

The Lord who knows

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Preacher: Malcolm Hazell

[0:00] reveal himself to us. Let's pray. Loving Heavenly Father, we thank you that you chose to make us, that you are a beautiful creator God, and that you love us.

We thank you that you know us completely. You know us today. You know what's on our mind. You know how we feel. And we thank you that you are Emmanuel, not just at Christmas, but always. You are God with us. We pray that we'd be aware of your presence amongst us this morning. And we ask you, Lord, to bless us as only you can, in those places where we perhaps don't understand all that is happening in life.

So we come hungry and thirsty for you. We invite you, Lord, to meet with us by your spirit. And we open our hearts and our lives to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We're going to worship God as we stand and sing, Great is your love and then faithful one. Let's worship God. Let the whole earth sing.

[1:28] Let the whole earth sing. You reached for us from on heaven's throne When we had no hope.

When we had no hope. You are the way. There is no other. You are the way. There is no other.

You rose from death to victory. You reign in life. Oh, majesty. You reign in life.

You reign in life. And lift it up. Jesus, Jesus alive in us. You reign in life.

You reign in life. You reign in life. You reign in life.

[2:33] Lord over all, you have made us new. We owe it all to you in everything. Be exalted in everything.

Be exalted, you rose from death to victory. You reign in life, O majesty.

Your name be high and lifted up. Jesus, Jesus, alive in us.

The enemy is under your feet. We are free. We are free. Death has been defeated by love.

You overcome. You overcome. The enemy is under your feet. We are free.

[3:46] We are free. Death has been defeated by love. You overcome. You overcome.

You rose from death to victory. You reign in life, O majesty.

Your name be high and lifted up. Jesus, Jesus, alive in us.

You rose from death to victory. You reign in life, O majesty. Your name be high and lifted up.

Jesus, Jesus, alive in us. Jesus, Jesus, alive in us.

[4:46] cáil youlight Pacvng as I've ever had. Óie ig aquilo arries DO paid in fauna gym. Ens ral! WeItIP I frontas bu known oise. Padre el año emic bicycle avó agrépt stops emes Esa Fable war so unchanging Ageless one, you're my rock of peace Lord of all, I depend on you I call out to you

Again and again I call out to you Again and again You are my rock In times of trouble You lift me up When I fall down All through the storm Your love is the anchor My hope is in you alone

Faithful one, so unchanging Ageless one, you're my rock of peace Lord of all I depend on you I call out to you I call out to you Again and again Again and again I call out to you Again and again You are my rock

You are my rock In times of trouble You lift me up When I fall down When I fall down When I fall down All through the storm All through the storm Your love is the anchor My hope is the anchor My hope is in you alone And as we stand We thank you Father that All through the various storms Of our life You have been there

Thank you That our hope is in you And that hope cannot Be shaken For you are the same Yesterday, today And forever The Lord Almighty Is with us The God of Jacob Is our refuge Hallelujah Amen Amen Do take a seat Just got One or two Notices My study Which is just along The corridor here If you've never been In my study Apologies There are books In there That are for taking So don't feel guilty Just go in there And any that are not Taken by the 31st I have got lots at home By the way Just in case you're wondering I'm going to stop Reading this entirely Then any not taken Will go to BookAid to Africa So do feel free to Help yourself And there's some CDs And things as well So do take those Don't forget to Pick up one of the Life Group leaflets And work out which one You're going to book into Next Sunday

[9:57] Do pray for those Who got their O-level results Just the last few days For God's guidance And blessing upon them Just to let you know Chris Mangtalo Has arrived back From Tanzania Hooray And I don't think He's here though Because he's too tired Is he?

He's got a stinking cold So we're glad he's not Sorry in the nicest way And Andrew will be back Next week I think he's coming back On the 27th, 28th So that's great So there's a few notices Let's just come before God And ask him to cleanse us As we seek to worship him And hear from his word Let's pray We thank you Father That you are so loving So faithful That you draw us To yourself And you enable us To be open And to be honest About our failings So we repent We turn away From what we know That we've said Or done wrong This last week Forgive us Lord Heal us Bring healing to others That we may have hurt Even inadvertently And we thank you That you promise To forgive all Who truly repent We bless you In Jesus name Amen

I'm going to hand over To Jackie Who's going to take This next little part Thank you Good morning So this is our last Sunday Of our eco-church activities And this morning We're going to think About chocolate Because chocolate Is very good And we're going to think About how small changes And small choices That we make Can have an effect On people around the world And on our environment And we're also going To challenge the children To think of one thing That they could do In their lives However small or big it is To help the environment And maybe impact on People in other countries Who we don't always think about And then looking ahead To the next two weeks We are the same as the church The main church We're going to be thinking About living in community And if we're Christians And God has called us To be part of God's family What does that actually mean? And how can we However old we are And in a however big Or small a way How can we serve Our church family?

And one of the ways We can do that Is by praying And so today Luca and Oriana And Toba Are going to come up And they have written prayers Luca and Oriana And Toba They have written prayers And they are going to pray For the church And for Malcolm and Dawn Right we'll try and find Space for you all up here Let's pray Dear Lord Thank you that we can be A part of this church family We ask that at this time of change We will feel your presence And your peace That we will be patient With one another And look to serve Rather than be served We pray for your blessing And guidance For Andrew The elders And deacons As they lead the church At this time Please also bless

[13:33] The living stones Project team And beaks As they work to transform The sanctuary In Jesus name Amen Amen Dear God Thank you for Malcolm and Dawn Thank you for the way They have humbly loved And served Our church For over The last eight years We pray that you will guide them And help them In the next chapter Of their lives And that they may know That you are there In the good times And the bad times In Jesus name Amen Amen Dear God Thank you for Pastor Malcolm And his family Thank you for bringing them Into this church And enabling them To do wonderful things For us Thank you for giving Pastor Malcolm The wisdom he needs To run this church well Please help this family To lack no courage And faith In all that they do And let them continue To thrive in their life Amen Thank you you three

