

Scripture Portraits of the Church (4) - God's City

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[0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship today singing in Psalm 107, Psalm 107, and we're singing from the Sing Psalms Version, page 143, verses 1 to 9.

O thank the Lord, for He is good, His love endures always. Let those whom God redeemed say this, those rescued by His grace. He saved them from their enemies and brought them from the lands, from east and west, from north and south, safe from oppressing hands.

We're singing verses 1 to 9, Psalm 107, page 143, and we're standing to sing. O thank the Lord, for He is good, His love endures always. Let those whom God God redeemed say this, those rescued by His grace. He saved them from their enemies and brought them from the land, from east and west, from north and south, safe from oppressing hands.

Come on dirt in the desert ways, not finding any way, to reach a city where they might obtain enough place to stay. Where life and strength were having passed, in partial and emptiness. Then in despair they sought the Lord, who saved them from distress.

straight was the path He led them on, a city to attain. So for the Lord's unfailing love, let them give thanks again.

[2 : 48] the Lord's unfailing love, let them give thanks again. And for the awesome deeds of power, which He for them achieves, for hungry souls He fills with good, the thirsty He relieves.

Well, let's pray together now. We're praying a short prayer just now, mainly for the children, and we'll have the main prayer afterwards.

Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks today that we gather here in Your name, that we do so willingly and freely, and that we take delight in doing so.

We thank You today, O Lord, that we are gathered together. We know from Your Word how important it is for Your people to be gathered together to worship You. And we give thanks for this occasion, and we give thanks for this day. We pray that You would help us to maintain the Lord's day, as a day that is separate and kept for worship, and for thinking upon Yourself and upon Your salvation, and upon Your creation as we see it around us.

Lord, we thank You, O Lord, we thank You, O Lord, as they come to learn more of Your gospel, of the truth of Your Word, that it may be truly blessed to them, and that they may grow up to know more and more of You through this Word that You have given us.

[4 : 33] Help them, Lord, we pray, as they interact with the message of the gospel today. Protect them in the world, we pray. Give them to be shielded from the many harmful things that exist in our world.

And give them, Lord, we pray, to pray for themselves, for Your own guidance and protection in life. And now go before us, we pray, and help us as we engage in worship, that we may do so depending upon Your Holy Spirit to guide us into Your truth.

Receive our thanks and forgive our sins, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Okay, children. In the main sermon today, we're going to be thinking of a city, because God's Word describes the church as God's city.

The people of God are citizens of that city. But I want to tell you about another city mentioned in the Bible, and that's in Genesis chapter 11.

Because in Genesis chapter 11, we read about an attempt to build a city or to build a tower, and the top of it was going to reach right up into the heavens.

[5 : 45] It came to be known as the Tower of Babel. Babel means confusion or scattering. Let me just read these words in Genesis 11. Here were the people of that time a long, long time ago.

And when they came to a certain place, they said, Come, let us make bricks, and we'll burn them thoroughly. So they had bricks. And then they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens.

And let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed and scattered over the face of the whole earth. They were afraid of being scattered, separated from each other over the whole earth.

And so they tried to make a place where they would be safe and where that wouldn't happen. And it's a passage that tells us about an attempt to produce safety without God.

In fact, it tells us something important there, that the Lord came down to see the city that they were attempting to build, and the very thing that they were afraid of and they were trying to prevent, the Lord actually caused.

[6 : 57] He gave them all sorts of different languages. They couldn't understand each other, so they were scattered abroad on the face of the earth. Now, that tells us something very important today. We need safety.

We need security. We need salvation. But we can't have that without God. If we try and build salvation for ourselves, that's going to end in failure and disaster.

Because here they were trying to build this city with the top of it reaching up to heaven in order to try and make for themselves a place of safety. Now, the Bible tells us that our place of safety, of salvation, is in Jesus.

Jesus is the one. When we come to believe in Him, to trust in Him, to give our lives to Him, then we are within safety. We have salvation.

No one can take that away from us. And then whatever happens, we know that that's going to be always true of us, that we will be safe in Jesus. So today, for the adults and for myself and for yourselves, we are here to build up our lives not by forgetting God, but by actually trusting in God.

