

Luke 7

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Well good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning. It's good to be able to come together once more and to worship God in this way. One or two intimations. Just to say first of all that the evening service will be online just before or just at 6pm sharp tonight. It's a live stream and I'll take that service myself, God willing.

The YF will meet on Zoom at half past 7 tonight as usual and the midweek meeting will be a prayer meeting but it also will be the AGM and that will be on Zoom this Wednesday as well on the usual codes at half past 7.

I also got a message to share with the secondary school girls. There will be a girls group or the girls group which was meeting before will meet again from this coming Tuesday.

So the intimations here from Iona and from Julian. Starting on Tuesday the 23rd at 8pm girls group are going to begin the better than life study. There will be 9 weekly sessions that will be on Zoom. Sessions will last about 45 minutes. For all secondary aged girls please get in touch with Julian McSween or Iona McLeod.

She'll be Iona Morrison in just a few days and so you can get more information from them if you need to. So that's this coming Tuesday.

[1 : 36] The other thing to say is that for next Sunday we hope to be able to meet back in the church for the morning service anyway.

I can't be categorical about that because we haven't got the final confirmation. There's a final decision that will be made on Tuesday as to whether or not we're able to meet back at the 50 restriction within the church building.

So we hope that will happen and if it does the intention will be to meet as we did before on a rota system in the church building. And you'll get an email or a text message as you did before just to give confirmation of that.

So these I think are all the intimations. So we'll begin this time of worship and we'll sing to God's praise. We'll sing from Psalm 84 verses 1 to verse 9.

Or at least DNA will lead us and sing in the building here and we'll be able to sing in our own homes. Down to the end of verse 9.

[2 : 59] To God's praise. How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts to me.

The tabernacles of thy grace, how pleasant, Lord, they be.

My thirsty soul longs vehemently, ye fainst thy courts to see.

My very heart and flesh cry out, O living God for thee.

Behold, the sparrow findeth out an house waiting to rest.

[3 : 59] The swallow also for herself hath purchased a nest.

In thine own altars where she's safe, her young ones forth may bring.

O thou almighty Lord of hosts, who art my God and King.

Blessed are they in thy house that dwell, they ever give thee praise.

Blessed is the man whose strength thou art, in whose heart are thy ways.

[4 : 52] Who passing thought a baker's veil, therein do dig up wells.

Also the rain that falleth down the pools with water fills.

So they from strength unwearied go, still forward unto strength.

Until in Zion they appear before the Lord at length.

Lord God of hosts, my prayer hear. O Jacob's God, give ear.

[5 : 47] See God our shield look on the face of thine anointed dear.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well let's unite our hearts in prayer.

Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day.

Amen. We thank you once more that you've given us the opportunity, that you've given us the desire to come into this place, or to, wherever we are, come before you.

and to unite our hearts in prayer, to unite our voices distant from each other, albeit in worship, and to wait upon you with the expectation that those who wait upon the Lord will have their strength renewed because we will meet with the Lord.

[7 : 03] And we ask that you would help us for this hour, wherever we are, to remember that we are meeting with you. We're not simply tuning in to a broadcast.

We're not simply watching a program like we watch on a television screen in normal circumstances, but enable us to be reminded of the fact that we are in the act of worship just now and that you have promised that we're two or three of your people meet together, and whatever means we meet together, you will be with us.

And we thank you for who you are, that you are the God of Jacob, even as we sang in that last verse. We think about what we know of Jacob, the schemer, the one who was deceitful, the one who was fallen in so many ways, and yet the one who was enabled to come into your presence, the one who was received and accepted by you.

And that speaks to us of your grace, for which we are thankful. We cannot come in our own name. We cannot come on the basis of our own attempts at good works, even. But we come because you are a God of grace, a God who gives to us, who deserve the worst, at your best.

[8 : 46] You have not treated us, Lord, as our sins deserve, because you have treated Jesus, your Son, as our sins deserve. And we thank you that when we come in Jesus' name, when we come trusting in the finished work of Christ, the fact that he lived for us, the fact that he died for us, the fact, as we remember on this Lord's Day, especially that he rose for us, when we come trusting in his finished work, we thank you that we are accepted, that we are received, and that we can expect to find blessing in your presence.

He is the one who took the curse that our sin deserved from us in order that we can be blessed.

And so we pray that wherever we are, we would know your blessing at this time.

for every family, for every couple, for every individual person who is in this act of worship just now, we pray that you would meet with us, that you would speak to us, or that you would give refreshment to those who feel jaded, that you would give strength to us in our weakness, that you would give to us, Lord, that grace which is sufficient to enable us to go on in strength, your strength, not ours.