Because they wrote those Themselves in their own time So I think That is a great way To be able to serve this church Well done Go and sit down In a minute I'm not sure Which one I'm supposed to use The children are going to go out In the next song We're going to be coming back in At the end of the service So children Before you go out That's all the children Above adventurer age Or

adventurers and above Are going to come back in Before you go out Just kind of remember Where you were sitting So that we can try And get you back To your parents When you come back in That would be really helpful And parents When they come back in If you could kind of Wave and own them That would be really helpful As well We have this amazing cake Down here I don't know Do we have a picture Of the cake Or we don't We have this cake Down here That Carrie-Anne Has made There we go The cake Is also going to Disappear now But we are

As a loving family Going to help Malcolm and Dawn Eat the cake At coffee time So that's why The cake's going to Disappear That reminds me If you have children Who are in Explorers If you could get them As quickly as possible After the service Because those lovely Leaders are going to Stay down there But they would like To come and help Eat cake as well So if you could get them As quickly as possible After the service That would be great Thank you Let's pray for our Children and young people As they go to their groups During this song So loving father We give you thanks For every child Every family Represented here And we ask you lord To enable each family To grow as disciples Of yours Thank you for those Lovely prayers Help us to pray With our children And to show them Show them Through our example The lord Jesus Amen

Let's worship god Shall we King of kings Majesty God of heaven Living in me Gentle saviour Christ of bread Strong deliverer Beginning and end All within thee Falls at your throne Your majesty I can but now I lay my own Before you now

In royal robes I don't deserve I live to serve Your majesty Earth and heaven Worship you Love eternal Faithful and true Who brought the nations Ransomed souls Who brought the nations Ransomed souls And brought this sinner Near to your throne All within thee Christ of team pray Your majesty Your majesty I can't come I lay my own Before you now

[18:39] Before you now In royal robes I don't deserve I don't deserve I live to serve Your majesty Your majesty I don't deserve I live to serve Your majesty Your majesty I can but now I lay my own I lay my own I lay my own Before you now I lay my own Before you now In royal robes I long deserve I live to serve Your majesty I live to serve Your majesty Do take a seat Well half the things on my list have already been prayed for

But no harm in doing it again Let's come to God in prayer Father we thank you for our fellowship We thank you for one another And the way that we can encourage each other We pray this week Lord for Andrew As he takes over the lead pastor role Later this week We pray that you'll give him the wisdom And the strength that he needs We pray for those who support him Both the eldership and leadership here And the his support group amongst leaders in other churches And other organizations We pray Lord that Between them They might help Andrew In his difficult task Of being the pastor to this fellowship

We pray for the elders and deacons At this time As they think through The type of leadership that we need At this time going forward And shape the fellowship For that purpose We pray for our children We pray that they will grow In faith and knowledge of you We pray for those in our fellowship We pray for those in our fellowship that teach them That they might teach them the truth And we pray for the parents As they also teach their children your ways And how to live in them We pray for our young people We pray for those We pray for those We pray for those Currently choosing their subjects Or choosing their careers Based on their recent exam results We pray Lord that you'll guide them in that

And that they might know that That they are being led by you We pray that you'll comfort those who mourn Comfort those who mourn Comfort those who are just in to the loss of a family member Or a friend at this time We pray for you Lord that Chris has come back from Tanzania And we look forward to hearing Of his adventures there over the coming weeks We pray that he'll quickly get over this cold That he's got at the moment At the moment We bring the Living Stones project to you And in this final week before the builders move in We thank you Lord for those that have helped prepare for that Some people have been here virtually every day for the last fortnight And will be here this week as well

We thank you for them And for anyone that's played a part in that And we pray that as the builders move in That they might sense that Your spirit is in this building We pray for those Thinking or already signing up for life groups We pray Lord that those groups will be a strength to those that join And as we look in our news feeds And as we look in our news feeds Whether it's on the internet, the television Or hear it on the radio or newspapers We struggle Lord to know how to pray so often We

see people struggling for power We see them taking over to countries Getting rid of people they don't like Getting their own way And starting wars Lord bring your peace to this world

[24:00] And may your church be the part in that peace We pray for those suffering from natural disasters The wildfires that are sweeping places like Canada and elsewhere For those living with drought And those in the complete opposite living with floods You gave us this earth Lord to To look after To be stewards of And to be honest we've messed it up We pray Lord that we might all Work towards restoring the earth We thank you Lord for Initiatives that go on But we pray Lord that You will help us As we do these things And so we pray that you'll be with us

In the rest of this service And teach us Lord what you want us to do And how you want us to live For we ask it in Jesus name Amen The next song we're going to sing I think was taught to us When we had an away day And I think it's very appropriate Joel and the team are here So sing out well for us King of kings Let's worship God shall we?

Let's stand Let's sing In the darkness we were waiting Without hope Without light Till from heaven you came running There was mercy in your eyes To fulfill the law and prophets To our virgin came the word From a throne of endless glory To a cradle in the dirt Praise the Father Praise the Son Praise the Spirit Three in one God of glory majesty Praise the King majesty Praise forever To the King of Kings To reveal the kingdom coming To reveal the kingdom coming And to reconcile the lost To redeem the whole creation You did not despise the cross For even in your sufferings You soared to the other side Knowing this was our salvation Jesus for our sake you died Praise the Father Praise the Father Praise the Son

Praise the Spirit Three in one God of glory majesty Praise forever To the King To the King Of Kings And the morning that you rose All of heaven held its breath Till that stone was moved for good For the Lamb had conquered death And the dead rose from their tombs And the angels rose from their tombs And the angels stood in awe For the souls of all who'd come to the Father are restored And the church of Christ was born And the Spirit lit the place And the Lord of heaven The Lord of heaven held its breath And the Lord of heaven And the angels, the Lord of heaven And the Holy and the Lord of heaven And the earth The Lord of heaven And the Son of heaven For the souls of all who'd come to the Father are restored And the Church of Christ was born And the Spirit lit the flame Now this gospel truth of old Shall not kneel, shall not faint

[28:45] By his blood and in his faith In his freedom I am free For the love of Jesus Christ Who has resurrected me Praise the Father, praise the Son Praise the Spirit, three in one God of glory, majesty Praise forever to the King of kings Praise the Father, praise the Son Praise the Spirit, three in one

God of glory, majesty Praise forever to the King of kings Praise forever to the King of kings Amen. Do take a seat and I think Beth's going to bring our reading.

