

Kickstart to Christian growth

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Preacher: Roger Mundy

[0:00] young people to go out to their groups in other parts of the building. So we come together as God's children to come into God's presence, to receive from God and to worship him.

Psalm 84 says, how lovely is your dwelling place, Lord almighty. My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. Let's pray as we prepare to worship God together. Lord God, it's so good to spend this time together in your presence today.

We're sorry that sometimes we've wanted to be in other places more than being in your presence. Sometimes we wanted to do other things more than to praise you and worship you.

Sometimes we've looked for hope and security and peace in things other than you. We're sorry for that, but we thank you that you invite us into your presence.

[1:07] Thank you that you invite us today. Thank you that you invite us every day. And it's a privilege to come together into your presence to meet with you. Thank you for reminding us that it's better to spend one day with you than a thousand elsewhere.

We really want to praise you this morning. Help us to remember how wonderful you are and give you the praise and the glory that you deserve. Amen. Let's stand and we're going to sing together as the music group leads us.

Come praise and glorify our God, the Father of our Lord.

Amen. In Christ he has in heavenly realms his blessings on us poured. For pure and blameless in his sight he destined us to be.

And now we've been adopted through his Son eternally. To the praise of God, the Father of our Lord.

[2:52] In him our sins are washed away, redeemed through sacrifice. In him, Lord, has made known to us the mystery of his will.

That Christ should be the head of all his purpose to fulfill. To the praise of God, the Lord.

To the praise of your glory. To the praise of your mercy and grace. To the praise of your glory.

You are the God who saves. Come praise and glory by our God. For we believe the word.

And through our faith we have a seal. The spirit of the Lord. The spirit guarantees our hope until redemption's done.

[3:59] Until we join in endless ways. To the love that's made come. To the praise of your glory.

To the praise of your glory. To the praise of your mercy and grace. To the praise of your glory. You are the God who saves.

To the praise of your glory. To the praise of your mercy and grace. To the praise of your glory.

You are the God who saves. Yes Lord we thank you that you are the God who saves. We thank you for everything that you've done for us.

We realize that we have absolutely no hope without Jesus. We have no way of putting ourselves right with you. But Jesus has done that for us. He has done what we could not do for ourselves.

[5:03] Thank you that he died for us. Thank you that he rose again. Thank you that he's coming back. We want to build our hope on Jesus. And we praise you for him. Amen. Let's continue to worship.

Amen. Amen.

I dare not trust the sweetest phrase. But holy trust in Jesus' name.

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest phrase. I dare not trust the sweetest phrase. But holy trust in Jesus' name.

[6:24] Christ alone. Christ alone. God astern. Weak made strong.

In the Savior's love. Through the storm. He is Lord.

Lord of all. God has a love. I dare not trust the sweetest phrase. I dare not trust the sweetest phrase. When darkness seems to hide his face.

I rest on his unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale.

My anchor holds within the air. My anchor holds within the air. And the

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[13:29] So, thank you. Thank you so much, Chris. So, more from 2 Peter later. But for now, we're going to celebrate and praise God for some of his wonderful promises to us as the music group lead us in a song.

Now, this is an action song. I've got some friends who are going to come up. I think the Mullard family are going to come, maybe some others, to help us with the actions. Let's move that out of the way. And so, we're going to sing, God, you're good to me.

So, please get on your feet. And we're going to sing and have a go at the actions as well. God, you're good to me.

God, you're good to me. You gave me life and set me free. You have me done. You're good to love. You're good to love. You're good to love.

God, you're good to love.

[14:50] I don't deserve this love you have for me. You sent your son to die upon a tree.

And sometimes when I'm feeling far from you, I hear your voice calling me, and I begin to sing. Lord, you're good to me. You gave me life and set me free. You heard me knock and open up the door.

