18.10.26 am

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Date: 18 October 2026

Preacher: Reverend Gordon Matheson

[0:00] It's great to have Gordon with us today. Gordon had agreed to cover for me for holiday today! And we look forward to hearing God's word through him. He's been here before, we very much enjoyed! having him, and we look forward to hearing God speaking through him today. I wasn't expecting to be here this morning, but I came back from holiday on Thursday. Most of you will have heard Neil Cameron, who's been struggling the last couple of years. He deteriorated quite fast this week, and he passed away very peacefully yesterday afternoon. Callum actually, Kaya, came in for a visit. He sang Psalm 23, and then Alan prayed, and once Alan said Amen, Neil took his last breath and passed into glory. So, we are sad. He is happy. And so we mourn, but not as those who have no hope. We have sure and certain hope in Christ. And Neil no longer has that hope. He experiences the reality of being with Jesus. So we pray for KTAC. We pray for Taffy, and for Joanne, and for Rachel, and for Alan. And we haven't got funeral arrangements in place yet, but we'll hear about that in the next day or so. Just pray for a moment before I hand over to Gordon. Lord God, we thank you that we are gathered here in your house, in your presence. And we thank you that we can come to you as our Father. We thank you that the Lord Jesus is our Saviour. We thank you that he is the one who lived for us and who died in our place, who rose from the dead, and who promises resurrection life to all who believe. And we thank you that this day, the Lord's day, is a weekly reminder to us that our Saviour lives, and all who are in Christ live eternally through all that he has done on our behalf. We thank you for Neil. We thank you for his life, for his warmth, for his love, for his witness. We thank you for how steadily he spoke to us about

Jesus and showed us the character of Jesus in his life. And we thank you that he is now with the Lord, that he loved and served.
We pray for the family. We pray for Ketak. We pray for Taffy and for Joanne and for Rachel and for Alan. We pray for all the grandchildren, the extended family. We pray for Morag, his sister.
And we ask, Holy Spirit, that your presence would be near to them, that they would know the comfort of God, the Holy Spirit, and the strength of God with them over these next few days especially.
We thank you that you're the God who binds up the brokenhearted. And we pray that they would know your work amongst them at this time. And as we pray for them, we pray for many others in this island and across the islands who grieve today.
[3:33] As we think of those in Carloway and Barvis and Ness, whose hearts are sore. We pray, Lord, that you would draw near to all who are struggling, all who are grieving.

And we pray that as we grieve the hope of the gospel, we penetrate the hearts of many. So comfort us, Lord, in our grief and our loss.
And encourage us as we look to the Lord Jesus. To help us, we pray, and be especially with Gordon now. Thank you for his willingness to come and preach today.
We pray that you would equip him for all that you have called him to. And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. David, well, good morning.
Lord be with you. Let us worship God this morning. We're going to sing to his praise in our opening item of worship. Psalm 46a.
[4:37] This is from St. Sam's, if you've got the book. We're going to sing to God's praise. So let's stand to sing. Amen. God is our refuge.

God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge.
God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our

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God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. God is our refuge. Though mountains fall into the sea, Though waters warm and roar, We will not fear, Though mountains quake, As waves engulf the shore, A river flows to shame's delight, The city of our God, The holy place in which the Lord
Most high passes above, God is within His holy place, The city will not yield, For God will come at break of days, To be her help and shield, The nations are in disillain, The kingdoms disappear, God's peace turned at His mighty voice,
[7:31] The Lord Almighty is with us, To save the land such a tear, For take those God, Our strong defense, And fortress will remain, Well let's just bow our heads in prayer to God for a moment.

Heavenly Father, As we draw near to you this morning in worship, We seek, O Lord, to see Jesus. We thank you for our saviour, We thank you that today we have a gospel, We thank you that today we see the evidence of that salvation in the church gathered, That as we look around us today, We see dear brothers and sisters who walk with us in the way of Jesus.
And we pray, Father, For the encouragement of the fellowship of the church today. We want to pray your blessing therefore upon us, As we gather, As we turn our hearts for a short time and our minds to the things of the gospel.
May our hearts be enriched and our souls encouraged, May we find food, Lord, for us, To nourish us and sustain us on the way as we follow after our saviour.
[9:23] Receive, Lord, our confession. As we gather, we acknowledge, Lord, That we sin daily in our thoughts and words and actions. We know that we are far from perfect, But we cry to you, Lord, today, That out of your great mercy, You would not only show us our need for cleansing and show us our sin, But that you would show us above all the remedy to that, The mercy that is found in Christ Jesus, The forgiveness and the atonement that is in him, And that we would today know your blessing and an assurance of that, As we worship together.