Okay, I'm going to be reading Psalm 139 and it's on page 626 of these Bibles that are around so you can read along with me.

So yeah, it's page 628 if you want to read along. You have searched me Lord and know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down. You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you Lord know it completely. You hem me in behind and I'm going to be before and before and before and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. Too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn. If I settle on the far side of the sea. Even there your hand will guide me.

[31:48] Your right hand will hold me fast. If I say surely the darkness will hide me and the light become the night around me. Even the darkness will not be dark to you. The night will shine like the day. For darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in a secret place. When I was woven together in the depths

of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God. How vast the sum of them. Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. If only you, God, would slay the wicked. Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty. They speak of you with evil intent. Your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebelling against you?

I have nothing but hatred for them. I count them my enemies. Search me, God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

[33:34] What an amazing psalm that is. Let's ask God to reveal wonderful things from his word, shall we?

Father, we do thank you for the psalms expressing things that we find hard to put into words. And yet as you put them in your word through, in this case, your servant David, we hear such encouragement, such truth, such knowledge of you, our great God.

I pray today as we meditate on your word, that you would shape us by it, that it would become a light increasingly to our path.

Hear our prayer. Amen. When I was studying for ministry, our doctrine lecturer used to say there are two questions in theology.

[34:43] Do you want to know the two questions? Here they are, so you can go and profoundly explain something to somebody. What kind of God, so what is God like, and so what?

So what does that mean for me, for you? And I think this psalm actually illustrates that completely brilliantly, where we discover things, or the psalmist expresses things about God, who God is, and then responds to that with the so what.

And so that's what we're going to be doing. Looking at these sections, we're largely going to go through in six verse sections. I'm not going to give quite so much time to the final section, although we'll touch upon it.

I said to Dawn, I can't just miss out the bloodthirsty bit. You know, I've got to cover that. But I say, all scripture is God-breathed, so we've got to, anyway, we will touch on that towards the end.

Now, as you were travelling here today, I wonder how many cameras caught you, so to speak. We're kind of in a surveillance society, aren't we? I was going to a house we're moving to in Fort Worth, and I'm sure I had a bell when we had it in the past.

[35:55] But they'd moved towards one of those bells that sort of looks at you and notices you moving. And I was like, oh, golly, and that bell's gone. So I've now got no bell.

And so I went into the little warehouse store yesterday and said, I need a bell. And they went, oh, it's all locked up, the bells. I was like, why?

Why? Well, they're very expensive bells. Because apparently the bells that you now have are watching you. So you may think you haven't been caught on camera, but you might have been caught by the bells of the houses that you passed.

Did you know that? You're going to be darting between houses now. I can see it. Well, I also have noticed that Tesco know increasingly many, many things about our sort of buying habits.

And they send us texts and things like this to prompt us to get us to buy something else. I guess they're trying to allow a little extra to help us. But they know a lot.

[36:58] We often worry, don't we, about this information being collected about us. And so we concern ourselves about data protection, which can be quite a burden as well.

But we are grateful that the knowledge that is had helps us to identify terrorists and also can avert credit card thieves.

Well, in verses 1 to 6, we discover that there is a level of surveillance that you would not believe. It's a surveillance, not surveillance is not really the right word, but there is a knowledge in the heart of God that goes way beyond any camera, computer system that we might imagine.

King David, writing about this, he speaks about this knowledge as being something that knows, that searches, that even perceives thoughts from afar, even your thoughts today.

When you go to bed, when you get up, God knows. He even knows when you're woken during the night for various reasons, sometimes by thoughts, children, animals.

[38:10] You are known by God. You could say, and he even knows what you're going to do in the future, which is kind of scary, isn't it?

It takes predictive text to a whole new level, one might say. In verse 4, God even knows what we're going to say.

The psalmist says that God hems him in, in front and behind. God knows you and I better than we know ourselves.

Can you just ponder that? You might know yourself a little. He knows you better than you know yourself. I wonder, how do you respond to that knowledge?

What do you do with it? What kind of God, so what? He knows, so what? He looks at us and we are an open book to him.

[39:12] Well, the psalmist responds by saying this. Verse 6, have a look. Such knowledge is wonderful to me. He doesn't say, go away, God.

He says, it's wonderful, it's wonderful that God knows me so profoundly. He doesn't lobby for no-go areas for God.

He simply recognises that God is God. And he's not like us. Now, friends, without a relationship with God, we're left to try to work out who we are.

He knows who we are. And so we ask ourselves, who am I? What's my purpose in life? Whereas God knows.

He knows you. He knows me. And he says, our purpose is to love him and to love one another. And then we will know life. We are beloved, you and I, sons and daughters of almighty God.

[40:18] Made for relationship with him and with one another. To worship him, to love him, to be with him. Have you ever sat down quietly and recognised that God knows you and God sees you?

He sees you. He doesn't see you and tell you off. He sees you, knows you, loves you, and wants you to know more and more of his grace and his mercy and his blessing and his power.

That's the kind of knowledge that he has for you and for me. And when you doubt him, he knows that too. God knows us completely.

When we can't see or work out who we are, what's going on, God sees us. He sees our past. He sees our present. He sees into our future.