[8 : 19] Because when we try and build up without God, inevitably we're going to fail and it'll bring disaster. And we will fail in a way that will actually not have salvation, but have what the Bible calls the opposite of that.

We will be lost. We will not be saved. And so today, you have this huge advantage or privilege to know about Jesus, to learn about Jesus, but it's so that you can come to have God in your life and not leave God behind and build up your lives with God at the center and foundation of your life.

So we're going to say the Lord's Prayer then. And then we'll actually have another singing after that when you go through to your classes.

So let's say the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father, 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.

[9 : 34] For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. We're going to sing again. This time we're singing from Psalm 106.

This is in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 106. Psalm 106.

Again, we're standing to sing. Amen. God's mighty works who can express the show for all this great.

Blessed are they that judgment keep, and justly do always.

Remember me, Lord, with that love which I to thine does pay.

[11 : 35] With thy salvation, O my God, to visit me draw near.

That I thy chosen's good mercy, and in their joy rejoice.

And live with thy new merit as triumph with cheerful voice.

I'm going to read now from God's word in the book of Psalms. Two Psalms, firstly Psalm 48, and then Psalm 87.

First of all, Psalm 48. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God.

[12 : 52] His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth. Mount Zion in the far north, the city of the great king, with her citadels. God has made himself known as a fortress.

For behold, the kings assembled and came on together. As soon as they saw it, they were astounded. They were in panic. They took to flight. Trembling took hold of them there, anguish as of a woman in labor.

By the east wind, you shattered the ships of Tarshish. As we have heard, so have we seen. In the city of the Lord of hosts. In the city of our God, which God will establish forever.

We have thought on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with righteousness.

Let Mount Zion be glad. Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your judgments. Walk about Zion. Go round her.

[13 : 57] Number her towers. Consider well her ramparts. Go through her citadels. That you may tell the next generation that this is God. Our God forever and ever.

He will guide us forever. And if we turn to Psalm 87, we'll read through that short psalm as well. Psalm 87. Psalm 87.

Psalm 87. Psalm 87. Psalm 87. Psalm 87. Psalm 87. Psalm 87. Psalm 87. Psalm 87. On the holy mount stands the city he founded.

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God. Among those who know me, I will mention Rahab and Babylon.

Amen. Behold Philistia and Tyre with Cush. This one was born there, they say. And of Zion it shall be said, this one and that one were born in her.

[14 : 54] For the Most High himself will establish her. The Lord records as he registers the people, this one was born there. Amen.

And may God bless to us these readings of his word. Let's again join together in prayer. We give thanks, O Lord our God, as we call upon your name again.

We give thanks that we belong to your church in this world. We give thanks for the teaching of your word in regard to belonging to your own believing people. We give thanks today for the many privileges that are ours and for the many promises that your word sets out for those who trust in you.

We thank you today for the opportunity again to worship you together. And we thank you for the way in which we are able to do so, using the resources that you have given us in your word.

And to call upon you in prayer and to sing your praises. And to have your word expounded. Lord, it is our great privilege to be gathered together here today again. Help us, we pray, to avail ourselves of this opportunity to make maximum use of it.

[16 : 03] We thank you, Lord, for the way that you continue to bless us from week to week. And for your patience with us and your long-suffering toward us. For the way that you repeatedly bring us before your word.

And bring your word to our minds and laid upon our hearts. Lord, we come today confessing that we are unworthy of the least of your mercies. We come confessing our own sins.

Confessing our many failures and shortcomings. The many ways in which we know we sin against you. In our very thoughts we sin against you. We sin against you in the words that we speak from time to time.

In a way that is ill-advised and not in accord with righteousness and truth. We sin against you in our behavior, in our relationships. We, Lord, don't have the ability to number the many sins that we commit against you.

As each day and each week and each year goes by. But we give thanks today that your mercy far exceeds our sins in their greatness or in their number.

[17 : 13] We thank you today that your word teaches us that your justice and your mercy reach the clouds. That they are greater than anything that we ourselves may engage in.