Lord, you're good to me. Open my eyes and let me see. I could search, but I won't find anyone. I can see. I can see. I can see. I can see. With me every day Your mercy Shall we lead away I will try to be What I can be What will your love for me Seeker than the sea What will your love for me You gave me life and safety You heard me love You heard me love You heard me love What will your love for me You will survive And you will be What will your love for me

[16:50] Well done Let's give ourselves a round of applause Give these guys a round of applause Give God a round of applause Fantastic Thank you so much to our musicians And action leaders For leading us in worship We really appreciate that Now before the children Young people go out I'd just like to share A few encouragements About what's been happening here During the week Today's a special day To praise God But God is praised and glorified Every day of the week Here in our premises Here in the hub In this building And just to recap Over the last week Some of the things That have been happening On Mondays We have beavers and cubs And scouts Groups for young people Where they can do fun activities Oriented around the outdoors And growing with people So it's a great opportunity To meet those kids That we wouldn't get to have contact with

Otherwise On Tuesday One of the things that happens here Is a kids' down to the board course It's a great opportunity For people to explore An informal course Exploring what the basics What Christians believe is And what Christians believe On Wednesday The highlight of my day Is the job club We have people who join us For a special employment course They're there Taken through a course They're there Helps to grow In confidence And experience To keep employment They get a lovely Home-tip Delicious meal Home-tip And bread During the month One of the team members Shares about Their journey Of life And of employment And how God has made an impact In their journey It's another great opportunity We have several life groups That meet here Some of our life groups Are home In the week Here at the pub In the week And that's a great opportunity To study the Bible together To think through The things that we've been taught On Sunday And to help each other

To encourage each other To live out What we learn about In the Bible God's message to us God's plans to us How we live that out In our lives Every day On Thursdays One of the highlights Is babies and toddlers And we're really blessed By having a number of Families come along to that With their little ones And a wonderful team Who serve them And this week For the first time Parents were invited To stay on for lunch Another home-cooked soup And we had seven parents Stay on For a time of Sharing together And discussing About the joys and challenges Of parenting And one of our team Was able to share About her experiences Of parenting And how God Knowing God Has helped her As a parent And then Thursday evening We have plug-in It's our ministry To rough sleepers We've invited in People who can get A warm welcome A warm space A safe space A warm shower A warm meal Hot meal And get their laundry Done as well That's a great blessing To those people

Who are in that Very precarious Situation on our streets And on Friday We have Discoverers Which is our Kids club Kids come along To do games And crafts And they learn About Jesus As they read The Bible together And then later on On Friday We have Chill Which is our group For 11 to 18 year olds And it's a group About half of them From church families Half of them From outside the church They gather each Friday To hang out To play games And each Friday We just have a little slot Where one of the team Will just share a little bit About what Christians believe And what it means to us So I just want to share that For your encouragement Many of you will be aware Of what happens Through the week But some of you Might pick up something new there And we're so thankful To God For the people That serve in those Different areas People who give up Their time Sacrificially for that We're so thankful For these buildings That God has blessed us with That gives us a space From which we can Serve our community And build each other up As well And we're so grateful To God For the financial resources That makes all of this possible Now there's information On our website About how you can Give in various ways As part of your Worship to God It's on the giving page Of our website I do commend that to you To explore How you can Be giving financially As well as giving your time And worshipping God In other ways As part of how we Worship God as a whole But I'm just going to Give thanks to God As we commit our offerings To him Of various kinds And then I'll pray For the children And young people As well So let's pray Father God I want to thank you So much For everything That you give us For the ministry That you call us to As a church But the resources That you give us Both in terms of The buildings The people And the financial resources That you give us To be able to Serve our community And to serve each other And we just commit To you Our gifts to you Whether that's Our time Whether that's An investment of our talents And other resources

[21:54] Whether that's Financial giving We commit these things To you We acknowledge That everything Comes from you anyway So we give them Back to you What belongs to you anyway But we pray That everything that we give Will be used by you For your praise And for your glory And now Lord We want to pray For our children And young people As they go out To their groups We thank you so much For each one of them We thank you For their leaders Who are going to be Leading them this morning And we pray That they'll have A wonderful time A fun time this morning As they hear about Jesus As they learn From the Bible As they come to Know Jesus personally And as they become Equipped to tell others About Jesus We pray that you'll Bless that time That they spend now In Jesus name Amen So children Young people If you haven't Already registered There's a registration Desk outside Downstairs Go and register first And then they can Show you where to go If you don't know Where to go And we'll see you Later on And we pray Thank you.

Thank you.