No wonder the psalmist is completely blown away and says, this is wonderful. And we wonder at it. So God sees us and knows us.

[41:37] But he's also present always. This is verses 7 to 12 of the text. The second section of the psalm addresses the response we can sometimes have when we realise that God is so profoundly knowing and so profoundly present with us.

The psalmist responds with these words in verse 7. Have a look. Where can I go from your spirit? I think perhaps in his worst moments, David probably did want to hide from God.

He did one or two things which are not very praiseworthy. And of course, hiding from God is as old as the Garden of Eden. As God is looking for Adam and Eve in the garden and they're hiding.

It's really quite funny when you think about it. How can you ever hide from God who sees and knows you and is always present?

It's like impossible. And of course, through the Bible, we see many characters trying to hide from God. Which one comes to your mind? I was thinking of Jonah.

[42:43] Jonah, you know, I'm going to go in the opposite direction of God. And God even meets with Jonah in the depths of the sea as he's swallowed by a fish and speaks to Jonah.

It's amazing, isn't it? That God knows us and is always present with us. You know, sometimes I pray and perhaps you find yourself doing that saying, Lord, may we please come and be present amongst us.

Well, I've got news for you. He is. He is present. What I think is a better prayer, but don't worry if you get that one because the sentiment is there. The better prayer is make us more aware of your presence.

Wouldn't that be a better prayer to pray? Because he is all present, all knowing God. As Psalm 23 says, Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

His goodness, his mercy follows us all the days of our life. Not just on the good days or the bad days. Sometimes we grieve the spirit and it feels like God isn't there.

[43:55] But he is. I wonder how that makes you feel. Well, David responds in verse 10 by saying, Even there, your right hand will guide me.

Your right hand will hold me fast. For David, God's presence means powerful, protective guidance and a strong hand to put his hand into.

Do you follow me? In 1939, King George VI quoted a poem in his Christmas Day broadcast. Very well reported, I think.

And it was about God's presence and his power to guide and save Britain during a terribly disturbing and worrying time for the country.

As I was thinking about this and as I was sort of practicing my sermon before you all arrived, it just struck me quite poignant to be in this room.

[44:54] This is the memorial block. Perhaps you, perhaps many of you know about this block. This was built after the First World War by the men of the church because they were remembering people who died in the First World War.

How very fitting for the king to say to the nation to call upon God as we face the Second World War. And do you want to hear the words that were said in that broadcast? He said this, And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, Give me a light that I may be able to tread safely into the unknown.

Perhaps some of you are facing unknown days ahead. And he replied, Go out into the darkness, into those uncertain places, and put your hand into the hand of God who is present with you.

I'm adding bits, you probably realize. That shall be better than light and safer than a known way.

This invitation to put our trust in God, to put our hand into the hand of God, is not just in crises in the nation in 1939.

[46:02] It's not just when you face a real difficulty in life. It's for every day. Every day to put our hand into the hand of God, to go into the uncertain days in which we live.

That will be better. Better than a known way. Isn't that interesting? Have you got little paths?

Whenever we go on a walk, Dawn and I, I always like to go on the same walk, and Dawn always likes to do different walks.

I'm definitely a known way walker. So I'm glad that it's better than a known way. The third section of the psalm is in verses 13 to 18.

So not only does God profoundly and deeply see you and know you, that's almost enough in itself, isn't it? Not only is he always present, that we might put our hand into the hand, the strong hand of God.

He is our creator. The words are remarkable, aren't they? And they're just so beautiful. I think I must read them again. I wonder if you've read this out yourself.

[47:10] For you created my inmost being. Speaking of God, you, God, created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that for well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed body. Even all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to pass.

It's remarkable, isn't it? Just remarkable that our God created each one of us. Now, my father is a fairly blunt man, and he rather unwisely told me, I'm not sure he sort of said, no, I need to tell you something, son, but he told me that I was an accident.

Now, as a bit of guidance to any would-be parents, this is not a great idea, even if it's true.

Sometimes the truth can be something you just hold to yourself.

[48:30] And when you think that you're just an accident, and I guess our atheistic society espouses that, you're just an accident of genetics, it

doesn't really do much to one's personhood.

Whereas, unfortunately, my dad isn't entirely right. You see, I'm not an accident. I may look a bit of an accident, but I am not an accident, because my heavenly father formed me in my mother's womb even before my mum and dad even, he knew what was going to happen, even before my mum and dad even got together.

Amazing, isn't it? It does your head in, it sort of goes, and you do say, this is wonderful, this is knowledge beyond my understanding. I am not an accident.

I was made by God, lovingly made by God. I think there was a time, I think we may have done this, Susanna might remember, I think there was a mirror once that was produced for our children. It says, underneath it said, known and loved by God, was it? I think, I remember that. Yeah, and what a beautiful thing to do. I wonder if anybody, I was thinking in our house, when we moved to our new house, we ought to have that under a mirror.

[49:49] Known and loved by God. Could get some in, that'd be good. Should we do that? Not just a little thing for the children, big thing in our houses. Yeah, that'd be great.

So what does this say to you and to me? It says that each life has an innate dignity given by the highest authority, by God himself.

Now, some adopted children never meet their natural parents. I notice my brother-in-law is adopted and he has spent hours on his family history.

He's desperate to know something of his history. He's in touch with his mother, but hasn't been able to have any contact with his father. Interesting, the desire to know where we come from.

Well, can I let you know, if you're adopted here, I don't know, some of you may well be and I'm entirely unaware. We are all ultimately, as Christians, adopted into his family and he really does know us.

[50:51] But all of us are known, fully known by God. He knows us completely. He knows us from day one. It is not like, oh, our adopted parents got to know us when I was a year old.

They don't really know us for that first year. He's known us always. Isn't that beautiful? To be able to tell people he's known you always. And I find it blows my mind a bit and gives me great security when I read that statement that even he knows when my day is finished.