We thank you today for your mercy. We thank you for your forgiveness of our sins. For your cleansing by your Holy Spirit. By your truth of our hearts and lives.

From sin and from the effects of sin. Help us, we pray, always to come before you conscious that you are the one who calls us into your presence. That with you there is forgiveness.

So that you may be feared. That we may revere you. That we may honor you. And that we may pay homage to you at all times. Bless us, we pray today, as a people, as a congregation.

Oh, Lord, we ask that you would give us today your blessing through your Spirit. To be with us as we gather. And with those who are unable to gather with us physically. Bless them where they are.

[18 : 14] We ask that you would bless the means that you have given us, Lord. Of people in their homes. Being able to share in the services. And we thank you for those who simply cannot be with us through illness of different kinds.

And, Lord, we ask your blessing for them today. And as your gospel reaches them, we pray that it may truly be precious once again to them. We pray for those who are ill at this time.

Remember them, we pray, O Lord, in hospital. Those at home or those in care homes. We commit them to you and ask that the care they receive may be blessed to them. And that we may all be grateful and thankful to you.

For your continuing goodness, Lord, in providing us with so many resources. We pray today also for those of our number, O Lord, who are not here and not watching online.

We pray for those damaged by the COVID pandemic particularly. Those who have slipped away from following you, from confessing you, from being meaningfully part of your gathered church.

[19 : 22] Lord, we pray for them today. We ask that you would recover them. We pray that your grace, Lord, will be with them. So as to shield them, to protect them, but to bring them back into your ways, O Lord.

We pray for those who have difficulties of their own health as well today. Remember those who have issues of mental health. We commit them to you, Lord, and ask that you'd bless them.

We pray that your word may be precious to them. And we ask that they may draw their strength from yourself. We give thanks that you know us so intimately, so perfectly in the workings of our mind and hearts, in our emotions, in our concerns, in everything to do with us.

O Lord, we give thanks that your knowledge of us is perfect. And we give thanks that you are able to meet every detail of our need throughout all the circumstances of life.

Remember those today who mourn the passing of loved ones. Lord, in our communities, we are so conscious that there are families from day to day and week to week who miss loved ones and who have bereavement to contend with.

[20 : 30] We ask that that will be so for those today, Lord, who have these circumstances in their experience. Bless, we pray, those who tend to our needs at such times.

We give thanks for the undertaker's staff, and we thank you for their own contribution, O Lord, to our well-being. As we need their services from time to time, we thank you for them and for the provision you have made for us in that.

We thank you, Lord, today that we can call upon you on behalf of many who don't pray for themselves. And we pray for our world. We pray for our nation.

We pray for our governments. We pray for those in authority of different kinds over us, those who have the task of maintaining law and order.

We pray for our police force. We pray for our ambulance service. We pray for all those resources that are this time so stretched and so short-staffed.

[21 : 30] And we ask, O Lord, that all the emergency services will know your blessing and will know your provision to continue to follow them. And we ask that you'd bless now our gathering here today.

We pray that you'd bless those, O Lord, who were mentioned in our intimations today. We pray for Dooney. We give thanks for his time as treasurer. We pray that you'd uphold him at this time and that he may know your grace, O Lord, for his recovery.

We thank you for that measure of recovery that he already knows. We pray, too, Lord, for Gordon as he takes over. We thank you for his willingness to do so. And we pray for him, not only in that role, but also as a counselor.

And all others who serve in the core of the two. We pray today for them, Lord, and ask that you'd bless them. We ask, too, for Ian as he takes on gift aid, treasurer duties.

We pray that you'd bless him, Lord, in that task. And help him and all of them together as they look after these aspects of the congregation's well-being. We thank you, Lord, for the generosity of your people.

[22 : 34] We pray at this time for those who are facing hard times financially. Bless those, Lord, facing loss of work. We pray for those who find the cost of living increased to be such a challenge in their homes and families.

We ask that you'd bless them. And those who are unemployed and looking for work, we remember them in your presence. We pray that you'd continue, Lord, to provide for them and to encourage them and to be their portion.