So help us, we pray, receive our prayers, And we ask all of these things now in Jesus' name. Amen.
Now, boys and girls, if you want to come up to the front, maybe, We shall talk about my mobile phone.
You may come. Where are you going to sit? Are you going to sit over here? Right. That's fine. I'll look this way.
So, do you know what this is? A phone. That is right. Now, none of you are as old as my daughter, But my daughter recently got herself a phone, And she's very excited about having one.
The only phone numbers that are mine, And her mum's, And some of her aunties, And her grannies, And her cousin, Who lives in Inverness, Who also has a phone.
[10:49] And so, she has discovered, A little thing on this phone called, WhatsApp. Parents might know what that is. You guys will discover it eventually, I think.

It's a way of sending messages, To other people. So, you can send a message, And the message, You can send all sorts of things. You can send words. So, you guys, How many of you can write? Can any of you write yet? Some of you can. Okay. So, you can use words to write. But you can also send smiley faces. How many of you can do a smiley face? Yeah, these are smiley faces. Yeah. So, you can send smiley faces. You can send grumpy faces, If you wanted to. You can send pictures. How many of you can draw pictures? All of you are putting your hands up. Yeah, very good.
Some of you. You can draw a picture. Oh, yeah, you can. Yeah, you just weren't putting your hand up. So, you can send pictures. You can send words. You can send smiley faces. You can do all sorts of things with it.
[11:40] And this week, we were on holiday in Inverness. So, I actually met David in Inverness on Sunday. So, we were on holiday in Inverness. And I'm thinking, I'll be able to stay in touch with Hannah while she's maybe around playing with her cousins.

Just to make sure that she's okay. And make sure that she's alright. If she's got any problems, she can get in touch with me. And I'm thinking that'll be fine. But, in Inverness, something was wrong with my phone.
And so, I wasn't able to get messages through. And my WhatsApp would only work if I was somewhere near a friend's house.

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So, if I was near a friend's house, I could get on their Wi-Fi and all the messages would come through at once. But if I wasn't at their house, and it was away somewhere, I wouldn't get any messages at all. And I was going around in the town centre in Inverness.
I was going to Marks & Spencer's. Have you been to Marks & Spencer's in Inverness? Have you seen Marks & Spencer's in Inverness? Brilliant shop. Wonderful food. It was really nice. So, I was in Marks & Spencer's doing some shopping. Couldn't get any messages in Inverness.
[12:45] I was walking around the streets in Inverness, going around looking at different things in different shops. Couldn't get any messages. I was driving around to see some of my friends, and when I'd go places to have a coffee with them, couldn't get any messages.

But then every so often, I would go to a friend's house. I'd actually go to someone's house, and all of a sudden, they'd be, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping. Lots of messages would open through at once. And I was thinking about that this week, actually. That sometimes, that's the way we think about church.
So, sometimes, you come to church on a Sunday? You all come every Sunday? Yeah? And maybe we come to church on a Sunday, and we think church on a Sunday is when we get messages. You hear from David every Sunday, I guess. You guys come every Sunday. David's got a kid's talk. You hear from David every Sunday? Every Sunday, do you go to Sunday school? Or creche? Yeah. And do you hear stories about Jesus and the Bible when you're in creche?
And sometimes, we might think, well, that's where we hear from God. Like, we come to church, and this is the only place we hear from God. And that's like me, when I was going to my friend's house, and I'd get all of my messages at once. Ping, ping, ping, ping, ping. And sometimes, we get a thinking that actually, church is the only place we can talk to God as well.
[13:52] So, we might think church is the only place we can send messages to God. So, we might think, the only place I can pray is when I come to church. But actually, the Bible tells us that knowing God is a bit like having a mobile phone signal that works properly.

So, wherever you go, you can always talk to God. Wherever you go, you can always hear from God. You don't have to wait until you're in a special place to talk to God.
You can hear from God, and you can talk to God wherever you are. So, if ever you're at home, you can talk to God there. If ever you're in church, you can talk to God there. If you're in school, you can talk to God there.
If you're out playing with your pals, you can talk to God there as well. You can always talk to God. That's what we do. We can pray, whatever we are. We can always talk to God. And He always wants to hear from us.
With His children, He loves to hear from us. Just like my daughter, Hannah, loves to hear from me. If I send her a message on WhatsApp, she's like, Wow, Dad, you messaged me. So cool. And God loves to hear from us.
[14:55] And we love to hear from Him. So, wherever we are, we can always pray. We'll do that just now. We'll be great just now. Right? Dear Father in Heaven, we thank you that you're a God who is listening to us, that right now you hear us.