We pray that you would give to us that forgiveness, that soul cleansing that comes from being sprinkled by the blood of Christ.

We pray that you would give to us your spirit, the one who is able to stir our hearts, the one who is able to open our eyes and unblock our ears so that we could see and hear and know that we are in the presence of the risen Christ.

[10 : 55] So, Lord, meet with us, we pray. May we be able to say from our hearts how lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts, to me. We pray that you would help us, Lord.

We are a people who are needy and you know the needs of each person, each home that we are connected with even in these moments. We pray for those who struggle with illness that you would lay your hand of healing and grace upon them.

We pray, Lord, that you would be with those who feel that sense of loneliness, that they would know that you are close to them and we pray that you would help us as your people to be mindful of each other and to reach out to each other in the ways that we can at this time.

We pray for those who battle with addictions and who may feel despair, who may feel like they are chained. We pray that you would break the chains, Lord, that you would intervene and work in the lives of those who struggle with particular addictions.

We pray for those, Lord, who may be healthy, who may be wealthy, who may have no worries in terms of the things of this world but who are lost. Some who may be listening with one ear.

[12 : 22] Others who may have no thought, who may be wandering around in different places, who may be engaged in different activities. We pray, Lord, that you would awaken the souls of many in this place and in all the places that we're connected with.

We ask that you would speak with the voice that wakes the dead and make the people hear the good news about Jesus. This is something that no preacher can do.

It's something that no individual can do. We are powerless to be able to make any difference whatsoever spiritually in our life. But we pray, Lord, that you would move in the power of your spirit, that those who are still blind would have eyes opened, and those who are your people, Lord, that we would be touched, that our hearts would be stirred, that we would be revived.

Lord, we pray, Lord, for our nation at this time. We anticipate being able to meet again next Lord's Day, and we hope and pray, Lord, that that will be possible.

We pray for wisdom for those you have allowed to be in leadership, and we pray, as we have done over these months now into a year, that they would look to you. They seem so determined not to look, not to acknowledge the reality of God, but we pray that you would enable them, enable us as a nation, to turn back from our wicked ways and to look to you.

[13:56] And we ask, Lord, that you would be at work across the world. We have the freedom to be able to meet. We know that there are many places where there are no such freedoms.

As we think of countries like that, where there's no liberty to meet physically, to worship you, and where there's no liberty even to meet virtually, to worship you.

We pray that you would strengthen, that you would encourage, that you would embolden the persecuted church. We thank you that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church that Jesus built.

And we pray that you, Lord Jesus, would continue to build your church across all nations and continue to build your church here, we pray also. And we pray for the girls group as they meet for the first time on Tuesday.

Since a while we ask that you would bless them. We pray for the meetings ahead of us in this week, the prayer meeting, the AGM, we pray for wisdom, we pray for encouragement as we meet as your people.

[15:03] We pray, Lord, for the appointments ahead of us this week as well. We think especially of Andrew and Iona as they prepare to be married this Saturday. We ask that you would bless them or that you would be near to them, that you would guide them in the preparation for the wedding and that you would bless them in their married life, that they would put and keep Christ at the centre and that they may know your blessing and that they may be a blessing to those they come into contact with.

So hear our prayers, take away our sin, lead us and guide us, we pray, as we seek to worship you and we pray these things in Jesus name and for his sake.

Amen. Well boys and girls, I hope you are well. I hope you enjoyed being back in school this week. Well what do I have to tell you today? I don't have any pictures to show you today but I do have a leaflet I can show you in just a second but I'm going to tell you just about something that happened to me on Tuesday.

It happened to lots of us probably on Tuesday and it happened to some people much earlier but on Tuesday of this week I was in the study and the phone went and I answered the phone and it was Agnes from the dentist and she said to me, I'm just phoning because you're over 45 and I said yes and she said and that means that you're now eligible to have the COVID vaccination.

[16:48] Would you like to make an appointment? And she said if you want to make an appointment they can give you the vaccine at 1.47 today.

Very precise. Every seven minutes she said they give the Jag. So at 1.47 we can make the appointment. And that's what she said.

And I was on the phone and my mind was going round and round in circles. And you know what I thought? I thought no I don't want it. Because if I tell you a secret boys and girls I don't like needles. Not one but I hate needles. In fact they give me the shivers. shh. When I have to go to the dentist and when I have to go to the doctors and get blood and they get the needle out I turn away like that I don't want to see it and I hate to feel it I just don't like it.