We're blessed, aren't we, in so many, many ways. And one of them is that we've experienced the love of God in our own lives. But let's not forget that that love of God reaches to every nation, every world leader, every politician, man, woman, and child on this planet.

And it includes over 60 nations that are having major elections this year. In fact, they're saying it's one of the most elections that this world has ever known.

And so many of them are important nations as well, including America and Russia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Mexico, the most populous nations in the world today.

[24:40] And, of course, that means the political, and, of course, it may happen here in the UK. Only Rishi knows that. We shall wait and see. But there is the possibility of the political situation in so many countries could change over this coming, other coming months.

So, anyway, let's pray to the Lord. Lord. Father, we thank you for your love that each one of us has experienced and known.

We thank you for the care and the way in which you have looked after us. We thank you for the love you've shown us when Jesus went all the way to the cross, made the ultimate sacrifice for each and every one of us.

And we thank you so much for all that you've given to us. But, Lord, we pray today for the people in this world who have power. May not last long, Lord.

It will eventually pass away, and your power never will never pass away. But we pray, Lord, that you will be with them, and we will pray that you will penetrate into their minds, actions, and situations.

[25:51] We pray, Lord, for the many elections that are going to take this year. And we pray, Lord, that as elections take place, it will be for the good of the country where they're taken, and for the good of the world itself.

But we pray, Lord, particularly for the situation in Russia and Ukraine. We pray for Vladimir Putin. We pray for Vladimir Zelensky.

Lord, these people may not know you. And, Lord, their actions you may despise. But, Lord, we know that you love them. And we just pray, Lord, that you will somehow influence this and bring peace to that land of Ukraine.

Lord, you can work wonders and miracles. And, Lord, you are the God who is able to do that, and we believe you for it. We pray, too, Lord, for the tragedy in Gaza and the Israeli conflict.

We pray for Benjamin Netanyahu and Ismail Haniyeh, who is the leader of Hamas. We pray for the negotiations seeking a peace deal and for the hostages to be released.

[27:00] Lord, we just pray that you will intervene in your love. Though perhaps these people may not recognize you, we pray that somehow there will be a change of heart that will actually affect the whole situation.

And after the conflict, what then? Lord, we pray for wisdom for the world leaders as they deal with that situation. We pray, too, Lord, for the escalating situation which we see in the world today, even last night, with the US, UK and other countries bombing targets in Iraq, Syria and the Yemen against the Houthi.

Lord, we pray for people like President Biden, Rishi Sunak, leaders in NATO and the EU making decisions that could either help or bring peace or could escalate the whole situation.

Lord, we ask that you somehow will penetrate and influence the hearts and minds of people who have the power in the world today.

We thank you that your love is far greater than all the power these leaders have put together. And with you, nothing is impossible. And we come to you, the impossible God.

[28:16] And Father, we pray for other things, too. We thank you that Living Stones is now well underway. And we would pray, Lord, for our builders, beaks, as they get themselves involved and the people that are working for them.

And we pray, Lord, as they meet Christian people and as they deal with the chapel, we pray that in some way it will have an influence upon them and will touch their lives. We pray for each one of us, Lord, as we that we will continue to pray for the progress and that things will work out well.

Continue to speak to each one of us, Lord, as to the amount we should give. Lord, either both to the church and to the Living Stones project itself.

We pray, Lord, that you'll just keep speaking to us and touching our hearts, our minds and our pockets and our bank balances as necessary. We pray, too, Lord, for our elders and deacons.

We thank you for them, for the commitment they've made to you and to this fellowship. And we pray, Lord, as they make decisions, sometimes difficult, we pray you'll give them wisdom and understanding and that you'll bless them through your spirit.

[29:26] We pray, too, Lord, for the coming holiday club and the preparations as they go on. And we pray, Lord, that young people and your children will enroll.

And we pray that their lives and hearts will be touched as they listen to the message of the gospel. And we pray, Lord, that it will have long-lasting influence on their lives with ultimately them coming to know you as their Lord and their Savior.

We pray, too, for the coming weekend at home. Lord, we pray that, again, be with the preparations, those that are organizing it. And, Lord, we pray that it will be a great time of fellowship and blessing, a great time of challenge as we meet together.