And we thank you that you're a God who sends messages to us, that you speak to us out of the Bible, out of your word. You speak to us in lots of ways, Lord. And we pray today that you would help us to always be ready to listen to you, that we'd always be ready to hear from you, and that we'd learn as well, that we can always talk to you wherever we are as well.
We don't have to be in a special place. We don't have to wait to be in a special moment. But we can just talk to you wherever we are, and we can hear from you wherever we are too.
So I pray that we'd remember that you're a God who loves us, and you want to hear from us, and you want us to hear you. And we pray that we'd learn this to your glory. For Jesus' sake. Amen.
Okay, we're going to sing again to God's praise.
This time we're going to sing from a hymn. It's called Eternal Father, Strong to Save. It's a really interesting hymn. It's been adopted by the...
[15:58] Both in the UK and in the United States, actually. It's been adopted by the Navy. It's got a very strong, obviously, naval tradition attached to it. And it's known as the Navy hymn.

It's a song that's really written by a man called William Whiting, based on Psalm 107. And the thought behind it really is that, you know, those who go down to sea in ships, and who experience the mightiness of the ocean, and the terror of it, in fact, their experience is one that's also reflected

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in the experience that we have with the turmoil in our own souls, particularly in times of grief and sorrow.
And so it's an appropriate hymn for us, I think, to sing this morning. Just as we know the island as a whole has been so moved and touched by the loss of these three men this week, we just remember that even in times of grief and turmoil, God remains strong and willing to save.
So let's sing this hymn to God's praise. Eternal Father, Strong to Save. Eternal Father, Strong to Save.
Whose arms bind the restless way, Who bids the mighty ocean be, A soon appointed limits keep, O hear us when we cry to Thee, For those in peril of all the sea.
[17:42] O hear us when we cry to Thee, O David Hennep?

Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God.
Oh, God. For me. To build it and keep true and cease, and give for one confusion peace.
O need of strength we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea.
O Trinity of love and power, the stream has fallen in danger, through rain and tempest, grief and loss, renew the triumph of the cross.
[19:18] And ever let the tribes to keep the hymns of peace from land and sea.

Amen. This is God's word.
The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness.
Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John appeared baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.
[20:49] And he preached, saying, After me comes one who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.
And a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased. The Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan.
And he was with the wild animals and the angels were ministering to him. Now, after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent and believe in the gospel. Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.
[21:59] And Jesus said to them, Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little further, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who were in the boat mending their nets.

And immediately he called them. And they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. They went into Capernaum. And immediately on the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching.
And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit.
And he cried out, What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. But Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be silent and come out of him.
And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, Who is this?
[23:02] A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

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Amen. This is God's word to us. Let's bow our heads once again in prayer to God. Heavenly Father, we come before you in prayer this morning.
We seek, O Lord, to intercede today for our congregation here. For our community around us, here in Harris and more widely in the islands.
We ask and pray, Father, today that you would hear us as men and women of prayer. People who recognize a sovereign God who is able to help in times of need and distress.
We cry to you, Father, today that out of your great mercy you would remember us. That you would minister to us. That you would minister to our communities in these days as well.
[24:08] We thank you that you are an eternal Father. That eternalness, Lord, is not merely a statement about your age, that you have always been there. But it is also a statement about your power.

It's a statement about your glory. It's a statement about your majesty. There is no measuring the greatness of your power. And it's, Lord, today that we would come to you with a desire for that power to be disposed towards us and for us.
We remember today, Lord, in this congregation there are those grieving. We pray today, Father, for the family of Neil Cameron. We ask and pray for his wife. That you would be with Kate and with his family as well.
That Taffy and Rachel and their families, Lord, would know your blessing and your comfort. Your sustaining arm with them. That they would know that underneath are the everlasting arms of God.
We thank you today, Father, that that power is not limited to one place or one situation. But that, Lord, today throughout this congregation there are people carrying their own burdens. Carrying their own griefs and sorrows.
[25:17] Carrying with them the wounds of this world and the reality of its sinfulness and brokenness. And we pray, Father, that today you would minister to each one of us according to our need.

Not limited by our expectation. But, Lord, exceeding our wildest dreams. That we would know the grace of God in its fullness. Coming in as a healing salve into these broken lives.
And what we pray, Father, for ourselves. Today we pray, Lord, for our islands. We thank today, Lord, of the congregations around the island that are meeting in grief and sorrow.
We think of our brothers and sisters in the congregation of the Carleby Church of Scotland. Today we ask and pray, Father, your blessing upon them. That community, Lord, where the churches work so closely together as well.
We ask and pray that you would be with Gordon as he ministers tonight. With Thomas as he ministers in the days to come in that community as well. That they would know your blessing as they bring your word to grieving hearts.
[26:26] We pray, Father, for the congregation in Barvis and the congregations in Ness as well. Where sorrow upon sorrow is in their experience.

