

## 28.3.21 am

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning and a warm welcome back to church for a few of us here in the building today. It's so good to see real live people and faces.

Not that Gordon and Stuart weren't real live people and faces, but I've been looking at a camera for a long time and it's wonderful to see faces back in the church today.

And it's good to know as well, also, we're not forgetting that there are many who are at home and who are tuning in and hopefully we'll see these faces over the next few weeks.

So a warm welcome to those present, to those who are watching online, to those who may be listening in on the telephone as well. Some intimations, I think we should probably start with just an intimation on behalf of the congregation to say congratulations to Andrew and to Iona.

You can't see them here, but they're just sitting on my left just now and it's a great example and encouragement to see you beginning your married life in God's presence and in God's house.

[ 1 : 07 ] So we were delighted to watch yesterday and we're delighted to see you and we wish you every congratulations and blessing for the future.

Tonight, the Gaelic service will be on, the monthly Gaelic service, and that will go on at six o'clock and that service is taken by Hamish Taylor, so be encouraged to tune in to that.

The YF will meet online as usual at half past seven on Zoom. The prayer meeting, again on Zoom at half past seven, will meet online.

This week we'll also have a guest speaker for part of the prayer meeting, a man called Bill Robertson from Asia Link, so be encouraged to tune in for that.

Next Sunday is Easter Sunday. The morning service will be back in church, God willing, and so we'll look forward to that. We'll have an Easter-themed service.

[ 2 : 06 ] The evening service will be slightly earlier in the afternoon going out, and what I'm hoping is that we'll have a family service where some of the young ones will do readings, we'll have various people singing, and it will go out on a pre-recorded message just on Sunday.

So we'll have various children all involved, but we can't do that because we can't get all the children in here, so we'll have recordings from home, and we'll be able to watch them all.

So that's the plan for next Sunday, so that's just to make you aware and appreciate your prayers and the preparation for that. I think these are all the intimations.

So let's begin this time of worship. We're singing to God's praise, or ENA is singing to God's praise. We're singing in our hearts, and it's Psalm 100.

Psalm 100, the whole of the psalm. This is the psalm that we heard Hugh making his debut on yesterday, his first time presenting. It didn't go unnoticed.

[ 3 : 18 ] I had a number of messages saying that he should be added to Farrakhar's list, but you're getting a relaxation this morning, and ENA is going to lead us as we sing to God's praise in our homes, and we listen in the church building.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, and serve with mirth. His praise forth tell, come ye before him, and rejoice. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

Him serve with mirth his praise. Forth tell, come ye before him, and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed.

Without doubt he did us make. We are his flock, he doth us feed.

[ 4 : 50 ] And for his sheep he doth us take. O enter then his gates with praise.

Approach with joy his courts unto. Praise Lord and bless his name always.

For it is seemly so to do. For why the Lord our God is good.

His mercy is forever sure. His truth at all times firmly stood.

And shall from age to age endure. Well let's unite our hearts in prayer.

[ 6 : 23 ] Let's pray together. Our heavenly Father we thank you for this your day.

We thank you for the joy of being able to come into your house. We think of the psalm that was written that said, I joyed when to the house of God come up they said to me.

And we thank you Lord that we are able to come into this place today for the first time in a long time. A number of us. And we pray for your blessing upon this time that we would know your presence, that we would know your peace, that we would know that sense of joy of being able to come together in worship.

And yet we thank you that you are the God who is everywhere. You are not limited to one place. You do not find that you are contained in a building made by human hands.

But you are in all places at all times. And for those who are in their homes. For those who are in different places in this community and across the nation and across all nations.

[ 7 : 33 ] We thank you that as we seek to draw near to you, you Lord God draw near to us. And you draw us close to each other also.

As we would seek to come together to worship you. And we ask the question with the psalmist for why do we worship? And we thank you that even in that short psalm that we sang, there are so many reasons for us to give you praise.

As we consider who you are and what you have done for us. You are the God who made us. You are our creator. The one who formed the world that we live in.