And so, go before us now, we pray. Look upon us in your mercy and guide us into your truth. And all for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to have one more singing before we come to look at Psalm 87.

This singing is from Psalm 132, and as you find it on page 423.

We're singing verses 13 to 18. For God of Zion hath made choice, there he desires to dwell.

[23 : 40] This is my rest, here still I'll stay, for I do like it well. That food I'll greatly bless, her poor with bread will satisfy. Her priests I'll clothe with health, her saints shall shout forth joyfully.

Verses 13 to the end of Psalm 132 to God's praise. For God of Zion hath made choice, there he desires to dwell.

For God of Zion hath made choice, there he desires to dwell.

This is my rest, here still I'll stay, for I do like it well.

How good and great, he bless her poor, with bread will satisfy.

[24 : 56] And there will I make day this home.

who'll be nice, there he does, or ■■■■■ would perish. For God for blessing me, for him that mine amounted is, A love poured in the light As with our garment diamond rose With shameless Henry's own But yet the crown that he can wear Upon him flourish shall

Now will you turn with me please back to the book of Psalms and Psalm 87 And looking at this short psalm as we read through it a short time ago We're just continuing with our short series of studies on Scripture portraits of the church We've already seen three from one version, 1 Timothy 3.15 And we've seen some of the imagery there, some of the illustrations, if you like, that the Bible uses To describe God's church We looked at the church described there as a household And also as the pillar and buttress of the truth Looking at the different aspects in which these are important elements of the church's life And the Bible's illustrations, of course, are always the best for us I know we try and hopefully get illustrations that we can use in the sermons that we preach So that hopefully that will help to blend in with the words of Scripture and the message itself

But the Bible's own illustrations are so brilliant And by far better than any other illustrations you can get to illustrate the truth of God for us And here we also have an illustration of the church or a portrait of the church And it's actually a portrait that combines two things It is a portrait of a city in which God has His dwelling But there is also an element of, you might say, mothering or motherly care On the part of the church for those who belong to the church Because it speaks about those who were born there in Zion And being born there means being born but looked after by the church herself In the imagery of her being a mother Which, of course, as we'll see, takes in our responsibility to look after each other As those who belong to God's church in this world So as we look at these images in the psalm I want to look at just three things to try and bring out the teaching of the psalm in that regard

First of all, this is God's city On the holy mount stands the city He founded The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God So the emphasis there, obviously, is on the city Zion Zion is often used, the word is used often interchangeably with Jerusalem Because Mount Zion, outside Jerusalem, where the temple was situated Sometimes the word Zion, sometimes it's the word Jerusalem But in the spiritual meaning of them, especially in the book of Psalms and the prophets They really stand for the people of God in covenant with Him Not just the place, but the people who gather in that place Who belong to God as His people And we saw in our first study that it's so important that we realize the church is people, not buildings

[29 : 42] That it's important that the church is comprised of people in covenant with God And not the buildings in which they meet Although that's sometimes referred to as the church, of course So here is the city of God, God's city Secondly, there's an emphasis, verses 4 to 6 On the mother city of God's children The place where God's people are nourished, brought up, and nurtured Just as a mother takes care of her children So the church is responsible to take care of those who belong to her And thirdly, you find in verse 7 That it's a city of joy and life For life and joy Singers and dancers alike say All my springs, all my well springs are in you Let's try and unfold some of the teaching in those three points First of all, it's the city He founded Now we sang already in some Psalms of Zion earlier on

And how Zion, despite its small size comparatively To those enemies that came to attack from time to time Nevertheless, God looked after his city God looked after Zion Zion was very small compared to the likes of Babylon Or Nineveh or these great cities in the world of these times But it's mentioned this year God founded this city on the Holy Mount In other words, there's a stability about this city Which is brought out by the fact that it mentions on the Holy Mount The city of Zion Zion, a place built upon the mountain Not just elevated, but also secure in terms of where it is anchored And of course that spiritualized is really and is proper for us to spiritualize That's what the Bible does It reminds us that when God establishes us as a people