So I would rather have spent the morning just having a cup of coffee and doing some work and not have a Jag. And I also knew that Gordon who is a wee bit older than me so he got his Jag just a little bit earlier and he felt a bit tired and he felt a bit sniffly after it so I just didn't want to get it.

[18:10] But you know what at 1.47 I was down at the community centre and Joyce was there with a Jag and she jabbed me in the arm wasn't as bad as I thought and I got the vaccination vaccination because what was in my mind was even though I don't like to get a Jag it's better to get

a Jag just for a wee minute than to get the virus.

Now in the passage that we're going to read today you can stay for a wee bit longer if you want and hear the passage being read. There's a woman and Jesus tells us or Luke in the gospel tells us about this woman in Luke chapter 7 and she'd done some bad things in her life things that she would have felt very guilty about sins.

But she'd heard about Jesus and she'd heard that Jesus could forgive sin and she'd also heard that Jesus was going to be having dinner at a Pharisee called Simon's house on that day.

So what would she do? This woman who knew her problem who knew about the virus of sin in her heart? What would she do? Would she come to Jesus?

It wouldn't be easier for her to go to that house because she had a bad reputation. Lots of people would point at her and say, there's that bad woman. And they would be tutting at her as she came into the house because that's the kind of thing that they would do back then.

[19 : 52] Would she go into the house with all these people watching to see Jesus? Wouldn't be easy for her. But you know, even though it wasn't easy, even though it was sore for her, and we see her crying in the story actually, she came anyway to see Jesus.

And you know what Jesus said to her? Jesus said to her just towards the end of the chapter, he said, your sins are forgiven. Your faith has healed you.

Go in peace. And so she knew in her heart, and everybody around who might have been pointing the finger at her before, they knew from Jesus that this woman's sins, because she trusted in Jesus, they were forgiven, they were gone.

And she had peace with God. because she came to Jesus. Now, boys and girls, for us, it can be difficult to come to Jesus.

I can remember what it was like to be in school. It doesn't seem that long ago to me. And I can remember the kind of things that would be said. Some people might say to you, don't become a boring Christian.

[21 : 13] Or at least, if you're going to become a Christian, don't do it now when you've got so many fun things you can do. Do it when you're old and you've got grey hair and you've got nothing else to do with your life. Don't become a Christian now.

You'll spoil all the fun. It's not true. That's what people say sometimes, and it can be hard when people say that kind of things to us. It can be hard when people laugh because they say, you go to church, you believe in Jesus.

That can be hard. It can be hard when sometimes people will just kind of put us to one side and keep us out of their little group because we are those who are coming to Jesus or who've come to Jesus.

And even when we come to Jesus for the first time, it can be difficult to admit that we are wrong, that we have sin in our hearts. it can be difficult and hard for us to accept that we can't save ourselves no matter how many things we do, no matter how many good works we try, no matter how many church services we go to, we can't save ourselves.

And that can be difficult to think about all these things. It can be difficult to come to Jesus, but if we don't come to Jesus, our sins can't be forgiven.

[22 : 40] That's the truth. And if our sins aren't forgiven, we can't have peace with God and we can't get to heaven.

So we have to come to Jesus. I think it would have been quite silly for me not to get the vaccine when somebody was saying, you can just go down the road and get it and it will protect you.

I think it would have been silly for me to stay at home just because I was a bit scared of a needle.

And I think it would have been very sad for that woman if she didn't come to Jesus and have her sins forgiven.

And I think it would be very, very sad if any of us didn't come to Jesus to have our sins forgiven and to receive the everlasting life that he offers to us today.

So boys and girls, I want to say what I so often say to you, come to Jesus. Trust in him. Ask him to take your sins away. Ask him to come into your life.

[23 : 54] And he promises that he will give us a protection from the virus of sin that lasts forever. he will give us everlasting life.

And we'll pray. Lord God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the story that we'll read in just a second, a true story of a woman who had lots of sins in her life and yet who found forgiveness

and who found peace and who found everlasting life in Jesus.

we pray that you would help us to be like this woman who didn't hold back but who came to Jesus trusting in him and finding forgiveness for sin.

We pray for all the boys and girls that they would know for sure that they are forgiven. We pray for all the older ones who might have been holding back for lots of years.

We pray that they, that each one of us would know that our sins are forgiven, that we have peace with God, that we have everlasting life. And we pray all these things in Jesus' name.