We remember Stuart preaching in Barvis today. We ask and pray, Father, that you would bless him. That you would grant him words of wisdom and healing. And that you would, Lord, show forth the light of the gospel in what he says this day.
We remember these three grieving families today. We pray for Douglas' family, for Tams and Murtagh's families as well, Lord. We ask and pray that you would be with them. That you would surround them with love and grace.
Help them, Lord, in a time of profound sorrow. Lord, we pray especially, Lord, that in the days to come, the remains of Tams and Murtagh would indeed be recovered. That these families would be able to have the closure and decency of a funeral.
And a burial of their loved one. We ask and pray, Father, that you would be with all the emergency services who are still involved in that process of what now looks to be certainly a recovery operation.
[27:38] And we ask and pray, Father, that you would minister to them in these traumatic circumstances as well. We remember, Lord, the fishing community around our islands.

And we pray, Father, that you would be with them. These times, Lord, are times where the uncertainty of that profession is brought home to many. And we thank you, Father, for the ministry that goes on among them with different operations and organizations that seek to bring the gospel into that community as well.

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We thank you for the many Christians who work in that sector. And we ask, Lord, that in these days you would give them wisdom in how they speak and care for one another. And that you would help them to have a clarity about the good news of the gospel in all that they have to say.
Lord, we remember that life is indeed fragile. There's a suddenness to it. And we ask and pray, Father, that each one of us would therefore have that sense of preparedness for the reality of death.
We so often think, Lord, that death is something away off in the future. Something that is assured to us in the distant, far-off moments of our lives. When a life may be full and well spent.
[28:49] And yet we know the reality, Father, that death can come at a moment's notice. And so we pray, Father, that you would help us to be prepared. Help us to have an awareness of the reality of our own mortality.

That we know that one day we must all give an account before the judgment seat of Christ. But help us to know that we have an advocate in that context. That we have one who will say of us, no, he is mine.
No, her sins do not count against her. No, they are paid for. And they are righteous. And may we today know the good news of the gospel.
May we believe that good news. That there is a redeemer for the chosen and elect of God. And so help us today, Father, to have faith. Help us to have faith in the midst of uncertainty and in the midst of sorrow.
And in the midst of horror and tragedy. May we know the one in whom we have believed. May we know the one in whom we have trusted. And may we rejoice in him for who he is.
[29:58] We thank you that he stepped into the valley of the shadow of death. We thank you, in fact, that he stepped into not only the valley of the shadow of death, but he stepped into death itself. That we therefore have nothing to fear because he has gone before us and he has defeated the enemy.

And we come and share now in his victory as we go into the experience of that same shadow ourselves. Help us, Lord, in the time when our own deaths may come.
To give glory to you. To exalt your holy name. And to give you the praise that you deserve.
Remember, Lord, with your great grace, remember our nation at this time.
We pray for our land. Lord, we pray for your blessing to be upon us. In times, Lord, of uncertainty in the world around us. Help us, Lord, to look to you. We pray for our leaders. We pray for those who govern.
May they do so wisely and well. May you help them. May you sustain them. May you grant them the wisdom to look to your ways as a pattern for how they should live and govern as well.
[31:06] Lord, we ask and pray today, Father, for your blessing to be upon all those in positions, therefore, of responsibility. That you would help them in the decisions that are made.

As we think, Lord, in the days to come of schools going back as well after the holiday. We pray for teachers. We pray for pupils going back to school. We ask your blessing upon them. And, Lord, as we begin into the winter months in our own communities.
Months at a time are so difficult for us. Months at a time are so difficult for people who struggle through these dark months. And may we remember that the church is a place of light in these communities.
And may we, therefore, shine forth gloriously the light of the good news of the gospel of Jesus. And may you be exalted through the witness of your people. We ask these things today in Christ's name and for his sake.
Amen. Well, before we turn back to God's word, we're going to sing again. I think the plan had been we were going to sing in Gaelic. But we'll try singing in English instead. This is Psalm 130 in the Sing Psalms.
[32:12] Sorry, the Scottish Psalter in the traditional version of the Psalms. Lord, from the depths I cried to thee. My voice, Lord, do thou hear. And to my supplications' voice give an attentive ear.

Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity? But yet with thee forgiveness is that feared thou mayest be. I will stand and sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise.
Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.
My voice, Lord, do thou hear. Unto my supplications' voice give an attentive ear.
Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity?

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[33:28] But yet with thee forgiveness is that fear thou mayest be.

I wait for God, my soul doth wait.
My hope is in his word. More than may that for morning watch.
My soul waits for the Lord. I see more than may that to watch.
The more devised to see. Let Israel open the Lord.
[34:48] For with him mercy's fear. And plenteous redemption is ever come with him.

And from all his iniquities. He is a child he be.
God bless you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, please turn with me this morning in your Bibles back to that passage you've read in Mark's Gospel. Mark chapter 1, reading at the beginning.
The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Heavenly Father, as we turn our thoughts just for a moment now to your Word, may you guide and and direct us into the things of the truth.
Help us, Lord, as we consider the beginning of the gospel, the beginning of your purposes in our lives, as we consider, Lord, the foundation of all of our salvation.
[36:11] May we today find rest for our souls. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. I wonder if you ever think about beginnings.