Do you see that? All the days ordained for me were written in your book. were written in your book. He knows when we're going to die.

It's not a cheery thought in some ways, but I find it strangely encouraging. Yes, we need to look after our bodies and all the rest of it, but our days are in his hands.

Isn't there a liberty there that we should enter into? All the days he's ordained for us are in his book. How wonderful. And then we have these verses in verses 19 to 22, which come as a little bit of a, I don't know, dampener at the end, don't they?

[52:15] And I've been sort of pondering on why spoil such a lovely psalm? You know, if only you would slay the wicked, O God, away from me, you bloodthirsty men.

And they speak of you with evil intent. Oh God, it's a bit like, oh gosh, I was enjoying this psalm until we got here. Well, I was pondering as we were praying beforehand.

I've got some notes and I'll read those to you. But when you spend time realizing that God knows you and God sees you and he knows you and sees you lovingly and with great grace, when you know that he is always present and he's the one you can put your hand into when there are uncertain days, when you realize that he created you and loves you even before you were born, how awful that people turn their back on this beautiful, loving, creative God.

And he realizes, I am a follower of the living God. I love the Lord Jesus Christ. And so therefore, of course, I love those that God loves.

But those who reject God, there is a response to that as well. Perhaps he says it more firmly than we would. Now my notes, here are my notes.

[53:38] This is what I wrote very briefly. The psalmist is longing for righteousness as he asks the Lord to slay the wicked who oppose God.

David is clear that he is on God's side. He's not uncertain about that. And in order to love God, we too must hate evil.

Is that okay? It seems to make sense then for it to fit in this psalm full of wonder about God. So friends, this psalm shows us that God is all-seeing, all-knowing. He knows us through and through. This psalm says that God sees you, he knows you, and that God is present everywhere.

So we can know his saving presence as we put our hand into his hand in uncertain days. God is all-creative.

[54:41] You are one of God's planned masterpieces. I don't know if you can say that without starting to laugh. I don't know. You are one of God's planned masterpieces, each one of you.

Perfectly, uniquely formed. Isn't that beautiful? One of God's planned masterpieces, made and loved by God. So as a new term starts, as we move to a new worship space here, as summer holidays come to an end, do you have a sort of sense I remember when I was a child, I had a great sense of depression at the end of the summer.

Do any of you get this sort of like, oh gosh, the summer's ending. Well, God's around in the autumn and the winter too. Hallelujah. As pastors come and as pastors go, one might say too.

As you look to the future, perhaps there are uncertainties for you. Not sure what's going to happen. I want you to know, however you feel, God knows.

God knows. He knows you better than you know yourself. And such knowledge is too wonderful. Too wonderful.

[55:59] Secondly, when you let God down, when you let others down, when you let yourself down, and you want to run and hide, and we all do that from time to time, don't we?

Know this, that you may be able to run away from others, but you cannot outrun God, however fast you go.

To place your trust in God, put your hand into the hand of God. It's safer than a known way. And finally, when you are tempted to write yourself off, sounds crazy to think that one might ever do that, but do you ever find yourself doing that?

I'm useless. Whenever you feel tempted to write yourself off, or write somebody else off, remember this, God wove you together.

He planned you from the very beginning. You are alive because God gives you breath. And be very thankful for every day you are alive.

[57:10] And as you look at others, the quiet ones, the unusual ones, the strange ones, I'm told that I am, what's that term that you used?

Sorry, Dawn? Eccentric. I'm told that I am eccentric. I thought I was normal, but no, I'm eccentric. The quiet ones, you know, treat them as those who are very special to God, planned by him, loved by him.

And may the Lord himself lead us in the everlasting way. Just some verses to finish from the psalm. And perhaps these are for all of us.

Perhaps we can pray. Amen. A moment of quiet as we reflect on what God may have said to us through this word.

Search me, O God. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me.

[58:23] And know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me. And lead me in the everlasting way.

Amen. Amen. I invite the worship team to come up. And then we're going to, after we've sung, we're going to say, I'm going to invite you to say a covenant prayer.

It's known as the Wesleyan covenant prayer. I know we're not Methodists, but I read it and thought it was wonderful. So, we're going to say that in a little while. We're going to sing Hosanna.

Hosanna in the highest. Let's stand, shall we, and worship God. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

[60:10] Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest. I see a generation rising up to take their place with selfless love, with selfless faith.

I see a new revival, stirring as we pray and sing.

We're on our knees, we're on our knees. Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.

[61:29] Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.

Feel my heart and make it change. Open up my eyes to the things unseen. Show me how to love like you.

You have loved me. You bring my heart to embrace yours. Everything I am for your kindness cause.

As I walk from earth into eternity. Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.

[62:48] Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Let's stand in well. Hosanna everyone. what I've just done with these slides. Sorry. So this is known as the Wesleyan Covenant Renewal Prayer, and I invite you, if you feel able to, to say these words together.

They're quite big words, so you might want to have a read of this first section before we say it. Just a moment of quiet. And the next slide, so we can just read it.

[64:22] And if you don't feel you can say this currently, I would understand that. But if you do, I think God would be very pleased. Let's say these words together. I was blocking Roger's view.

Let's say these words. I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will. Place me with whom you will.

Put me to doing. Put me to suffering. Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you. Praised for you or criticized for you.

Let me be full. Let me be empty. Let me have all things. Let me have nothing. I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.

And now, O wonderful and holy God, creator, redeemer, and sustainer, you are mine and I am yours.

[65:35] So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it also be made in heaven. Amen. Amen. Amen. And you may remember this card, which is our verse for the year.

And I'd like to say it as a blessing over us all today. And then we're going to sing, Guide me, O thou great Jehovah. And I think then Roger may have one or two things to say. So hear this blessing and receive it.

So may the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him. Amen.