We would ask, too, Lord, for our families, our friends and our work colleagues who need the Lord. And we pray, Lord, that our lives will be such that we will touch them and affect them.

And, Lord, that there will be opportunities come up for us to help, to do good deeds for them and to speak to them about your love. And this morning, Lord, we thank you again that we've been able to meet.

[30:31] So we pray that you'll be with Roger as he opens God's word to us. Lord, by your spirit, we ask you to speak to us. We pray that we might know your power and influence in our lives.

And we pray, Lord, that we'll go from this place knowing that we have met with you. And in conclusion, Lord, we pray your peace will go with each one of us and all your people across the world, wherever you have placed us and them.

Guide us all, we ask, through this world's wilderness and protect us from the storm. Bring us home rejoicing at the wonders of your love, your care and the answers to our prayers.

In the name of Jesus, we bring these prayers to you. Amen. Amen. Thank you so much, Colin. Just before Hannah brings our reading to us and then Roger will share on that.

Just want to share about a few things coming up, which I forgot to do earlier in the service. So first of all, this evening we have an evening service. We have an evening service on the first Sunday of every month. It's a communion service.

[31:42] Do commend that to you, invite you to come along. We'll be spending time again around God's word, praising him and sharing communion together. So that's 6.30 here. It'd be lovely to see you there. Now, the other thing that Colin also mentioned in the prayers is our weekend at home.

The weekend at home is in two weeks' time. It's a wonderful opportunity on the Saturday to spend the day together, get some great teaching from our visiting speakers, John and Alison Rizbridger. We've also got worship led by our guest worship band, Syndesis, who are coming. And then in the afternoon, we'll have lunch together. You can either sign up to have soup and bread provided here or bring your own picnic lunch. And then there's various activities and seminars. The activities are there.

I just need to apologize. I read through the list last week, and somehow I miss craft. So thanks for whoever pointed that out. There is craft, and I commend that to you. You can make your own kind of painted living stone, which I think is really cool.

And those are the other seminars, activities that you can sign up to. Now, we do really need you to sign up to this this week and preferably today. And one of the ways that you can sign up today is after the service, down on the registration desk where the kids normally sign in, Judy, who's been leading us.

[32:50] Judy, can you just give us a wave? Judy's dressed in purple, as normal. And she's going to be on the registration desk. She can sign you in. If not, please get online. It's on the home page.

Just follow the link and sign in onto that. That would be really great. The places are filling up very quickly, but it would be great to have you as part of that. And what I would say is I'm aware that some people can only come to part of it.

Just sign up anyway and tick the boxes that apply to the bits that you're going to be doing. But do please sign up, even if you're only coming to part of it. You're most welcome to just come for the part of the day that you can come for.

So looking forward to that. And then Colin also mentioned just to save the date at this stage for our holiday club, which is coming up in April 3rd to the 5th. It's the first week of the Easter holidays. Just after Easter, it's for all primary age children. And just save the date. And the booking is going to open on the 21st of February. So then at that stage, if you have children in primary school or you know other people who do, then please share with them.

[33:51] We'd love to have them come along to a wonderful time playing games, having fun, music, and learning about Jesus and introducing people to Jesus. That's a great opportunity. Please be praying for that as well.

Okay, I'm going to hand over to Hannah now. He's going to bring our Bible reading, and then Roger will speak to us. Hello.

We're reading from 2 Peter. If you're following along in this Bible, it's page 1222. It doesn't actually have a page number on it.

It is just the 2 Peter topic page. Reading from 2 Peter 1, 5 to 11. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness.

And to goodness, knowledge. And to knowledge, self-control. And to self-control, perseverance. And to perseverance, godliness.

[34:57] And to godliness, mutual affection. And to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But whoever does not have them is short-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election.

For if you do these things, you will never stumble. And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

If you have the church Bible, please keep it open at that page.

Or maybe you have it on a phone app. Very 21st century. I'm still living in the last one. I like a printed version of the Bible.

[36:07] And mine is slightly different to this one. Now, when we start a sermon that starts, for this reason, we've got a big question mark.

What's the reason? When you see a word like therefore, or so, you've got to refer back to what came before. And so, Andrew explained this last week.

And in verses 1 to 4, we have the foundations of our Christian faith. In verse 1, for example, it tells us we have received a faith.