[25 : 09] Amen. If you could turn with me now please to Luke chapter 7. Luke chapter 7.

Luke chapter 7. Luke chapter 7. Luke chapter 7. Luke chapter 7. Luke chapter 7. Luke chapter 7.

Luke chapter 8. We read a part of this passage last week. We read from verses 1 down to verse 17 I think. The account of the centurion whose servant was sick who came to Jesus and whose servant was made well.

And we read the account also of the woman whose son had died and Jesus raised her son from the dead. and we will read from verse 16 just at the end of that passage after Jesus had raised this boy from the dead and given him back to his mother.

It says in verse 16 as God speaks through Luke here. They were all filled with awe and praised God. A great prophet has appeared among us they said. God has come to help his people.

[26 : 27] This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country. And at verse 18 Luke 7 verse 18 John's disciples that's John the Baptist told him about all these things.

Calling two of them he sent them to the Lord to ask are you the one who was to come or should we expect someone else? When the men came to Jesus they said John the Baptist sent us to you to ask are you the one who was to come or should we expect someone else?

At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases sicknesses and evil spirits and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers go back and report to John what you have seen and heard.

The blind receive sight the lame walk those who have leprosy are cured the deaf hear the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.

After John's messengers left Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John what did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not what did you go out to see?

[27 : 39] A man dressed in fine clothes? No those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet?

Yes I tell you and more than a prophet this is the one about whom it is written I will send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way before you. I tell you among those born of women there is no one greater than John yet the one who is the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

All the people even the tax collectors when they heard this when they heard Jesus' words acknowledged that God's way was right because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves because they had not been baptized by John.

To what then can I compare this people, the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other. We played the flute for you and you did not dance.

We sang a dirge and you did not cry. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine and you say he has a demon. The son of man came eating and drinking and you say he is a he is a drunkard, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

[29 : 01] But wisdom is proved right by all her children. Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him. So he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears.

Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on him. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, if this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is, that she is a sinner.

Jesus answered him, Simon, I have something to tell you. Tell me, teacher, he said. Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him 500 denarii, the other 50.

Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled.

[30 : 12] You have judged correctly, Jesus said. Then he turned towards the woman and said to Simon, do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not pour oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much, but he who has been forgiven little, loves little. Then Jesus said to her, your sins are forgiven.

The other guests began to say among themselves, who is this who even forgives sins? Jesus said to the woman, your faith has saved you.

Go in peace. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. God bless us.

[31 : 13] We'll pray just for a moment again. Our heavenly father, we pray that you would send the Holy Spirit, that he would work in each of our hearts, that we would be enabled to see not only the truth of what happened and what was said back then, these thousands of years ago, but we pray that we would know the reality of that truth pressing in upon our own souls and our own lives.

Apply these things to us, we pray, that we would know that you are God and that you are speaking directly and personally into our own lives. So minister to us, we pray through your word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

And what we pray for ourselves here, we pray for the children in their Sunday school lessons. We pray for the churches around us, and every congregation where Christ crucified is preached.

We pray, Lord God, that you would be working and that you would be drawing many people to Christ as he, we pray, is lifted up. And we pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. I was watching one of these TV shows a week or two back, I think it was called Celebrity Home Cook.

[32 : 40] And the challenge for that particular day was our baking challenge. They had various dishes to make and on this particular day that I'm remembering, there was a baking challenge and all the contestants were having to bake cakes and everything looked fine as they were going through their task.

All these cakes or the cake mixers seemed to be coming together, all except one. There was one contestant who at the end of the stage, before she put the stuff in the oven, just had a big wet mix that had been poured into the cake tin.

A big wet mix went into the cake tin, it went into the oven, and then 20 minutes later, a big wet sticky mix came back out of the oven. It didn't look any different to the way it was when I went in.

And the reason for this problem was that she had forgotten to put the flour in. And I'm no baking expert, I'm kind of speaking out of my comfort zone here, but I think if you're trying to bake a cake, flour is a vital ingredient.

And in a spiritual sense, when we think about salvation, the vital ingredient for salvation is faith. And not just any faith, but faith in Jesus.

[34 : 08] If we think about the passages we've been reading in the past few weeks in Luke chapter 7, the Pharisees have been a great example of teaching us that negatively. The Pharisees, as a group of people, they had a great knowledge of the scriptures, they were exercised in going to church meetings, they could make long wordy prayers that sounded very impressive, they were serious about keeping the Sabbath day holy, but they were lost, they weren't saved, simply because they didn't have faith in Jesus.