Let's worship God and put our hand into the hand of God. Guide me, O thou great Jehovah. Guide me, O thou great Jehovah.

O thou great Jehovah. Build him through this far and land. I am weak, but thou art mighty.

[67:12] Hold me with thy powerful hand. Red of heaven, red of heaven, Meet me now and evermore.

Meet me now and evermore. Open thou the crystal mountain, Hence the healing stream doth flow. Let the fiery, cloudy villa, Lead me on my journey through.

Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, In all still my strength and shield.

In all still my strength and shield. When I tread the verge of Jordan, Build I am, and shall be subside.

[68:38] Dead of dead and hell's destruction, Land me save on cadence side.

I will ever give to thee. I will ever give to thee.

I will ever give to thee. Songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever give to thee.

I will ever give to thee. I will ever give to thee. I will ever give to thee. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[69:50] Yes. Yeah, will do. Thank you.

We're singing praises to our God and Father. We're going to honor Malcolm and Don now in this next period of time.

But by doing that, we are honoring all that they have been able to do with us through their reliance upon our Heavenly Father. So in all of these things, we give God the honor and God the praise. What happens, what is said in Ecclesiastes? For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. Malcolm and his wife Dawn are leaving us to move into a new phase of their lives.

Today, therefore, it's a time to mark the ending of their time here at Union. A time to look back. A time to look forward. A time for joy.

[71:25] And a time for some sadness. It is a time to give thanks and praise to Almighty God for what Malcolm has given us in our times together over these past eight years.

Actually, Malcolm's been here a bit longer than eight years. Some of you may realize that. That in 2014, he was our moderator trying to find us a new minister.

That's ironic, isn't it? And come February 2015, he decided, well, God, you've been prompting me long enough.

Maybe I should put my hat in the ring, as it were, from a human point of view, but from God's point of view, allowing his name to be brought before us and for us to call him to be our minister.

Father, we've benefited hugely from his eight years of ministry. He's led us through many issues and many challenges.

[72:33] COVID, post-COVID, pre-COVID. I'm not sure what we're in at the moment. But the ongoing progress of Living Stones, the rapidly changing world and environment in which we all live, and the challenges that that brings to us.

Malcolm has sought to steer us through all of those challenges to God's glory. Malcolm and his wife Dawn have had a very special time of ministry here.

He leaves behind, and I say these as quoting some of his words recently, he leaves behind a strong and united leadership team, a fellowship where prayer is more embedded and central, a healthy, reflective, and talented leadership team.

Andrew has benefited greatly from his wise and measured leadership. The church has been blessed by an excellent preacher, an excellent teacher, and a wonderful ministry, thoroughly Bible-based and centered on scriptural truth.

Hallelujah. We thank him for all that he's done and for all that he is, eccentric perhaps, but nonetheless much loved.

[74:04] And we thank God for upholding him and equipping him in the many challenges that he has faced. He can be content that he leaves us stronger than when he arrived, better equipped to meet the challenges of this current age, firmly established in God's word, prayerful in all our endeavors, and reaching out to others with a servant heart.

We say goodbye with sadness, as he and Dawn are very much in our hearts and in our prayers.

And we pray that the Lord will lead him in the future and make his paths straight before him.

Some weeks ago, we were all asked to contribute to an online memory book, as it were. And so many of you sent us lovely messages in of gratitude for how you individually have been helped and supported through Malcolm and Dawn and the love that you want to extend to them.

And at half past 12, his email box at home will chime and those memories will arrive on his computer.

So Dawn and Malcolm, please remember to log in when you get back at half past 12 to read those lovely messages. Lynn has helped us a little bit.

[75:38] We have an A3 copy of those messages, which I will put downstairs, upstairs initially, then down in the copy room.

And you can read through, look through if you want, like, and that shows you some of the depths of memories that people have given you. It's quite a weighty tome, but it does express the love and gratitude of so many of us.

And I would say that reflects everybody's view of Malcolm and Dawn here this morning. So that's the first thing Malcolm has got from you.

Thank you very much indeed. And what we're going to do now is listen to a little video from two people who sadly can't be here, Andrew and Miriam.

And as we've prayed for already, they are coming back in a couple of days' time, and they're coming to take up, Andrew coming up to take his new role, excuse me, for this coming year. [76:45] So, listen to their words as they give thanks to Malcolm and Dawn, and echo those in your heart. Thank you.

Hi, Malcolm and Dawn. We're so sorry that we can't be with you today on the special day of giving thanks for your ministry at Union Baptist Church.

But we wanted to take this opportunity to say a big thank you. We really, really appreciate the massive part you've played in our lives. Firstly, it's really your fault that we came to England and left Tanzania in the first place.

We really appreciate how patient you were with us at the beginning when we really didn't want to come. And how willing you were to get on a plane and come and see us, meet with us, experience life with us in Tanzania.

And that really made a massive difference to us, and we really appreciated it. So, thank you for coming, Malcolm. And Dawn, thank you for letting him come. Yeah, I think from that time we came to Tanzania, Malcolm, we could see that it was a good fit for us to work together in terms of our personalities, really complementing each other.

[77:48] But also, we were really in agreement on all the important things and very much on the same page in terms of the importance of Christ being at the centre of our faith and the importance of sound biblical teaching that accepts the authority of the Bible.

It's been a real privilege for me to have served with you these last five years. I've been blessed and I've learned so much from you about Christian leadership, about pastoring people and about faithfully teaching God's word.

We also want to just take this opportunity to thank you so much for the support you've been to us as a family. You've really cared for us and loved us, and it's made a massive difference for the way that you have shown an individual interest in our children.

We really appreciate the way you've been intentional about that, taking time to speak to each of them individually, talking to them about who they are and what they're doing, and you've always been so generous to us as a family, and really, really appreciate that and thank you for it.