He establishes us on a sure foundation It's not something like we saw with the children The Tower of Babel The attempt of human beings by their own ingenuity To try and provide security for themselves To try and actually provide a basis for life On which they could safely build And that passage and others tell us You just can't build that for yourself You need to belong to the city of God You need to belong to the people that God is anchoring firmly in himself On the mount that he himself is The rock that he himself is And of course you carry the imagery of Zion As a city And the church as a city You carry that forward Indeed the Bible does it for us When it speaks of heaven as a city You go to Revelation And you find a description there of heaven Set out in terms of it being a city And you recall what's said in Hebrews chapter 11 About Abraham especially

And Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob They traveled about different places They didn't have a place that they could actually settle in And this is what it says about Abraham He dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob Heirs with him of the same promise What promise?

The promise of a lasting inheritance For he was looking for a city that has foundations Whose builder and maker is God And in that wonderful chapter Chapter 11 That list That wonderful logbook if you like Of those who lived by faith You come to the middle of the chapter or thereabouts It tells us that those who Actually came to know the Lord They might have had opportunity to return To go back But they didn't want to do that They were looking for a homeland And so God is not ashamed To be called their God For he has provided for them a city He has made for them He has created for them a city When we call God today Our God When you call God My God You're using covenant language You're using the language of citizenship You're using the language of belonging to God's church

[34 : 11] And you're looking forward to a city That has foundations To heaven Whose builder and maker is God And you notice what he says here The Lord loves the gates of Zion More than all the dwelling places of Jacob Now often the gates of a place in the Old Testament Mean the important center place of that city It's not just gates in the sense of which Gates were placed on the walls for security The gates were often where the council met Where the important people who took the decisions met In the city The gates of Jerusalem The gates of Zion Are where the business of the place takes The business of the place occurs Where decisions are taken So it's really saying The Lord loves the gates of Zion He loves the people He loves what's going on in Zion More than all the dwelling places of Jacob Because Jacob you see As we mentioned with Abraham as well Went from place to place in tents

Dwelling places you could just lift up and take with you Because they were looking forward to permanence Looking forward to stability That would last for them A city that has foundations Whose builder and maker is God And now he's saying God loves the gates of Zion Why does he love the gates of Zion More than all the dwelling places of Jacob Because he has fulfilled his promise That he would actually come to speak Of a place where he would build A temple would be built for him Where his people would gather Where they wouldn't have to go from place to place Where they would no longer be traveling Through the wilderness Where they would be settled in the land of promise And he loves the gates of Zion More than the dwelling places of Jacob Doesn't mean he didn't love the dwelling places of Jacob But it does mean that When they settled and built a temple And worshipped in Zion God's love was focused upon them It's a covenant community

In relationship with God Isn't that such a precious thing for yourself And for myself And for ourselves We shouldn't really be thinking So much in individual terms As in the congregational sense Because as we gather here We're gathering here as a covenant community As a people who stand in covenant with God As baptized members of His church Most of us at least And that means that in that covenant We have with God God is our God We can take Him as our God He delights in being known as our God And in His love He has provided salvation for us In Jesus Christ It says glorious things of you are spoken O city of God What glorious things Well especially those things That are mentioned then In the following verses

But glorious things Are spoken of the church Because the church's future Is amazingly glorious You see all of these enemies That try to actually deal with Zion And wipe out Zion And the same down through the ages Wiping out the church If it were possible Which it isn't Denominations come and go But God's church remains And as long as sun and moon endure God will have a covenant People somewhere in the world Until the end of the world You see here is Zion This tiny place Compared to Babylon Or the might of the Assyrians Whatever it was Whatever People were attacking her And yet she survived Look at the apostles Look at that small group Of people gathered After Jesus' resurrection Before He ascended to heaven And then even afterwards Look at them gathered there Before the day of Pentecost Before the Spirit came with power What are they in number?

They're so small They're so insignificant In comparison to the world around them How were these people That small group of people Ever going to produce something Ever going to be something Meaningful in that great world?

[38 : 26] Well if you look at the history Of the church That's something you see All the way down to the present day Why is there a church? What's the reason The church continues to exist?