And then in verse 3, we have received everything, God's promises, his divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him.

And in verse 4, it even says, we may participate in the divine nature. In other words, Jesus has laid the foundations for everything that follows.

[37:09] We can live a godly life, a successful faith because of what Jesus has done. Now, as Chris said earlier in the service, we're in a series on 2 Peter that is looking at the fact that we are having to contend these days for truth, that we can sometimes have our faith hijacked by all kinds of wrong ideas.

And so, the whole letter of 2 Peter is aimed at the Christians to help them establish and believe their faith, to be strong in what they believe.

It says, confirming one's calling and election. That's the heading there for this whole section. Or you could say, making sure of what you believe. And in fact, Peter goes on to say in the bit we haven't read, so I will always remind you of these things even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you have, you now have.

I think it's right to refresh your memory. So, some of what I'm saying this morning is not new. But I think we need to keep reminding ourselves because we are being constantly bombarded by wrong ideas.

And so, we're going to have a look at what comes next. So, it's for this reason, the reason that Christ has established everything necessary for whatever we need to live a godly life.

[38:33] Therefore, we can add to our faith, as it says, seven different qualities here. We're going to look at each one in turn. So, the first one in verse 5 is goodness.

And as we look at these, I'm going to suggest a Bible character that I think exemplifies these qualities. I think goodness is to do with being a blessing, isn't it, to other people.

It's the kind of person you want to be with. They're just so pleasant, so good, so helpful in many ways. And my choice of person in the Bible for this is Barnabas.

In Acts chapter 11, he's called a good man. I wonder why he's good. It's because he was generous. He sold some land that he owned and he gave the profits of that to the early church in Jerusalem so they could share it with the people in need.

And at that time, it was around that time that Saul of Tarsus, who was persecuting the church, suddenly had a tremendous conversion experience, met Jesus on the road to Damascus.

[39:39] Now, a lot of the disciples in Jerusalem were a bit sceptical that this man really was saved. They'd heard that something had happened. So, Barnabas went to find him, went all the way to Tarsus up in southern Turkey and brought Saul, this renegade who'd been attacking the church, back to meet the elders and so they could understand that, yes, he really is changed.

He is proclaiming the gospel. He's saved. Barnabas did something else as well. Later on, he actually took the side of his young cousin, Mark, when Paul was a bit disappointed with his way that he had not helped them on a particular journey.

So, there's a good man, Barnabas, and that's the kind of quality that I think God wants us to have, to be generous, to be kind, to be helpful to people. Second one, verse five, is knowledge.

And there's two aspects of this, head knowledge and heart knowledge. Now, Paul is a good example of this. He was a man who had a tremendous amount of head knowledge.

He was an intellectual, a brilliant Jew, a Pharisee. He understood the Old Testament. He was able then, as a Christian, to write letters to the young churches, to explain the gospel, to explain the teaching to them.

[41:00] But also, in one of his letters to the Philippians, he said, all of that is not worthy to be compared with what I really want. I want to know Christ.

That's heart knowledge. Do you want to know Christ? I certainly do. I'm getting old. I've had a lot of years behind me and there's all sorts of things, yeah, that I wish had gone better.

But right now, at this stage in my life, I want to know Christ because it may not be long before I suddenly see him. And that's what we want, isn't it? Heart knowledge of Jesus as well as the knowledge of the scriptures.

And that's what we try to do week by week here as we open the word and as we look at it and as we preach and try to study and in our life groups and so on.

We're learning more and more. The third word is self-control. This is a good one. Verse six. Well, it's the ability really, isn't it, to be calm, thoughtful, not burst out with the wrong word, not to be provoked, but to think carefully before we start to share what we think we ought to share or whatever.

[42:16] I'm going to choose a lady from the Bible. There's some really brilliant women in the Bible, I think, need a little bit of attention. And here, this is Esther, the beautiful young Jewish girl who was chosen to be queen in Persia.

and she was a Jew and they were hated by many of the people in that particular time in that empire. She had to be very careful.

She had to be quiet about who she was. She was very obedient to everything she was told to do, particularly by Mordecai, her uncle who'd brought her up because her mother and father had died. And the time came when she had to go before the king, which was no big deal in those days, to plead for his mercy to save her people from the wrath of those who were against them.