We also want to thank you for the example that you've set to us as a couple, in the way that you've served the church, the way you've been so selfless, the way that you've given so much for yourselves, and that's a hard act to follow, but we really appreciate the way that you have encouraged us and guided us in that.

[79:04] I've been blessed by your wisdom and your guidance and your feedback, which has always been speaking the truth in love and always constructive. You've helped me to grow in my faith and how I serve the church, and I'm sure looking forward to the future, there'll be many situations where I'm wondering what to do, and I can think, what would Malcolm do in this situation?

Thank you for your patience with me. Thank you for bearing with me when I've not been so easy to work with too. Thank you for your love and your friendship, the humble way you serve this church. We'll miss you very much, but we know that God has big plans for you both in the future.

So we're really pleased that you're not going too far away, so that we'll be able to keep in touch and see you every now and then. We love you guys, and yeah, we're so grateful for you, and we pray for God's blessing on you.

Bye. Bye. Bye. We've compiled a number of photographs, and we've compiled a slide show of some aspects of Malcolm's ministry in church life over these years.

They go back quite a bit. I think we know what's happened recently, but there's a selection of slides here, including his induction, his baptisms he's taken, dedications, and wow.

[80:28] I say that deliberately. Obviously, Judy and I are very involved with wow, but Dawn has been very involved, and Malcolm too, in his support for wow ministry in our church. And you'll see some interesting pictures of Malcolm in different guises.

And certainly one thing that Malcolm really loved was getting out on the high street of High Wycombe every Christmas and getting in the picture. And that's become a tradition here at Union,

and has been hugely effective in just waving the flag for who we are and what we stand for, and inviting new people to come and find out more about Jesus.

And Malcolm does have a good sense of humor. Have you noticed that? You know, he enjoys a good laugh and a good chat. So thank you for all of that.

So let's just look at the slide show, and then we'll move on to some other aspects. I'm going to step down. Thank you.

Thank you.

[82:33] Thank you. Thank you.

Amen. Amen.

...

Could we keep the last slide up, please? . . .

I wonder could Malcolm and Dawn come up, please, and have a seat on your lovely stools that Malcolm bought for us, I think, and obtained.

[84:47] I rescued them from the skip, it's all right.

..... On My Pleheet Please Rosa an ■■■■■■■■■■■ille. that you put online, but many of you donated very generously to getting a gift for Malcolm and Dawn as they leave. I think a gift is probably an understatement. We've got a few gifts that we would like to honor them with. So this is the time we're going to do that, and I'm going to ask Jane first of all to come up with her gift.

But what are you going to do? You need it. We need a...

So many thoughts. Is this a new one? I have to open it and see. I was using it this morning. I was thinking, Jane's mentioned that she might give me it.

I'm like, no, but you need... It's very nicely wrapped. Oh, I've got to be environmentally friendly, haven't I? Just rip it. Rip it. Can you help, Dawn? You go that side.

[86:27] It's really nice wrapping paper, this, by the way. Oh, yes. Oh, that's a nice one, isn't it? A carpet. That will be great.

Thank you, thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. We got you a U-bank. A U-bank? It's called a U-bank, isn't it?

Yes, it is, because you used to mention so often how your mum had a U-bank. Yes, she did. When you were teaching me. She did. Yes, she did. So we thought we'd get you one. Thank you very much. Remember us, while we hope you get as much as you.

I will treasure that. I will treasure that. Now, as you know, Lynn and... Sorry, Lynn.

Malcolm and Dawn are very good at exercise. They love getting out and doing things. They're a very sporty couple. You may not have realised it. We just want to recognise that as Lynn comes forward as well, please.

[87:26] Hmm. Now, I don't know what this is. Yes, we've heard a lot about Malcolm's swimming. But we feel you need to expand your repertoire a little bit.

And we know that Dawn's quite competitive. And it would be nice for you to do something together, and maybe with Michael. So please open that. Dawn better open this one, I think. It's a box.

Oh, yes. Very good. Oh, thank you. Fabulous. Fabulous. Very good. Thank you. Very good. Very good. Oh, thanks. There you go.

Yay. Thank you very much.

Thank you. They're going back to their old home in Jollywood and I'm sure there's a lot of work to do in the garden. Dawn loves gardening. She's a member of our little allotment group that a number of us are in.

[88:35] She is a mastermind of planting and vegetables anyway. I don't know about other things. So Judy, if you're there, a special gift for Dawn for all that she's done and means to us here at Union.

Thank you very much. That's for your new garden.

And actually some of you may know it's actually Dawn's birthday today. So that's not a birthday present, but we're going to sing her happy birthday. And there's also another member of the congregation who might just stand up for a moment.

You didn't come up here. Pauline had a special birthday, a zero one, last Monday. So let's sing happy birthday to Dawn and Pauline. Happy birthday to you.

Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday dear Dawn and Pauline. Happy birthday to you.

[89:48] Happy birthday to you. Thank you. So those are tokens of our love, but a further token of our love comes from all the congregation here, leadership and lay members and all of us together who have contributed financially to those gifts.

And I would just want to thank you again for the generosity that you showed. So Malcolm and Dawn, thank you so much for all that you mean to us. We hope that you'll be able to use what is in this envelope wisely and choose from a wide range of possibilities from various voucher offers that are in this envelope.

So thank you very much indeed. I'm intrigued. And God bless you. And you may wish to open it and see as you sit there, but we're going to pray over you in a moment. But do please open it.

This is linked to the website that you gave to and you put your memories on. I've left my glasses on my pew so I can't read it. I'll read it to you. Gift number one.

I'll have it next. It's a... Oh, that's nice. Thank you.

[91:18] Thank you. It includes a six-month subscription of a bunch of flowers. So every month they'll be receiving flowers from us to remind them in case they could ever forget.

Oh, it's those flowers again. For those six months. There's an amount that they can use on a voucher format.