What's the reason Despite all the attempts To actually do away With the gospel And do away with the church How come it's still there? How come we still have A believing people Left in the world In covenant with God?

Because God The Most High Establishes her That's why It's God's church That's what He said to Peter Wasn't it? Matthew 16 I will build My church Jesus said And the gates of hell Shall not prevail against it You see using The gates in the same way As it's used in the psalm here The gates of Zion The gates of hell The powers of darkness The powers of enmity To the gospel All the different ways In which the The thinkings The intrigues The plans The purposes Of the kingdom of darkness In which they conspire together Against the church And we're still here We don't take pride In being here It's not our Doing as such But God has seen to it That He will establish His church Glorious things of you Are spoken O city of God And when you go And when you go Into the New Testament And onto the book of Revelation And find the imagery

There described Where heaven is described As a city With all this wonderful Emphasis on The most precious stones And gold And all the rest of it These are just images Of something far better Than diamonds and gold In themselves It's the presence of God Life with God Salvation Through Christ Glorious things Are spoken Of the city of God Aren't you privileged today To be a citizen of Zion To be a citizen of the church To be brought up Under the teaching Of the gospel To be in covenant With God And to have these promises Addressed to you As believers But it's also Secondly The mother city Of God's children You see this Emphasis from verse 4 Among those who know me I mention Rahab

And Babylon Philistia And Tyre With Cush This one was born there They say And of Zion It shall be said This one And that one Were born in her For the most high Himself will establish her The Lord records As he registers The people This one Was born there Three times You have mentioned there This one was born there Because Zion is a Spiritually a place Of living people People come to Spiritual birth Through belonging To the church And even if you Are outside of the church Completely And never belong To the church And God starts working In your life A person's life Anybody out there Today who's never Been to church Who's never heard The gospel And God comes Into their life Well then they're Joined to the church They come to belong To Zion They come to be a part Of this covenant Believing community You can never separate The church And what the church Is From rebirth

[41 : 54] From being born again This is what It takes us to The New Testament But Look at what it's saying There Mentioning Rahab, Babylon, Philistia, and Tyre Most of these Were enemies of Israel Enemies of the Jewish People of Zion And yet it speaks here Of a great intake You'll find that In the prophets Likes of Isaiah Chapter 2 Chapter 25 Chapter 56 And of course In the New Testament Ephesians Chapter 2 The death of Jesus Is the means By which God Has brought together And joined together Jew and Gentile Alike Within the one church And so important To the apostles That there is Only one church One believing people Of God However many Denominations There may be But there are There is only The one believing People of God Why was that Important to the apostles?

It was important Because They saw it That God's Zion God's church Was one Right through From the Old Testament Into the new And on into eternity They weren't thinking Of the church Of the Old Testament As a different church To the church Of the New Testament In its essence They are the people Of God And so that's What remains true For ourselves We come today To be God's People In covenant With himself And as we do so We connect with those Who've gone before us And that's another Image that the New Testament uses God willing We'll come to look At that one too The image of the church As a body The body Of Christ The body That's joined together Different parts But all functioning As one Well there's the intake Of the Gentiles Of which you and I Ourselves are part The Gentiles being All those who are not Jews

Apart from the Jewish people Everybody else in the world Were known as the Gentiles The Gentile world This is what God had In his purpose To bring Gentile And due together To be one believing People in his name And of course The emphasis In the New Testament Of being born again You see how it's Mentioning here The register That God keeps The Lord records As he registers The people This one was born there Where?

In Zion They belong to his church And it's interesting Isn't it That there's an emphasis There on the people Together Congregationally Corporately The totality If you like Of the people And yet There's also This wonderful emphasis Individually The Lord records As he registers The people This one And that one Was born there Because when you come To be born again And when the Lord Takes note Of your spiritual rebirth That he brings about And when as it were He records Your birth certificate In his register In heaven You're there As an individual It belongs To this larger group In other words God is actually saying That each one That is born Is precious to him It's pastorally