So Esther was somebody with self-control. If you read that remarkable story in the Old Testament, it's incredible just how well she handled the whole situation.

[43:19] The fourth word, perseverance. Verse 6. I have trouble with this one. I don't know about you, but I've got quite a lot of unfinished things in my life.

Perseverance. It's the ability to carry on, isn't it? To keep going, to not give up when you know you've got a task to do that is not that easy. Who am I going to choose for this?

Nehemiah. He was the man who, around, not long after the time of Esther, actually, in Persia, he was able to go back to Jerusalem, which had been in ruins since the people had been exiled out to first Babylon and now they're in Persia.

Nehemiah went back determined to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem against a huge amount of opposition, opposition from the other tribal leaders in the area who were definitely very much against the Jews.

It took 52 days to rebuild that wall. Incredible perseverance. But he didn't do it alone. He had a gang of people. He had people working day and night defending what they were doing.

[44:28] And not only that, he and the prophet Ezra at the time also persevered in restoring the true worship to Israel in bringing the people back to the book, to the books of Moses, to the law.

They'd abandoned all that. They'd worshipped false gods, which is why they were in exile. So this is why now Nehemiah and Ezra together persevered to restore the people to God.

What's the next word? Godliness. Verse 6. I'm going to choose another lady for this. An unusual one, perhaps. Not a Jew. Way, way back in the time of the judges when everything was going wrong in Israel, there were some people who left the country.

They were refugees. a lady called Naomi and her husband Elimelech. I hope I got that right. And they went to the country of Moab. They had two sons.

Very, very sadly, during the time they were there, Elimelech died. The two sons died. They'd been married to Moabite women. So Naomi was left with two widowed daughters-in-law, one of whom was called Ruth.

[45:46] What a great name. And that young lady didn't want to abandon Naomi. She was going to go back to her people, absolutely bereft of everything.

And Ruth said to Naomi, I will go with you wherever I go, wherever you go, I will be. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God.

She demonstrated as a non-June great godliness. She decided she wanted to follow the God of Naomi and she did.

And she obeyed Naomi and back in Israel, Bethlehem actually, she did everything Naomi said she should do and God rewarded her by meeting a godly man called Boaz.

And you know what? Together, they became the great grandparents of King David. What a great woman. There'll be a few more. Kindness is the next word.

[46:48] Verse 7. Wanting to help others in their need? There's a lot of people like that in the Bible but I've chosen Jonathan, the son of King Saul.

Why was he kind? Well, kindness, he was the one who cared for a young shepherd boy called David. He'd been brought into Saul's court to play the harp because Saul used to have pretty bad moods and the harp helped to calm him down.

But around the same time, this young man, this shepherd boy had been told he will be another king. He will be the next king. Now that was Jonathan's place. He was the one who should have inherited the kingdom.

And yet, he knew that he should look after this young man. He was kind to him. He protected him from his father's wrath. And then when both King Saul and Jonathan were killed in a battle later on, David actually reciprocated that kindness because there was only one surviving son of Jonathan left.

Many years later, a man called, wait for it, Mephibosheth. And David invited this poor crippled man into his palace to eat with him.

[48:11] So that kindness, that love between David and Jonathan, that's the kind of thing that God wants us to do, to be kind to people, whatever it might cost.

The final one is love. What a pity this isn't first. I think this is probably one of the most significant ones, isn't it? Love in verse 7. It's the agape love, the unconditional, the sacrificial, the kind of love that just loves in spite of everything.

How about some women for this? They probably in the Bible are the ones who most understand that. Can you think of Mary, the sister of Martha, who sat listening to Jesus and who anointed him with her feet before the crucifixion who loved him like a brother?

She had a brother, Lazarus. But what about Mary Magdalene who was weeping by the tomb on the morning of the resurrection? She was rewarded by being the first person to see Jesus alive again. Her love for Jesus was so strong. And Mary, his mother, they're all Marys, aren't they? And she was at the cross where her son was being crucified.

[49:31] Can you imagine what that was like? The test of her love? You love in spite of everything that's going on.

And at this point, I'm going to call the musicians to come up because we're going to sing a short song. I'm going to pause. there's a summary to all that's been said so far.