And we can look back over church history and see this time and time again. Think about Martin Luther. There was no more serious church man than Martin Luther.

He was an Augustinian monk for quite a period, very, very serious about the things of God. He dedicated himself to fasting for long periods, for long hours of prayer.

He dedicated himself to going on spiritual pilgrimages. He had frequent confessions of sin, but he had no peace. And the harder he worked, the more he seemed to be far away from this peace that he was looking for.

And then one day, when he was reading through Romans, his eyes were opened, and he suddenly saw that the key to salvation, the vital ingredient to salvation that he was lacking, was not religious fervor, but it was faith in Jesus.

[35 : 53] Faith in who Jesus was and is, faith in what Jesus had done in living and dying and rising to save us. And what I want to look at today, for the time that we have, is it really continues on from last week.

I want to scan the whole of Luke chapter 7 and consider some more lessons on faith. I want us to think about what faith is and what faith is not.

And the first point that takes us from verse 1 to verse 10 is we can see that faith is not irrational. Point 1 is faith is not irrational.

And we see that in relation to the centurion that we looked at last week. The centurion was in this situation, his servant whom he cared for, whom he loved, whom he, it says in verse 2, valued highly.

He was sick. In fact, he was more than sick. He was terminally ill. He was about to die. But the centurion had heard of Jesus, it says in verse 3.

[37 : 05] And this centurion, he acted on what he had heard about Jesus. So this centurion, his approach to Jesus, yes it was a step in faith, but it was based on facts.

It was based on rationale. One of the commentators, Zarmilne, says the Roman centurion would have heard of the remarkable feats of Jesus in healing the sick and casting out demons and controlling the natural powers.

His faith to some extent therefore rested on the facts of Jesus' life. Faith, says Milne, is never an irrational leap, but a personal commitment to Christ, partly informed by the recorded facts about Jesus.

Faith is not rational. Faith does not involve disconnecting your brain. your mind. And that's an important lesson, I think, for us to learn and to hold on to in a very sceptical world.

We often meet people who say to us, if we're Christians, well, you may have your faith, but I'm a science man. You know, I'm a scientific thinker.

[38 : 33] I like to deal with hard facts. I use my mind. I like to think through things rationally. And that's what the centurion did.

We see that here. He thought through things rationally. He heard facts about Jesus. He listened to the testimonies about the works of Jesus.

And the centurion's thought process, his rationale, was, well, I believe that this Jesus may be able to heal my servant on the basis of what I've heard about this Jesus.

So I'm going to take a step of faith and approach him. Now we today, as we try to apply this to our own lives and situations, we know more about Jesus than this centurion ever did.

We have more historical facts to consider. We have heard through credible historical sources that have lasted the course of time.

[39 : 41] Remember, this Bible, which has been so much under attack, has never been able to be buried. It's never been able to be destroyed. It's never been able to be disproved. There is more historical evidence for the text of Scripture than any other book in history.

So we have heard through credible historical sources that this Jesus, he lived, that's proven, that he died, and he rose from the dead so that sinners can be saved.

We read that in Scripture, go to a historical text that are not scriptural of that time, like Josephus, they too will confirm this. This is what was heard about Jesus.

These are the facts that were on the street about Jesus at that time. So we have much more to consider than the centurion ever did.

But the question, I think, for us today is will we come to Jesus as the centurion did? Will we act on what we have heard about Jesus?

[40 : 56] Will we, based on what Dr. Luke records for us in this orderly account, will we come to Jesus and seek healing for our hearts?

And for the sceptics, if there are those who are behind the camera there who are tuning in with a great measure of scepticism, I would urge you, keep reading about Jesus.

keep listening to what Jesus has said. Do some digging if you want. Go to the biblical and the non-biblical evidence.

Don't dismiss Jesus just because this world tells you to. To do that is to take an irrational leap of faith based on secular theories and cultural pressures.

Now, consider the evidence. think rationally and I pray that for the sceptic, you too may like the centurion in God's time come to Jesus.

[42 : 09] So that's the first point. Faith is not rational. The second point that takes us through from verse 11 to verse 16 is that faith is not proof dependent.

We go to the other extreme here. Faith is not proof dependent. Faith is not irrational. It's based on biblical facts. It's based on the gospel truth about Jesus.

But faith, on the other hand, is not proof dependent. It's not something that is produced in a test tube. And we learn that even as we think about the definition of faith in Hebrews.

it says in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1, Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

And we might ask the question even at this point, why is it that Jesus, why is it that God requires us to have faith in him?