And they can sign up for various gifts and experiences and so forth as they choose. So we honour them in these particular ways. So thank you both very much indeed.

Thank you. Thank you very much. And what I'd like to do now is to pray for Malcolm and for Dawn. And I'm going to ask Gary and Mike and Helen to come up.

And we're going to ask Malcolm and Dawn to stand here. And we're going to pray around them. And if you feel able to, as our friends join us here.

[92:22] Mike, would you go there? Do you want us to go there? Yeah. Yeah. Could you come forward?

Yeah, of course. Let people get on. Do come up. Do come up. I'm going to... We'll hear this. All right. I think those of us who are going to pray need to get...

...to cross to the microphone. Is this logistics? It's all right. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Okay. All right. Do stretch out an arm in prayer and blessing as we pray for them in your hearts.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for all that you have done through Malcolm's ministry here at Union. We thank you for his spiritual leadership that he's provided for us.

We thank you for his teaching ministry. We thank you for his teaching ministry. We thank you for his teaching ministry. For the way in which he has opened your word to us.

[93:25] The way in which he's planned the teaching ministry here. His Bible-centered approach to everything. We thank you for the way in which he has used those talents of expository teaching to train others up.

To be able to go out in their congregations and different churches to preach your word and support the word and work of your kingdom. We thank you father for his gift in worship for the way in which he has brought us into different areas of worship and showing us that worship is not just about singing although we love that it's about all that we do and say in your name bless him we pray amen well father we thank you lord for Malcolm and Don's love for people and communities and we see that working out lord in how inquisitive Malcolm is in understanding how your day was how your week was how your family is in Don in her work with the various communities here in in High Wycombe lord we thank you for that gift that you've given them to be able to to love people love your people we just thank you for that deposit of love that you've given them we ask you father to go before them and allow them to be able to share that gift wherever they go on from here father to be able to touch the lives and the hearts of the people that they come into contact with and the communities that they share we bless them father we just thank you again for that gift of love that you've given them amen amen amen father god want to thank you again for both uh Malcolm and Dawn we want to ask that you'll lead them as you continue to lead them in the way that you want them to go we thank you for that psalm 139 and all the days that are written in that book lord we don't know what chapter we're on at the moment in Malcolm and Dawn's life but we know it's a new chapter and we pray father that you'll guide them as they serve you in chorley wood whatever church or whatever fellowship you lead them to lord may they continue to be a blessing

and a witness for you there and encourage them lord with the gifts that you've given them that they might use them and continue to use them for your glory and when they go through difficult times lord may they know that you already know about it and the ending is being worked out or already been worked out by you and it will bring glory and honor to you as they use their lives for you share their lives with those in chorley wood so bless them we pray in jesus name amen amen amen oh lord we thank you for the whole hazel family we pray for each of them that you would continue to bless them in the next phase of their family life we thank you lord for your presence with them and we pray that as they choose new paths and explore new horizons you would continue to bless them we pray that they'll also be blessed and supported and loved by a strong network of family and friends to walk this next phase of the journey with them lord we pray for dawn and for malcolm that they would have quality time together and that they would find new and exciting ways to serve you we pray for rob and charlotte in their teaching careers and in their family life we pray for sarah as she serves you as physio and plays football and we pray for michael as he explores the right way to use his many gifts to serve you father we thank you for how you have blessed this family thus far and lord we are grateful for all the blessings that are yet to come amen thank you very much just as we have prayed and led and laid hands on our dear friends so i'd like to bring us now to a formal formal form of blessing on them from all of us so if you feel able to stand then if you could stand i'm going to right right um right okay um i'm going to read out a formal statement of thanks to god and then we're going to join in again if you could stretch out a hand as you join in to bless malcolm and dawn and then we can say these these words together but first of all let me pray eternal god and heavenly father we thank you for malcolm and dawn and for our life together here at union and in high wickham you led malcolm by your holy spirit to serve your people in this place to build up your church and to glorify your name together together we have worked for the sake of the gospel together we have studied your word

together we have broken bread and given thanks in thanksgiving we praise you for raising up faithful servants among us for the ministry of your church and we pray that malcolm may continue to exemplify in word and deed the gospel of your son grant that we with him and dawn may continue to serve you in the church on earth and be brought to rejoice in your kingdom forever through jesus christ our lord amen amen at the end of this prayer that we're going to be on the screen i think we have three amens at the end so we need to increase in volume at the end if you're able i'm going to step aside and we can read hopefully together do Amen. And also say to grace together.

[101:10] Amen. Please be seated.

thank you very much it's a lovely time together opportunity now to go and have to see that cake again i'm sure you are wondering where it's got to we go down, have tea and coffee together and cake and this is an opportunity from now until you leave and then into the picnic which i think the weather looks as if it's raining right, we'll see in half an hour what the weather is doing and make a decision then but there's an opportunity to give your personal farewells to Malcolm as he goes can i just mention two other things Malcolm's already mentioned his office which is just down the corridor here take whatever books you like as many as you like but make sure that if you take them you read them you use them and then you pass them on to somebody else to get the benefit of the wisdom that is in those books so often books sit on our shelves and are never looked at again if you know somebody else who's a Christian who would be built up by that ministry of reading books pass it on excellent also in the information room if you remember where that is down in the depths of the church buildings there are still two chairs twelve vases and two cupboards it's like a Christmas song almost isn't it

I think some people may have looked at the cupboards previously and thought oh this must be these are too nice for anybody to take but if you've got use for the cupboards that are in the room there the vases please take them because after you know in the middle of this week they will have to go and they will go to a place that you know they will not come back from alright okay okay so thank you very much indeed use your time to talk to Malcolm and Dawn i will put the book A3 book of comments down below in the in the main hall Malcolm and Dawn haven't seen them yet so a sneak preview for you alright so thank you very much God bless you and look forward to seeing you again next week thank you very much thank you