These qualities are not just people in the Bible, individual qualities. They are all together in one person. You know who I mean? It's Jesus.

Jesus' perseverance to go to the cross to carry out what his father wanted him to do which was to bring salvation to all of us. His self-control when being tried and falsely accused.

His love for his disciples and for everyone. His goodness and kindness. It's all about Jesus. And we're going to sing a little song. It's called Jesus, you are changing me.

[50:41] This is what really this is all about. This is what Peter is urging us to do. Let Jesus come into our lives and change us and to make us different. This song is from written by Marilyn Baker, a blind singer, songwriter.

She's known to Linda, Paulie and me. She wrote it quite a long time ago. It's quite a simple song. We're going to sing it twice. And how many of you know it? Yeah, that's pretty good.

So for those of you who don't know it, we're all going to help you to learn it. Okay, twice three. And we're both Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[53:12] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[56:12] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

these qualities in our lives, but please don't rely on them for salvation. And if you're here this morning and you still haven't, put your trust wholly in Jesus.

Believe him for eternal life. Do it now. It is the way, the only way. Jesus said it, didn't he? He said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.

And by the way, around this time, and in fact earlier than this, around about 51 AD in the early church, this was a huge controversy because some of the Jews who'd become Christians, Pharisees particularly, liked Paul, but it wasn't true of him. Some of them were saying, well, these people who are not Jews who are becoming Christians, they should obey all our laws.

[57:50] And they had a big meeting, a big council. It's in Acts chapter 15. You can read all about it. A few years ago I preached on it. And there they had to confirm the fact, and Peter was there, by the way, the writer of this letter, and so was Paul, so was Barnabas.

All the leaders were there, and they said, look, we must not try to burden the people who are becoming Christians by saying you've got to obey the Jewish laws. We've never been able to keep them all.

Why should we make them? It's by believing in Jesus Christ alone that you are saved. That's the message. That was what Paul was preaching. That's why we sometimes sing, in Christ alone my hope is found.

So that's the good news that counters the bad news that we can't make it on our own.

Unfortunately, there's another piece of bad news. Even though we've got this new nature inside of us, because we've believed and we've come to Christ, there's still something else in there, isn't there?

It's called the human nature, our old nature. While we're in this body, it's still there. It doesn't go. There's a battle between our two natures. Are you aware of that?

[59:06] I certainly am. And I'm nearly 77 and over the years I've been very conscious that there have been times in my life when that old human nature has got the better of my new nature.

You know what I'm talking about. We want to be good. We want to be kind. We want to be godly. We want to be all these things. But sometimes the old human nature trips us up and gets in the way.

Actually, it happened to Paul. If you read his letter to the Romans, chapter 7, he confesses this is one of his problems. He says, when I want to do right, I find I'm doing the wrong thing.

Help! And I think that's true of everyone who really believes and wants to do these good things, wants to live a godly life. It's hard work.

It's a battle. But the good news is that we have the Holy Spirit. We can call on the Holy Spirit to help us to grow in these qualities.

[60:10] For example, you know, you wake up one morning and you realise at work you've got a difficult situation to face or you've got some problems, relationships that you're having to deal with.

You can say, Holy Spirit, help me. Help me to be self-controlled today. Help me to show love to the people that I'm going to be with. You can actually do this day by day.

Ask the Holy Spirit to come and fill you again and to help you to overcome the old human nature and live in the new. So that's the good news to overcome the bad news.

And by the way, Paul, after talking about how he struggles with all of that in Romans 7, he then goes on in Romans chapter 8 to say, walk in the Spirit and you will be able to live a much healthier, successful, godly life rather than walking in the human nature.

And by the way, this list is very similar to another list. Did any of you think, I thought there's something like this somewhere else in the Bible?

[61:22] Well, if you go to Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22, there Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit. He says, that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-controlled.

Four of Peter's lists are actually here. And a lot of other good ones too. In fact, they're really all one big multi-layered fruit. It's all the nice of Jesus, isn't it?

In us. And we ask the Holy Spirit to fill us with that kind of fruit. And by the way, this comes back to the concept of the earth.