[43 : 18] And the answer to that is because God is calling us into relationship. relationship. And love and trust are the foundations of a relationship.

Think about Andrew and Iona who plan to be married this coming Saturday. Now as they marry, they don't require each other to present proofs on their wedding day that they will be good spouses. They don't sit down with proofs and evidences and then come to some kind of decision. Will we go ahead with this or will we not? No, what they do on their wedding day is they declare their love for and their trust in each other.

That's the foundation for a loving relationship. And that's what God requires from us. He wants us to trust him.

He wants us to love him. And if we struggle with that, then where do we look?

[44 : 25] Well, I would say as I so often do, look to the cross. Look to the cross where we see God the Son dying to save us.

Look to the cross because that's where we see how much God loved us before we ever loved him and how much we can trust him, how faithful he is.

We sometimes sing that hymn, my faith looks up cross direction. It looks up to thee, Jesus, thou Lamb of Calvary, Saviour divine.

Faith comes from looking up to Christ. It comes from looking up to that cross. Now, again, a word to the sceptic.

You may say if you're sceptical just now, well, you see that with your open Bible, but I want proof. I want proof, and if I had proof, if I could see with my eyes that all that Jesus teaches is true, if God did a miracle, a supernatural work in my life, then I would believe.

[45 : 47] But not until then. But to such a person, I would say, would you really believe if God was to do a work like that in your life?

Because that's not what we see in these verses from 11 through to 16. We see the raising of a dead man with hundreds, if not thousands, of witnesses.

There's no more compelling proof, than this, of the power and the authority of Jesus. The crowd witnessed firsthand Jesus stop a funeral procession, touch a coffin, speak to a dead man, who rises back up and is reconciled with his mother.

And yet the crowd, in their response, people are largely they don't believe in Jesus. It says in verse 16, they were filled with awe and they praised God.

There was a huge emotional response on that day that looked so promising, but for most of that crowd it didn't cause them to put their faith in Christ. They didn't have saving faith.

[47 : 05] They said in verse 16, that a great prophet has appeared among us. God has come to help his people, they said. They see Jesus as a great prophet.

They see Jesus as one through whom God is helping his people, but in spite of such compelling proof of who Jesus was and is, they don't put their faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

And this same crowd that was so filled with awe on that day are highly likely to be a large part of the same crowd who before too long would be shouting out crucify him.

Crucify him. So how do we apply this? Well I think one of the ways that we apply this is we need to recognize, I want to say to those who are waiting for God to give some kind of miraculous proof to them.

I would say to those who are waiting for some hard supernatural proof to be driven into your life, I would say stop waiting. For those who are trying to do deals with God, stop asking for that.
[48 : 22] Stop waiting. Because even if we got it, likely it wouldn't persuade the person who doesn't want to believe.

the reality is we see Jesus more clearly today than these crowds did on that day. We hear more of what Jesus said and these crowds did because we have the New Testament.
But in order for us to be saved, we don't need more proof. we simply need to respond to all that God has given to us in Scripture.

By saying, Lord Jesus, I believe. I believe that you are more than a great prophet. But I believe that you are the Son of God who lived and died and rose to be my Savior.

Please save me. That's how we should respond. Faith is not irrational, point number one. Faith is not proof dependent, point number two.

[49 : 39] The third thing is faith is not doubt proof or doubt resistant. And that takes us from verse 17 through to verse 35.

Faith is not doubt proof or faith is not doubt resistant. Most of us have had the experience at some point of leaning forward whilst washing the dishes, forgetting that our phones are in our top pockets and watching our phones in slow motion dropping out of our top pockets and splashing into a basin of soapy water.

Now what happens next when that happens? Well we get our phones out as quickly as possible because mobile phones at least no mobile phone that I've ever owned, mobile phones they're not waterproof, they're not water resistant.

And faith is not doubt proof, it's not doubt resistant. We can be real genuine Christians, we may even be mature Christians and yet find that doubts about God get in.

And this takes us to John. We're looking here from verse 17 through to verse 35. We see here John, John the Baptist.

[51 : 07] And John the Baptist of all people is probably one of the least likely people we would have thought to have doubts about Jesus. And yet we see that happening here.

Verse 17 it says that this news about Jesus, everyone was talking about Jesus, and this news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

John's disciples told them about all these things, verse 18. Now that should prompt us to ask the question, why do John's disciples have to tell John about what Jesus is saying and doing?

Why could John not see and hear this himself? And the answer to that question we find back in Luke chapter 3, verses 19 and 20, because we see there John being thrown into prison.