Beginnings are tremendously important. How something starts so often tells you about how it will go on. And so often when it comes to the beginnings, you often see that in our world, that we begin with great hope and expectation, and yet as things drag on, sometimes the reality can sink into a bit of a quagmire.
However, I say that as somebody who works now in a community sector. I work in trying to redevelop a building for the community in Sandwick, and there's so much enthusiasm when you stay down on one of these projects.
And sometimes the enthusiasm carries on, but the reality is that the path you go on is very different. The path you go on can be one full of struggle and real tough decisions that have to be made as you work your way through your aspirations.
When you read about the beginning of the Gospel, Mark, I think, has in mind that same sense of writing to disciples who are maybe getting bogged down.
[37:40] He's writing to and for the benefit of the Church, who as they go on in the reality of their lives in this world, discover that perhaps things are harder than they might have thought they would be.

And his whole reason in writing this Gospel, this good news, is to remind them of where it started, and to take them towards a conclusion about where it's going.
And we need that in our lives as well as Christians. I'm sure all of us who are believers today can think back to the beginning of our walk with the Lord, to our conversion, and we can think about how wonderful perhaps our hope was then.
Perhaps we have the same hope today, but we know that that hope is lived out in a broken world and a broken reality. And what we need to do today, I hope, is remind ourselves of the beginnings of this.
Even the idea that we're there at the beginning, perhaps even in our own walk, and to encourage us as we would seek to go on. So the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
[38:44] We should be clear just on some of the language that's used here. Obviously some of these words are words that we're maybe very familiar with, words that trip off the tongue very easily. The Gospel. We've even prayed about that today.

We've prayed for our lives in the Gospel. But what do we mean by it? What does that word even mean? It's an interesting word in the English language. It's not a word that we really think about the etymology of it very much.
The background to it, where it comes from, the God spell, the good spell, the good news, the good proclamation. But it is a proclamation of triumph.
It's a proclamation of victory. The word in Greek goes back to an idea in the ancient world that a proclamation of good news would come from the emperor, from the ruler, perhaps victory in the battlefield, salvation for the kingdom, security being established and secured and made certain.
a proclamation would come out. Good news would come out that a victory has been won. And Mark, as he writes here, that's the way he uses the word. He's saying this is the beginning of the good news, the proclamation of a victory, a proclamation of something profound that has happened.

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[39:58] So it's not merely a historical narrative. It's not just a sort of unfolding story of the life and times of Jesus. It's not an autobiography, a biography rather of Jesus that Mark is trying to put together.

Mark was writing to put together something about the proclamation of the victory of Jesus, what Jesus has accomplished, what he has done. And it's that idea that Mark uses when he talks about the gospel and the proclamation of it, that he taps into the proclamation of Jesus himself, that Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, the good news of the kingdom, that the kingdom of God has come close, broken into, in fact, the darkness of this world.
And it's the same idea that you find through all four of the gospels. Matthew and Luke certainly rely on Mark's template, but John takes a completely different direction. But John, when he begins his gospel, he talks about the light coming into the darkness and how the darkness hasn't overcome it. It hasn't been able to defeat the light that's shining in the radiance of the person of Christ. And how ultimately these stories take us to the resurrection.
They take us through what Paul later describes as the self-empting of the Christ, of his kenosis, right the way through all of the sorrow of his life, and ultimately to the place of rejection at the cross itself.
[41:23] And then emerges in victory over death and over sin to the acclaim of God, who says this, is now exalted to Jesus, raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God in power.

That's good news today. It's good news because it is the salvation of the lost of this world that we become a sinner.
So that's the gospel of Jesus, the Christ. The Christ is the anointed one, the Messiah. This is the one who has been prepared for this task.
The one who has been set apart for this task. That's what the idea of anointing in the Bible essentially means. It is someone who is set apart for a purpose. And Jesus is set apart for this purpose.
His name, Jesus, we know from the other gospels, appointed by God because he will save his people from their sins. The point being that Jesus is the Messiah, the one appointed by God who will take away the sin of the world.
[42:39] Again, going into John's gospel, you've got John the Baptist who says this very thing, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. You have that proclamation of who this is and why this good news matters because it's about this person who Mark also identifies for us as the Son of God.

