preach here, I said, you will enjoy it.

That doesn't mean, but that we don't get nervous and apprehensive and such like. But there is, for every preacher, they know prayer is being made.

There's a support of prayer. And there's also a ready listening. You are very good listeners. And that always makes it easier for those who are wanting to preach or trying to preach the gospel.

And that has been one of the great, great blessings of having been here and seeking to minister with you. We've had many, many great times.

There's been times of great blessing, times of great sorrow. But that's the way it goes in life. That's how life is. But nothing lasts, nothing stays the same forever.

[22 : 55] Everything changes. You change. I change. And that's why I wanted to focus today on this particular verse.

Because as I began to think about it, at the end of the day, it's not about personalities and about people. It's always about Jesus. That was the great message of the gospel.

Jesus Christ and him crucified. And that's what this verse is telling us, that in this world of change, there's change all around and about us. Every day there's change.

We change. Our circumstances change. Our lives change. Our homes change. The church changes. The country changes. Everything. But Jesus Christ doesn't change.

He is always and ever the same. And that's what it tells us here, that Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. I want us to think about what that means for us.

[23 : 55] Because God always wants us to deal personally with what the Bible is saying to us. We don't read the Bible just like a book. We read the Bible in order to understand and seek to apply what it is saying into our own lives.

That's what God wants. He doesn't want this to be so that there's nothing personal about it. He wants us to interact with what he says to us.

And so it's important that we take on board that this, because at the end of the day, Christianity is all about a personal relationship. Sometimes the thing that people don't understand what the Christian faith is, but at the very heart of it, it is personal.

It's a personal relationship. Now before we go on, maybe to look at this in a more practical way with regard to Jesus as being the same yesterday and today and forever for ourselves and what that means, from this epistle alone, there are different sections that highlight to us this very thing about Jesus being the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And the yesterday of Jesus is highlighted back in chapter 1 because there, at the beginning, it tells us of how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is involved in the creation of the world.

[25 : 18] That's what it tells us. Chapter 1, verse 2, So the Son of God was involved in the creation of the world.

So we want to think of the yesterdays of Jesus. We need to go back before this world was, into eternity. And he is the one who brought into being by the word of his power this world.

His fingerprints are everywhere. Psalm 8 tells us, When I look up into the heavens, which thine own fingers framed. Isn't that incredible?

We see the fingerprints of God everywhere in this world. And that awesome power that was at work in the creation of this world is still the awesome power that belongs to the Son of God.

He hasn't changed. So the creative power that was at work all these years ago is the very same creative work, creative power that is at work again today.

[26 : 36] And then it tells us, so there's yesterday, today. Chapter 4 tells us, Today, if you hear his voice, that is the voice of Jesus Christ, Do not harden your hearts.

See, the Lord's great work is saving souls. Into this broken world, this world that fell and was smashed and broken, into all the mess and the pain and the sorrow and the heartache, it's into this world that Jesus came.

He became one with ourselves. and he came in order to save. That's his great work. And today, he's holding out these nail-pushed hands to any yet who have not come to receive him, any who have not come to accept him as Savior.

And he's saying, today, today I have the same message that I bring every day, that I am the Savior of sinners and you're a sinner, I'm a sinner and nobody can save you but me.

That's what Jesus is saying. And on the back of that, we're told, do not. That's what today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart.

[27 : 51] That's the easiest thing to do. You can sit under the gospel, maybe you're sitting today and you're listening and you're saying, oh yeah, I know that. And then his voice says, I'm not ready for, I don't want Jesus into my life right now, he might, I don't know what he would do.

I'm not ready for my life to be changed. I like the way it is already, I like the way it's going. I'm not ready for change. That's hardening your heart. The Bible says, don't do that.

Today, if you hear his voice, you hear the message of the gospel, do not harden your heart. Because you see, the message of the gospel is always in the present, it's always given just now.

The Bible never says tomorrow. If you hear the voice today, then tomorrow, seek him. No, because we're not promised tomorrow. We're only living in the present, it's today.

Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden his heart. You know, so many things that come online and you put them in your junk or trash or whatever it is, it's so easy to do that with the message of the gospel in there.

[29 : 00] It's got to be in the inbox, it's got to be dealt with. So you make sure, as we're saying to the children, look with your face. Don't turn away from it. This is a great message.

And then it says forever. And again in chapter 10 and verse 12, it shows us there of how Jesus has sat down at the right hand of God, which now shows that he's reigning as King and Lord forever and ever.

And you know, the safest place in the whole wide world is to have your life in the hand of King Jesus.

Because he will never abandon you, he'll never change his mind, he'll never turn around and say, you know what, my power is waning. See that power that I had yesterday in the creation of the world, well it's not the same today.

I don't have it anymore. Jesus will never say that because that power remains always sure and steadfast. And so that's the great encouragement that we have, that the unchanging Lord, the unchanging Christ is our Lord and our Savior.

[30 : 17] It means that time doesn't change the Lord, circumstances don't change the Lord, the Lord never changes his mind. Imagine if today as he looked upon you and if you're here as a Christian and he said, you know something, you're a disappointment to me and what I'm saying to you, I'm saying to myself.

Imagine if the Lord was saying that. Do you know this, you're a disappointment to me. You've let me down so often. I had so many hopes for you. I saved you in order to serve me and to do this, that and the next thing but you've served yourself far too often.

You've disobeyed me so often. Do you know what? I'm giving up on you. I'm walking away. You're on your own now. Imagine if the Lord was to do that with us but he doesn't.

In this world we see so often the breakup, breakup of those who are in love, those who are, well here's one that will never break up. The Lord will never change his mind.

He will never change his love. once his love is set upon somebody it is forever. And that gives such assurance. Imagine if every single day we woke up and we're wondering, I wonder if the Lord still loves me.

[31 : 35] No. His love is constant. So his constant love is the same today as it was yesterday and will be forever and ever.

and you can't think of anything more encouraging than that. And as we live out our lives and as we make our way to the promised land you remember when Joshua was going to the promised land the Lord met with Joshua and Joshua was encouraged by the Lord because the Lord encouraged him with his promises and promises of his power and promises of his presence.

And the Lord is doing exact the same thing for you and me he's promising he's giving us his promises and his presence and his power. We're not in our own.

My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest is what the Lord said to Moses as he was leading the children of Israel. And you know Moses remember what he said if your presence isn't going with us we don't want to go.

And we say exactly the same thing. Lord if your presence isn't there I can't do this. And that's one of the places that you come to in your life is where you discover that you can't do it on your own.

[32 : 53] It's like trying to swim up a fast flowing river against the stream. I would imagine that would be one of the hardest things to do. If you're in a really fast flowing river and trying to swim up against the whole force of the water that's coming down I reckon most of the time you'd be going nowhere.

And you know far too often that's how it is in life. That people are putting out so much energy and are so involved but at the end of the day they're not really going anywhere they're not getting anywhere.

And the Lord says it doesn't need to be like that. Stop struggling. Stop fighting. And just take me. Because I know the way.

Because I am the way. And indeed I will take you there. So that's what the Lord has promised. He's promised his presence and he has promised never ever to leave or to forsake us.

And that's the most wonderful thing because you know at times in this world we feel vulnerable and we feel overwhelmed. We feel uncertainty and anxieties and we're unsure what's going to happen.

[34 : 04] Maybe that's how you feel today. Christians can feel like that. But you know what's so important is that we fix our eyes upon Jesus. Because if we don't we will be constantly overwhelmed.

It's the same as Peter walking on the water. Remember when Peter was walking on the water he walked as long as his eyes were focused upon Jesus. But the moment he took his eyes off Jesus and he saw the wind and the waves and everything around him he began to sink.

He became overwhelmed. And so will you and so will I. And so it's vital that our eyes are fixed upon Jesus all the time. And so that this unchanging Lord who as we say brought this world into being in the creation is able to make you a new creature.

You know that's what happens when you're born again. It's a new creation. And that's if you're here today and you're not a Christian you haven't come to faith in Jesus Christ.