Significant To God himself Because it means Every single one Of these individuals Born in Zion Are precious to him And have his full attention They have his care And full attention As he actually records That they are his people That they belong to him That they are the born Children Of Zion You know One of the things That I Fail to appreciate Myself Is the Relevance And importance And the privilege Of belonging To the church Of belonging To God's people In this world Of having my place Amongst those people Of whom this is said And other things Are said We sometimes You know Find it all too easy Just to have A criticism Of the church And that's sometimes Very rightly the case Because we all need Sometimes To be criticized

[46 : 25] And to find fault With us But what a huge Privilege it is today For you and for me To belong To this people To be a citizen Of Zion To be born In the church Of God To be looked After by God To have God's Full attention As he brings up His children Spiritually For himself And That image Of the church Is so important For ourselves Because It's not just A case of Looking at An image When you go To the New Testament And when you go To a passage Like Colossians chapter 3 Verse 12 This is really What it comes to When you find Zion Being The place Or the people In which we are Nurtured and nourished Spiritually Remember how Paul there writes As follows Put on then As God's chosen ones Holy and beloved

Compassion Kindness Humility Meekness And patience Bearing with one another And if one has a complaint Against another Forgiving each other As the Lord Has forgiven you So you also Must forgive And above all these Put on love Which binds Everything together In perfect harmony And let the peace Of Christ Rule in your hearts To which indeed You are called In one body And be Thankful You see there is The church looking after Looking after Its own members Looking after Those who belong As children To the church How they look out For each other How they actually Remember each other How they help each other How they forgive each other How they deal with One another On the pattern Of how God Has dealt with them How we all feel in this We all have to accept

That we don't measure up As we should To these great words But it's our privilege Nevertheless To be here In order to try And as far as possible Do that And be the church of God And show ourselves To To To be In the privileged position Of being Zion's children Of whom glorious things Are said The church To put it another way Ought to be A safe place People think nowadays And speak nowadays Of having a safe place Having a place Where they find safety Whether it's mental health issues Spiritual issues Physical issues Relationship issues Whatever But the church Must be a safe place And we must project That it is a safe place A place where people Will have Their own situation Dealt with Honestly Seriously Lovingly Tactfully Patiently

All those things This is The mothering qualities Of Zion Of the people of God Together As we seek to Grow In being nourished Through God's truth And thirdly It's a city Of life And joy He says here In verse 7 Singers and dancers Alike Say All my springs Are in with you There's a picture Of that Part of the imagery It's a picture Of a joyous Celebration Of life Talks there About wellsprings All my wellsprings Are in you Just like you find A spring Or a fountain Bubbling up Through the ground And providing It's refreshing water So David is saying So The psalmist Is saying This is how it is With the church All my wellsprings Are in you What does he mean By that?

Well he means That God Actually provides The water Of life For us But it comes To us Via his church It comes to us Through his word Through his word Preached Through his word Read Through his word Sung And through the Sacraments of Baptism And the Lord's Supper The springs If you like Situated in the church Through which God Brings nourishment To our souls And here is The psalmist's Confession All my Wellsprings Are in you Singers and Dancers alike Say this Doesn't mean that Stornway Free Church Is going to introduce Dancing Into its Services This is just An imagery Of great And wonderful Celebration Singers and Dancers together As they celebrate Something that is Really meaningful And express Such great joy Well he's saying This is what Characterizes Zion This is what must Characterize the church

[51 : 27] It is a place Of great joy A place where there's Vibrancy of life As God Fuels or Provides The streams Of blessing The streams Of life Through the church Through the Ordinances he's Given to his church And of course we come This Lord's Day to remember That God willing Another communion Is anticipated Next Lord's Day So here we are Today At one of the Wellsprings In the gospel In the word Preached And here we are Looking forward Next week To another one At the Lord's Supper Along with the word May we say With the psalmist All my wellsprings Are in you The church I belong to The church of Christ The church of God May our mind be Truly set Believingly And longingly Upon God Blessing These wellsprings To us On us Drawing the water