And so we want to kind of think a wee bit today about these points. First of all, is that this is the beginning of God's purpose in making something good.
And it's interesting when you think about it because Mark, as the earliest of the gospels, in a sense is really the first book of the New Testament, is writing back, or as he writes, he harks back to the first book of the Old Testament.
In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And now, he's telling us this is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
It's a very deliberate use of the same word if Mark had been reading the Old Testament in Greek, as he may have done. Certainly his readers, part of the Gentile church, scattered throughout the Roman Empire, Mark's gospel really being Peter's gospel, in a sense, inspired by Peter's stories and narratives, probably coming from the church in Rome at that time where Peter was ministering.
[44:06] They're familiar with the Old Testament scriptures in Greek. And that begins in the same way, the beginning of God's work. And all of us can recognize that in the world in which we live.

we can see that the world in which we live is one where God had begun a good work but it's now marred by the reality of sin. The world in which we live is one which has on the face of it so much potential for good, so much opportunity, so much that can be as we would want it to be, so much health perhaps, so much wonder, so much potential stored up before them like all these kids that were here before us today.
And yet, we know the world in which we live is one where that good beginning has been marred. The good intentions that we all of us know so often aren't followed through.
And when we stop and we ask why, we see that the answer to that is not because God is somehow deficient in what he has done. It's not because God has kind of lost the plot a wee bit along the way or that God isn't enthroned and isn't in control.

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It's because of the reality of sin. The beginning in the Bible goes on with what God did on the six days of creation and how he rested on the seventh day and then immediately something goes wrong.
[45:36] This good world that God has created is marred. How do we explain the state of the world and all of its brokenness? Well, because of sin.

Because of the fall. Not merely of the world passively into a sinful state but because ultimately of human responsibility for not living in God's way.
The reason this world is as messed up as it is comes back in fact to human choices. To the choice of our first parents and Adam in the garden. And how there they were deceived and disobeyed God's one command to them.
Don't eat the fruit of that tree. And yet the command is bypassed. The command is neglected. And fallenness and brokenness ensues.
Not principally a brokenness in the world itself. And that comes slightly later. The brokenness that we see in the world comes as a consequence of that sin. But the initial brokenness that comes is a brokenness of that relationship.
[46:50] God and humankind find themselves drifted apart. Separated. So when God comes into the garden on that day in which Adam has sinned he comes to have fellowship and closeness with him.

Where God comes to us what does Adam do? What does Eve do? Where do they go? Do they run to meet with God? Do they run to enjoy fellowship with God in God's place and God's way?
No. They instead go the other way. They hide in the midst of the garden. They try to cover themselves inadequately and they flee from the presence of God.
And that's the story of what's been happening in our world ever since. Because we won't live in God's world and God's way because we won't take possession of God's pattern for life and live it to his glory.
We find all of the consequences of that brokenness repeated in all of our relationships with God himself with one another with our offspring in our relationship with the environment and the world in which we have created which is now wholly under the curse of God because there were consequences to what happened in the beginning.
[48:08] And yet Mark says now we have the beginning of good news. So in a sense the original beginning of the Bible it's the beginning of a story which is one of bad news.

It's a beginning of a story of what God had intended and God had purposed and how that is in some way dismantled, upended, overturned but now God's purpose is to begin something which is better, something which is the ultimate good, something which is the greatest that it can be, the good news, the gospel.
And so when Mark begins to tell us about Jesus we need to read this in the context of that sinful broken world that Genesis tells us about.
And to understand that the story of Jesus, the news about Jesus relates to that ultimate problem. This is the beginning of God's renewal.
In a sense it is the genesis of God's renewal. There's been prophecies about this, it's been foretold, it's been spoken of in the prophets. There's a narrative there that points towards this.
[49:22] there's a hope that one day this will be revealed. It's there in the first sacrifice in the Bible that God kills an animal to make coverings for Adam and Eve to provide them with some kind of shelter and covening for their bodies to conceal their nakedness.

It's pointing us a little bit towards the fact that ultimately there will be a sacrifice for sin to cover sin in the future but it's not that sacrifice, it's something else that's still to come. And you've got that same narrative that runs right through the whole of the Old Testament.
It's pointing us towards this happening but it hasn't happened yet. The Day of Atonement wasn't the good news. All of the burnt offerings recorded in the book of Leviticus and laid out in the patterns of the worship of Israel that isn't the good news.
It's simply saying there's good news to come. And now Mark tells us into the chaos and the darkness of a whole broken world God has sent good news.
This is the beginning of the good news. This is the coming of it. That there was a Messiah who came. John has sent before him as the last of the prophets to say make his path straight.

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[50:38] Prepare you the way of the Lord. But now the hope has come. Now redemption has come.

Now a solution has come for our problems and our sin. So this is the beginning of the gospel era. It is the beginning of God's grace redeeming this world.
But it's also the beginning in the sense that it's also secondly I suppose the beginning of the actual transaction that has to take place.
It's the beginning of the salvation that we enjoy itself. It's not just the beginning of God's work in a sort of genetic sense. It's the beginning of God's work in a specific sense.
It's not just the beginning of God's redeeming of the whole world. It's the beginning of God's redeeming of us and the means on which we rest and secure that hope for salvation.
[51:53] This is written into a world where there's a bit of confusion. I think this is one of the things that we sometimes forget about the early New Testament.

the early New Testament was one where the church I think initially thought well Christ is going to return soon that there's going to be a transformation brought about in the world very quickly.
And the disciples you remember they saw it initially in the ministry of Jesus. They're constantly asking questions you know is it now that you're going to restore the kingdom? Is it now that the throne of David is going to restore the Romans are going to be booted out of power in Palestine and in Israel and the province and in the nation?
It isn't now when we're hoping for this to be fulfilled. And the church in the early days is a church that is surrounded by threats.
It's a church that's surrounded by conflict. Christians are persecuted. They are put to the sword. Christians are tormented.
[52:59] In virtually every city you have opposition from the Jews where there's a Jewish community they stood up trouble against the Christian community. In everywhere where there is a pagan community trouble is stirred up against the Christians because they herald salvation through one God.