And you're looking out and you're saying you know this I could never become a Christian. I just can't see myself there. I just can't take on board all of this and I don't think I could want to go to church every day.

[35 : 21] I don't want to read my Bible every day. I don't want well do you know what happens? The Lord changes your heart. He does a revolution within your soul.

He changes things so that maybe what you didn't want you now want. And so that these things that you're looking at from here are no longer an issue or a problem it's all straightforward and you can see and you can understand and it makes sense.

And that's why the Lord he offers he offers us himself and he says look don't don't fight against it just accept me.

He's heard enough of me that's in my way. So that's the wonderful thing that we have this Lord who is who is our Lord and who is always and ever the same.

So what does that mean for us in practical terms? Well remember what we said here's the Lord and he promises his presence and his power. We'll say four or five very brief things.

[36 : 32] First of all he has promised to save. That's his great work. And he has committed to saving. And he has never changed on that.

And today he is offering himself to you in order to save you. You know over the years as every minister here has appealed and wanted there's nothing I want more and I'll be quite honest.

There's nothing that I would want more for your life than that you would come to faith in Jesus Christ. Because it's the best you have no idea how liberating it is for you.

It gives you a peace that the world promises peace. The world gives peace but the world's peace doesn't last. Jesus said my peace I give you not as the world gives give I unto you.

So Jesus' peace is completely different. And you know when Jesus promises to save it's not just your soul it's also your body. You may say to yourself my body is going to die.

[37 : 36] Yes it's going to die. But this is all part of the wonder of the Christian faith. This creative God who made so much out of nothing we're told that the very dust is dear to him.

Even as the body disintegrates in the grave he's watching over it. And just as Jesus' body rose from the dead as his resurrection took place it's a personal guarantee that what happened to him will happen to us as well.

So when Jesus says I'll save you he's going to save you entirely. You tell me a better message than that anywhere in the world?

Can anybody offer anything better than that? No. So that's a great thing there's great commitment to save. So same yesterday today and forever. He's also promised to supply all our needs.

Isn't that amazing? That's what he's promised. He hasn't promised to give us everything we want. There's a big difference between getting everything we want and everything we need. We wouldn't give our children everything that they want.

[38 : 47] Why? Because we love them. Because maybe some of the things they want are dangerous for them. And similarly the Lord doesn't give us everything we want because he loves us.

He knows what's best for us. Now it's here often that the problems arise because sometimes life is strange. God's providence is often missed a mystery.

There's many things we can't quite work out. But he always knows what is best for us. And that's where faith comes in. We have to trust him.

And you might be saying to yourself today, you know this, if you knew how much my heart hurts, if you knew the losses that I've experienced in my life, how can you say that God cares and loves?

God's love. Because you haven't seen and I haven't seen the full picture. There's more yet to come. And one day we will see what was impossible for us to see here and now.

[39 : 50] So he has promised to supply all our needs, all the things that we really need in life. He has promised to supply a sufficiency of grace.

My grace, he says, is sufficient for you. And again, so often in life, before we go into something or as we're entering into something, we're full of fear and say, oh, I don't know if I can do this.

But you know when you actually go in. And it's amazing how often people will say afterwards, you know, I can't get over. I was given strength. Of course you were. I can't believe myself.

That's because God equipped you, God enabled you, God helped you. And he has also promised to satisfy us. You know, the world can't.

The stone's anthem from many years ago, I can't get no satisfaction, is the world's anthem. Jesus' promise is the very opposite.

[40 : 53] He says, I will satisfy you. He satisfies us by feeding us in his word. He satisfies us with his presence. satisfies us in a way that the world cannot.

You know, the greatest thing that you can do is to ask the Lord Jesus into your heart, into your life. And to have him as a new guest arriving into your heart.

He won't remain a guest for long. He becomes then your best friend. And I urge you, with all that I have, to seek for the Lord Jesus, he will change your life for the better.

As I come to the end just now, as I said at the beginning, I will miss you more than words can say. Although I'm not going anywhere. I hope I still get the back seat.