From these great Wells of salvation That through the church Come to be enjoyed By God's people You remember The woman of Samaria In John chapter 4 Sitting there By the well And the Lord Comes along Enters into Conversation with her As only he could And eventually Draws her to the point Where he says to her When she mentioned The Messiah The Savior I who am speaking To you I am he And in the conversation She said Lord give me more Of this water So that I don't need To come here To draw water anymore She didn't quite follow What he was saying At that point And he said to her Whoever drinks Of this water That's the water Of this well This literal water Whoever drinks Of this water Shall thirst again But whoever drinks Of the water That I shall give him Shall never thirst But it will be in him

A spring of water Welling up To eternal life I've mentioned Many times already A place that's Quite precious to myself A spring of water Bubbling up Through the sands Down at Airtongue Where I was brought up There last week In fact Went down just again To see it Despite the fact That for generations The sea has been Coming in To cover that Little spring of water Covers it up And then the sea Goes out again And still that water Keeps bubbling up And it's like that In your soul As a Christian today When you're in Covenant with Jesus When you're born again When your life Is secure in him Whatever things Wash over your life From time to time And let's face it There are many people Here who know Better than I do Of the sheer difficulties And challenges of life But whatever water Wash over you To cause distress And trauma And pain

And challenge You will always find Where God places Spiritual life That it cannot Be extinguished It keeps welling up And I'm sure Most if not all Of you today Are thankful In some regard For that In some way or other That you can say Of your life Lord I'm so thankful That when things Were critical for me And when I faced A challenge That was far greater Than I could cope With myself Your spring of water Kept flowing Your spring of life In my soul Kept bubbling up Kept feeding me Kept me in life All my wellsprings Are in you The psalmist Is saying Now you have been Sitting By a well Today Where the water Of life Is placed By God

You've been sitting At the well Of the gospel You've been sitting Beside One of the Wonderful provisions Of God One of these Wellsprings That he has placed In his church But it's one thing To be sitting Near the well That's another thing To drink of it And I hope today That no one here Has left this building Without drinking Of Christ Without drinking These precious waters These wellsprings In the gospel That he's placed In the church That's why we're here That's what it means To us To belong to the church It's where God Flows life Into our souls And you notice That the title Of the song The title of the psalm Is simply

[56 : 30] A psalm Of the sons Of Korah And then it says A song Very simple But very profoundly Important Because all the Great truths That we have In this psalm The great truths About God's city God's church Being a city Well founded Well placed And situated And stable The great truths Of the church Being a place Where people Are nourished Spiritually In the gospel There's great truths About a place Of joy And of Vibrancy Of life God is saying That's for you To sing about That's for you To channel Into your praises Of God Because that's why It's here called A song And as we come In a few moments To our final singing Today To conclude This service Sing Of the privilege

Of the privilege Of belonging To the church Doesn't matter What you might say Your quality of voice Is Or even if you think You don't have a voice At all Of any Of any quality Sing it Let it out Make sure God hears you Singing Of what it means To you To belong To God's church To God's city To God's mother city To God's place Of joy And celebration Of life May God bless His word to us Once again We're singing now In conclusion From Psalm 46 Psalm 46a In the Sing Psalms Version of Psalm 46 That's on page 59 Verses 4 to 7 A river flows Whose streams Delight the city Of our God

The holy place In which the Lord Most High Has his abode God is within His holy place The city will not yield For God will come At break of day To be her help And shield On to verse 7 The Lord Almighty Is with us To strengthen And sustain For Jacob's God Our strong defence And fortress Will remain These verses Then in conclusion Again we stand To sing A river Close to Saints Delight The city The city of the God The holy place In which the Lord Most high

Hath is upon God is within God is within His holy place The city Will not yield For God will come The kingdom's day To be her help To be her help And shield The nations are in disarray The kingdom's day The kingdom's day The kingdom's disappear

God speaks The kingdom's day The kingdom's day The kingdom's day The kingdom's day God is within The kingdom's day Lord Almighty The kingdom's day The kingdom's day The kingdom's day The kingdom's day The kingdom's day The kingdom's day For Jacob's day The kingdom's day The kingdom's day The kingdom's day The kingdom's day And fortress Will remain After the benediction I'll go to the main door

[61 : 36] This morning Now may the grace Of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the communion Of the Holy Spirit Be with you now And evermore Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Thank you.