And that clearly conflicts with the polytheism of the Greek or Roman world. And the understanding in fact that was prevalent not just in the Greek and Roman world but prevalent in every culture and society around the Mediterranean and further afield.
And so there was persecution and terror and horror visited upon the church. And against that backdrop inevitably there are going to be temptations to what's called syncretism to taking your beliefs about what you know about God from the scriptures and trying to mold them and fit them in somehow to the prevalent worldview around you.
So you might say well we do worship Jesus as a son of God but maybe God has sons and that's a prevalent idea in the ancient world that there were demigods who were sons of Zeus or Jupiter and these demigods in a sense you could almost say Jesus is almost like that he's one of the demigods that works there as a son of God or if you're competing against the very harsh treatment from the Jewish community you might say well okay Jesus does grant us our salvation but we find salvation is rooted in the traditions and the law of Israel of the sacrifices and of Passover and of circumcision and of following the Jewish rituals that are necessary for salvation too and so you can end up again compromising your belief one way or the other you might want to try and fit into the world around you you might want to try and fit into the
Jewish world from which Christianity had emerged and Mark as he writes this gospel is writing into a church that's in danger of compromising on these things and he says I want to tell you about the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ and he puts Jesus central to the whole gospel that the gospel begins and rests on the person of Jesus the foundation of the gospel like when you're building a house the beginning of your house is the foundation that you build you dig down you go down to the rock and there you lay a solid foundation on which the house rests and if that foundation is good the house will stand if the foundation is wrong if you think the beginning sits somewhere else the house will crumble and actually
[56:12] Mark very subtly is making this point that if we put someone else at the beginning of our understanding of God's good news if we misunderstand who Jesus is if we misapply the teaching of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done if we get that wrong whatever else we think about our relationship with God we're going to find that that crumbles too and so if you have thought to yourself that you can compromise and think well Christianity is just one of a number of religions that work and they're actually all pointing towards the same thing it'll crumble and fall that's a great

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danger I think in Islam today for example Islam has an acknowledgement of Jesus it holds Jesus up as a prophet someone who's very spectacular in his position as one of God's anointed messengers but because they don't get the identity of Jesus right and because Muhammad in his 6th century Arabian context didn't get the identity of Jesus right probably because the church in that context didn't get the identity of Jesus right it results in something that crumbles it falls apart and it's dangerous it's the same today when we start a compromise on our understanding of what the gospel hope is and we start to say well the gospel hope is a message about doing good to one another about being nice to one another about living in a society that's well ordered and well organised well yes these things are good but that's not the gospel the message of the church is not one about just being nice to one another or being good for society or being good in some way towards one another and we're seeing that today with some of the political movements that are happening in our country you've got political movements in our country today that want the fruit of the gospel but without the vine without the true vine