Even though you might feel that many times that they were so embarrassed in the way of God, there is a man that you can refer back to Jesus said, you have been crucified and the cross.

You never had to be to develop any of this problem. He was distressed with another. And yet he couldn't recognize that Jesus didn't deserve to die.

[62:41] But he did. And he recognized Jesus was in the respect. Remember me when you come into your kingdom, Jesus said, you'll be with me in paradise.

That man was saved at that moment. If you believe in Jesus and you put your trust in him, you are saved. However well or however badly you feel you're doing on that list.

And there's another illustration that Jesus actually used. Remember the one that he talked about the vine and the branches in John chapter 15. He compared himself to a vine and we are all the branches.

Now a branch sitting there on the ground on its own can't produce fruit. No grapes will grow on it. But if it's plugged into the vine the life of the vine will flow through it and produce the grapes.

That's it. We're plugged into Jesus. We need his life flowing through us to produce that kind of fruit. There's another piece of bad news. Sorry about this.

[63:49] As well as this internal battle that's going on we've got an external enemy and you know that. Satan the devil and all his principalities and powers that Paul talks about in Ephesians chapter 6.

They are against us. Once we become Christians once we believe we made an enemy. We are in a battle and always will be and we've got to recognise when we're being attacked and that can quite often happen in our lives.

But and here's the good news Jesus has conquered Satan completely at the cross. Satan's power was crushed.

We got that? Okay so and he's and James says in his letter resist the devil he'll flee from you. He's just somebody full of lies somebody who's trying to trip you up somebody who's bringing all sorts of false things and that's what this whole series is going to be talking about in chapter 2 and onwards. All these false ideas that were trying to upset the Christians in those young churches. So we're fighting against the world the flesh and the devil as the Bible tells us.

[65:04] The world and its ideas about how we should live and about being good and righteous and all that and we'll win. You know it's secular funerals. Sometimes people say oh that person was so good they're up there now looking down on us.

Well if they didn't know Jesus sorry they're not. It's a hard thing to say but Jesus said it's only through me that you will be saved and that is the truth and we've got to believe the truth that we learn.

Well so my friends if you want to grow in all these heavenly characters we can be ineffective and unproductive as it says in verse 8 but the more we take on the character of Jesus and allow his life to flow to us we will be effective we will be productive and it also says in verse 9 if we're not doing this kind of thing we might forget that we've been cleansed from our past things so that's what I've been laboring this morning but I think it's something that needs to be said Peter said that we need to keep reminding ourselves we have been saved we've been cleansed and we go on from there and then we will receive a rich way into the same kingdom that's there and save the people and so we need the help of the

Holy Spirit as I was saying earlier don't we and what we're going to do now we're going to sing about that song called Holy Spirit Living Breath to God this is asking the Holy Spirit and let's do this every day not necessarily in song but ask the Holy Spirit to help the light of us to fill us and then we'll go to that's that's that's that's that's Holy Spirit thing Thank you.

Thank you.

[68:40] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[71:40] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. And we pray that we so much, Lord, and I pray that for each one of us, you would fill us with your Holy Spirit, to be able to live in the way that you want us to live, to grow us into the people that you want us to be, to grow our characters, to be more like you, to know how dependent we are on you, but to be filled with your goodness and your self-control and your perseverance and godliness and kindness and everything else we need, because it's all found in you.

Yeah, we're so thankful. Amen. We would love to pray with you after the service. I would love to pray with you. Roger, I'm sure, would love to pray with you. Any of our leaders or anyone with a white praying hands badge would love to pray with you. Maybe you just sense from what we shared this morning, there's a particular area that was mentioned there that I really just know that God wants me to work on, and you know, the good news is God's got resources for us, and he doesn't call us to do it alone. We're to support each other in that, and we would just love to come to God together with you and just to pray that home for you today. So do please come and find one of us after the service.

Do please join us for tea and coffee down in the main hall downstairs, and please don't forget if you haven't signed up for the weekend at home, sign up online or go and see Judy downstairs at the registration desk. She can sign you in.

[74:28] I'm just going to finish with a very brief blessing from 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 2, part of what was read last week. So receive this blessing. You might just like to lift up your hands like this as a sign of a posture of being ready to receive God's goodness. Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

God bless you. God bless you.