And so John the Baptist at this point, he's still in prison. In fact, John the Baptist is not ever getting out of prison alive. Herod's wife would make sure of that.

[52 : 14] So things were not going well for John. And as John was going through that hard time, he began to have doubts about Jesus. And in application, let me just say that this happens.

I may encourage somebody who's watching even today, this kind of thing happens. And often when circumstances are difficult, when we are not getting the freedom and the fellowship that we once had, that was John's experience, to an extent it's our experience just now.

When our mood gets low, spiritually speaking, doubts can creep in. And John seems to have doubts here about Jesus.

probably because of the dark circumstances that he found himself in, in that prison cell. But perhaps the other reason that John was wrestling with doubts was because Jesus wasn't doing ministry the way that John expected.

John had prophesied that when the Messiah would come, this is Luke chapter 3 verse 17, he would burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

[53 : 33] But at this point, Jesus, as far as John could see, wasn't doing much burning up. Instead of blasting the Pharisees with sermons about wrath like John did, Jesus was having dinner in their homes.

He was reaching out to them. He was calling people like Nicodemus, the Pharisee, to be born again. See, Jesus wasn't doing things the way that John expected.

and it caused them to doubt. And again, this can happen to us. Sometimes in our lives, Jesus doesn't do things the way that we expect.

Sometimes the Christian life can be hard to understand. Sometimes it can be difficult to follow Jesus. Sometimes life doesn't make sense to us. and we begin to doubt the wisdom of this course that Jesus seems to be guiding us along.

If John could doubt, then you and I can doubt. But when it happens, the lesson here that is so critical is when this happens, let's not allow doubts to crush us.

[54 : 54] Let's know what to do with doubts. let's not allow doubts to get in and cause decay and spiritual breakdown, but let's do what John did, and that's take our doubts to Jesus.

Verse 18, calling two of them, he sent them to ask, that's the disciples of John, he sends them to ask the Lord, are you the one who was to come or should we expect someone else?

So John's question here is very direct. He's asking Jesus, are you really the Messiah? It's almost an offensively honest question and yet he asked it and Jesus answered it.

And this is a pattern that we see in the Psalms also. In various Psalms we find David the Psalmist in extreme difficulty under intense pressure, wrestling with doubts, with an abundance of whys going through his mind.

and what he does is he takes them all up and he presents them to the Lord in these prayers that we have in the Psalms. So if there's someone watching today or someone who's listening today who's wrestling with doubts and I would be surprised if there isn't, I want to say take these doubts to the Lord.

[56 : 21] Don't bury them. Don't pretend they're not there. Don't turn away from the Lord. But take your doubts to him.

Because that's what John did. Verse 20. When the men came to Jesus they said John the Baptist sent us to ask, sent us to you to ask, are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?

now how does Jesus respond? Well you'll know that he responds through scripture. Verse 21 and 22.

At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits. He gave sight to many who were blind. So in verse 21 we see Jesus carrying on doing what he was doing.

Healing the sick, curing those who had evil spirits, giving sight to those who were blind. He carries on with these actions.

[57 : 32] And then he replies to the messengers in verse 22. Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

So Jesus' response was first of all to act out and then to speak out a paraphrase of Isaiah chapter 35 verses 5 and 6.

Isaiah in Isaiah 35 was speaking of the coming Messiah and what would happen when the Messiah would come, how one could detect, how one could know that the Messiah had come.

And Isaiah says this, he says, then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy.

And so Jesus says to the disciples of John, go and tell John that what Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah chapter 35 verses 5 and 6, go and tell them that what Isaiah said is happening in real time now.

[58 : 45] we're seeing it happening. He answers the doubts of John with the word of God.

And that's what dealt with, that's what overcame John's doubts. And it's the word of God that deals with and overcomes our doubts. doubts. For those who are wrestling most acutely with doubts, I would hazard a guess that you're probably not very much in the word of God.

Because it's the word of God that deals with and overcomes our doubts. Think again about the illustration of the mobile phone that fell into the basin of water. Now what do you do when you have a mobile phone that's fallen into water?

This might be news to some people but it's true. You take the phone and you put it in a big bowl of rice and you leave the phone in this bowl of rice for a couple of days, two or three days and over the course of these days the rice draws all the moisture out of the phone so that the phone usually starts to work again.

And for us when doubts get into our minds and our hearts we go to the Bible we immerse ourselves in the Bible and as we are in Scripture our doubts are drawn out and faith in Christ is strengthened.