I want the good of Christianity but I don't want Christ and so they forget that the beginning of the gospel is Jesus himself and it's easy for us to do these things it's easy for us to compromise and lose our place and so not only is this just the beginning of God's actual work it's the beginning of the whole understanding the theology the doctrine of our salvation it's the beginning it's the foundation of how our salvation itself works today we need to examine that what do we make of Jesus I mean it's lovely that you come to church it's lovely that you come and maybe listen to David every Sunday he's a good preacher I would if I lived in Tarber I have to drive over the cliche I'm becoming here so I'll go to
Stardom but but simply coming to participate in church is not what makes us believers it's not what makes us Christians it's not what saves us it's not what puts us in a right standing with God positioning ourselves aligning ourselves with God in some way and saying well he's someone that I might respect and even pray to it doesn't actually make you a Christian it's all about what do you make of Jesus not what do you make of God's laws and God's purposes and God's intentions and God's design not what do you make of the ten commandments even how well do you live by them and do you structure your life around these biblical principles what do you make of Jesus is his death and resurrection the solution to your greatest problem is he the one who takes away your sin is his life where you find your righteousness do you stand before
God and say God look at me look at how good I am look at how much I've done this week look at how hard I've tried to be your servant look at how diligent I've been in reading my Bible look at how diligent I've been in showing kindness to people look at the good things I do I have lots of things I can stack up and how wonderful I am or do you plead before God the righteousness of Jesus you say Lord I have no standing before you except that I stand before you in Christ because that's what Mark means when he says the beginning of the gospel the beginning of the gospel isn't us the beginning of the gospel is Jesus and I wouldn't proclaim good news to you today if I said to you you can be right with God by doing things yourself that puts the beginning on you and when you get the foundation wrong the house crumbles the beginning is Jesus the foundation is Jesus you need Jesus and so what do you make of Jesus today is he the beginning of your salvation the third beginning is in fact just the story of each one of us and this is where I think it relates into the personal lived experience of those who read this Jesus is the beginning of our personal stories with God it's the beginning of the narrative of what God is doing in each one of our lives it's quite remarkable to think that isn't it that actually God works in all of the lives of his people and God works differently in the lives of all of his people David's testimony is different to mine and I'm sure each one of you will have a different story of God dealings with you as you've gone through your life and all of these stories are subtly different and they're perhaps even for somebody in the outside they might even be confusingly different when it not for one thing that there is a common denominator in the story of
[62:24] God's dealings with all of us and that is Jesus we come to deal with Jesus Jesus is the point at which all of our lives intersect with God himself and where God breaks into our lives it's in the person of Jesus it's when Jesus comes as the one who comes into the darkness of our lives it's where Jesus comes as the one who takes away our sin it's where Jesus comes as the one who brings us salvation it's when Jesus comes as the one who speaks authoritatively into the chaos of our lives it's where Jesus comes in and calls us it's where we hear the voice of Jesus speaking to us in the scriptures speaking to us through the preached word speaking to us through the witness of

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one of our friends perhaps perhaps even as is common in some parts of the world today speaking to us in dreams where

Jesus comes and speaks and where we're brought into a place of relating to God through his son that's why the expression the son of God is so crucial to this it's not a sort of facet of God that we're seeing it's not looking at God from a certain perspective it's through a person who the father knows as his son he relates to as his son has sent one his emissary who he has sent into this world for this very purpose and a work that now goes on because the son and the father together send the Holy Spirit into the world for the same purpose to make us know God through the person of Jesus and so as Mark writes here he's not merely telling about the beginning of God's entire purposes and he's not merely giving us a doctrinal basis for what God has done he's telling us about the beginning of each one of our relationships and we need reminded of that our relationship with
God today begins with and rests on Jesus that's who we relate to that's who we know that's in fact how we know God himself because he has made himself known to us through his son he has said you can know me and you can discover that I am trustworthy and you can rely on me because you know me in my son who took on flesh and lived among you can know God and you can know God's character and you can know God's person through his son and so today I would urge you to reflect perhaps on these beginnings you know if your faith is wavering come back to the beginning of God's great purpose and redemption if you're feeling bogged down in the midst of all of the sorrow and brokenness of this world remember
Jesus is actually the only foundation that there is that it's going to weather the storms of all of that horror and brutality of sin in this world that there's nowhere else you're going to turn to and find comfort and peace and if you're maybe wondering can I know God in any of this does God walk beside me in the sorrow of this world in the grief of this moment remember you know him through Jesus the same Jesus who wept at the tomb of his friend Lazarus the same Jesus who at the cross cared compassionately for his mother and said woman behold your son and who gave charge of her to John the apostle the loving considerate compassionate Jesus of the gospel is the same Jesus who is loving and compassionate towards us and who ministers to us today so let's turn to him in faith and in prayer our lord we thank you that you came into this world that you came to herald the good news and that in heralding the good news you also brought redemption for sinners thank you that you died on the cross in our place and we pray that today you would send your Holy Spirit to minister that truth to us that we would know your power that rest in the certainty of who you are we thank you for the gospel we thank you for the emissaries of the gospel who have brought that to us who herald the good news how blessed are their feet upon the mountains we ask that you would help us now to receive that good news in faith in your name we pray Amen we're going to sing in conclusion a more contemporary hymn the hymn
[67:51] Here I Am to Worship the idea in this hymn is the incarnation of the one who stepped down from heaven to earth the one who came into the darkness of this world and whose beauty we need to see and whose salvation we need to rest on so let's sing this hymn to God's praise recordings to light light light of the world you step down into darkness open my eyes let me see recordings!

together wonderful to me! in all days oh so highly exalted!
glorious in heaven above! days Oh hand does come on play good fathers fathers together fathers together never able know every together community full name only could happen together whole matter house things about God land fathers young earth loved Jah realized everything hard things make whole puke equipment hear fathers fathers■■ fathers Ca tu Busca fathers fathers kept fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers guest chosen Ari fathers fathers fathers altogether wonderful to me I'll never know how much it costs to see my sin upon the cross I'll never know how much it costs to see my sin upon the cross here I am to worship here I am to bow down here I am to say that you're my God altogether lovely altogether worthy altogether wonderful to me the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and always
Amen Amen

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