I've got very attached to it. I hear the back seat. So I'm not going anywhere. as such. So that's in some ways where it makes it different. But I'm stepping back and stepping down.

[42 : 03] And it's been my privilege to have served you here. I never became what I wanted to be. I've never managed to achieve all I wanted to do.

But I have tried with God's help. And it's been, as I say, my privilege. One of the things about the ministry is you enter into people's sorrows and griefs and quite a unique way.

And grief is very private. And when death and sorrows come into people's lives, it is very private. But as a minister, you so often enter in and share in these things.

And in many ways, it's heavy going, but it's also a wonderful privilege. And I want to thank you for your kindness to me, not just to me, but to our family.

And to thank you for all that you've been and how loyal and supportive and helpful you've been over the years. I'm sure there's many times you just get fed up.

[43 : 05] It's natural, we get fed up of things. And I'm sure there's many a time you say, when on earth are you going to retire? Well, it's coming now. Here we are. So I want to sincerely thank you for all that you've been and all that you've done.

And I'm just going to, well, ride off into the sunset, unless someone's pinched my horse, I'll have to walk. But it's, as I say, it's been a pleasure and a privilege.

And my great prayer is that every single one of you, those who already don't know Jesus, that you'll come to know him as Lord and Savior. And those who do, that you'll continue to serve him and serve him well.

And again, I want to thank James for, I've been with, and again, I'll have an opportunity to say this, maybe at a later time. I've had a tremendous privilege, first of all, with the late Murdo Alec, where he had us as students.

James was there as well, like myself. Before we had student placements, he used to arrange that for the guys who were going through the college then.

[44 : 18] And then I came as an assistant. I learned so much from him. And then, of course, I came back here after being in Irry with Kenneth Stewart and then with Ivor and then with James.

And it's been wonderful. They've all been different, but it's been a tremendous privilege and it's been great and you'd really have a great leader in your minister just now.

So the one thing I'm going to ask you to continue to do for me is to pray for me. because I remember when Kenny Ferguson was leaving Ness, I think I said this to the session, and he said to me, you know the thing that I'm dreading above all is maybe not being prayed for.

Because one of the wonderful privileges of being a minister is that you have a congregation praying for you. So I'm going to ask you, even although I'm stepping down, I will no longer be the assistant minister of the congregation, I would love that you would continue to pray for me.

I would value that more than anything else. Let us pray. Lord our God, we give you thanks for everything that you've done, everything that you've been to us and for us, and pray that you will bless us, and that you will equip us day by day as we go forward in life, and that you will indeed do us good.

[45 : 41] We give thanks for every gift that you give us, give thanks for every blessing in the gospel, and we pray that you will watch over us and take away our every sin.

In Jesus' name we ask it all. Amen. We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 72, and we're going to sing the last four verses of that psalm. It's in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 72.

Psalm 72. Psalm 72. Psalm 72. Psalm 73. From the middle of verse 16, the city shall be flourishing, her citizens abound in number shall, like to the grass that grows upon the ground.

His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall. Men shall be blessed in him, and blessed all nations shall him call. Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, for he alone doth wondrous works and glory that excel.

And blessed be his glory, his name to all eternity. The whole earth let his glory fill. Amen. So let it be. From the middle of verse 16, the city shall be flourishing.

[46 : 58] Amen. The city shall be flourishing, our citizens abound, and number Microsoft there will vinculentOS and Condirauliera 64 Lord, who has been Night the sun it shall, and shall be blessed in the earth.

All nations shall be born. O blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel.

For here alone hath wondrous works, and glory doth excel.

And blessed be His glorious name to all eternity.

The Father, the Lord, His glory dwell.

[49 : 15] Amen. So let in me. 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.

Amen. Amen. Under normal circumstances, I would ask you if you'd all go in the one direction, out the one door. But we can no longer do that because you can't shake hands. So it's just very frustrating.

But I'll just use the words of Alistair I when he was preaching here once. It was a really wild night and he said, consider yourselves all hugged. So I'll say the same just now.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.