[60 : 26] Verse 23 says blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me. so did John fall away?

Well no he didn't fall away he was faithful to the end it was a difficult end but he was faithful to the end and Jesus in verse 24 to verse 35 he commends John for his ministry.

I haven't got time to go into that but the point is John did not fall away on account of Jesus and we will not fall away as long as we keep looking to and listening to with open Bibles and speaking to in prayer the Lord Jesus.

So faith is not doubt proof but it's the word of God that deals with these doubts and strengthens our faith and the final thing very briefly is faith is not hidden and that takes us from verse 36 through to the end faith is not hidden I could also say that a lack of faith is not hidden either remember in school in science class you would do the acid test you'd be given the beaker with a clear liquid in it and you had to try to understand what was this liquid you couldn't see by looking you couldn't see by you couldn't tell by smelling but you were given the pH paper and when the pH paper was dipped into liquid it would tell you whether it was neutral whether it was water whether it was acid or alkali we called it the acid test and saving faith or the absence of it is indicated not with a pH paper but by a response to Jesus that's the acid test we see the faith or the lack of it in our response to Jesus and we see that in this final section because we see two very different responses to Jesus if you want an exposition of this section you can go back six months and listen to a sermon that Andy Longway preached in the YouTube page I just want to glance this very briefly as we finish we see two very different responses to Jesus we see Simon the Pharisee's disrespect and then we see this sinful woman's devotion Simon the Pharisee's disrespect so we read in verse 36 one of the Pharisee's invited Jesus to have dinner with him so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table now back in these days there was an etiquette to having someone round for dinner you would greet them with a kiss you would have their sandals removed and their feet washed you would anoint their head with a refreshing fragrant oil and it seems that Simon who invites Jesus round for dinner he does none of that which indicates to us that

[63 : 43] Simon's motives for inviting Jesus for dinner were probably not good it may have been that he wanted to catch Jesus out in conversation it may have been that because Jesus was so popular and drawing so many crowds Simon just wanted a piece of that he wanted to get some attention for himself by calling Jesus into his house it's not clear exactly why Simon asked Jesus to come round but what is clear is that Simon treated Jesus with a disrespect that was characteristic of the Pharisees and showed very clearly a lack of faith and that was in huge contrast to this sinful woman's devotion the King James version and the ESV are a bit more candid about this woman she's described as a woman in the city and I don't think

I need to spell that out it's clear that she had a dark and lurid past she came from a questionable profession she was a woman with a bad reputation but it seems that somewhere along the line she had heard about Jesus and she had began to be drawn to Jesus and perhaps for a period this woman she believed but secretly staying under the radar you know after all what would people say when a woman like her came to faith but the reality was she couldn't stay hidden for long and so here in Simon's house at that dinner party she comes forward and she did everything for Jesus that Simon didn't do she brought perfume with her to anoint

Jesus she washed his feet with her tears tears that expressed sorrow for her sins she anointed Jesus feet with this perfume that showed the humility she bowed low before Jesus she wiped his feet with her hair which was an act self forgetful devotion and worship she didn't care what people thought she was so consumed with love and devotion for Jesus that all she could see in the room was Jesus and so we asked why such warm devotion from the woman and why such cold disrespect from Simon and Jesus makes clear through the parable that she through faith in Jesus had been forgiven her sin but Simon who had no faith in Jesus did not even see the sin that he needed to be forgiven of see faith and the absence of it cannot be hidden but it will always be seen in our response to Jesus so as we finish where are we today that's the question who do we stand with here who do we who do we see ourselves in in this closing session are we stiff lipped looking on at Jesus from a distance like Simon the Pharisee did with a heart that was cold and eyes that are dry or are we with this woman bowing low before Jesus conscious of our sin but trusting in Christ as our saviour and saying from our hearts what we'll sing in a moment amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved even a wretch like me heavenly father we pray that you would bless your word to us help us to see

Jesus clearly and help us to see ourselves clear enough to know that we are those who are wretched because of our sin but those who can be saved because of the amazing grace of Jesus

help us to trust in him help us to receive by faith that grace that is offered to all and we pray this in Jesus name amen our final praise is from mission praise 31 that great hymn of John Newton amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me

I once was lost but now I'm found was blind but now I see grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved how precious did not did not grace appeared the how I first believed I first believed through many dangers toils toils and snares

[70 : 43] I have already come come tils grace have brought me safe thus far and grace and grace will lead me home when we've been there ten thousand years bright bright shining as the sun we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first began and now may the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forevermore Amen