You are the God who formed each of us. Who made us the way that we are. We thank you that we do not have to wonder where we came from. And we do not have to wonder where we are going. Because you have revealed that to us. You as our creator have made us for yourself. And we thank you for the peace and for the joy that we find when we are in close fellowship with you.

[ 8 : 42 ] And we thank you, Lord God, that not only are you our creator, but you are our carer. The one who watches over us. We are the sheep. And you, Lord Jesus, are the good shepherd.

The one who cares for us day by day as we look to you. And we thank you, Lord, that we see the full extent of your love and care for us as we look to the cross.

Where we must look each time that we meet. There we see that the love of God poured out for us. This is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and gave his son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin.

And so, Lord, we thank you that as we confess our sin this morning, as we think about the things that have grieved the Holy Spirit, the things that we have said, the things that we have thought, the things that we have done, the things that we have failed to do, as we confess these sins, we thank you that because of Jesus, because of the blood that was shed, we have the assurance that we can be forgiven.

So we ask, Lord, that you would cleanse us in the blood of Christ. We pray that we would know that our hearts are touched, that they are clean. And we pray that you would enable us to walk close with you, to glorify you with the psalmist, to remember the wonder of your mercy, to think about how much from our hearts and with our lips we should give you praise and enable us not only with our hearts and with our lips on the hour of worship to give you praise, but help us in all things, in all of our lives, to seek to worship you, to live our lives always with that desire to please you.

[ 10 : 37 ] So help us, Lord, we pray in this day. Bless this hour as we come together in your presence, here and in our homes.

Bless each one of us in our need, Lord, in our different situations. We thank you in particular for Andrew and for Iona, who are with us this morning. We thank you for their marriage, that we watched yesterday as they came together.

And we thank you, Lord, that they are found here in your house at the beginning of their married lives. And we pray that you would bless them, bless them as a couple, bless them as a family, as family comes.

And we pray that their home may be a home where your presence is felt. And we ask, Lord, that in their lives they would know your hand upon them for good.

We thank you that you are the sovereign God. And in a world that seems so unpredictable and so changing, so much beyond our control, we thank you that we know that we worship the God who is still in control.

[ 11 : 46 ] So as we look to you, as individuals, as couples, as families, as a congregation, we trust you, Lord, and we pray that you would guide us and lead us as we seek to follow you.

We pray for those who are struggling this day. We are conscious of those in our community who are grieving, who are going through difficult times, who have a sense of loss that's acute and hard to manage.

And we pray that as they come to our minds that you would draw near to them. Some of them perhaps do not know you as God and Saviour. And we ask, Lord, that even through the difficulty of dark days, that you would reveal yourself to those who are struggling.

Come alongside them, we pray. Draw them close. Pray for those who are ill, who are struggling with illness, who are undergoing treatment, some who are not able to get future treatment.

And we ask, Lord, that you would be near to all of them as well. As they come to our minds, Lord, we pray that you would minister to them in the power of your Spirit, that they would know the comfort and the presence of God where they are.

[ 13 : 05 ] So hear our prayers as we look to you, as we commit ourselves to you. Lead us and guide us, we pray, and enable us to keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus.

For we pray these things in his name and for his sake. Amen. Boys and girls, it's good to have a few of you here this morning.

So hopefully you'll speak to me. Now, what do I have to show you this morning? Well, I don't have anything in my hands to show you. I don't have a toy or anything like that.

But I do have some pictures to show you. And I have some people to show you. So we'll start with the pictures.

Is that them all?

[ 14 : 27 ] It's all finished at home too? Okay. So boys and girls, who did you see on the screen? Can you point to the people that you saw on the screen? Natalie snuck in there.

I'm sorry, Natalie. That photograph must have gone in by mistake. Picture of the bridesmaid. But she looked very pretty, didn't she? But who did we see on the screen?

Alistair? You're pointing. We saw Iona and Andrew on the screen. And we saw them.

And what were they doing yesterday? What? They were getting married. And so today they're sitting here with us. And they are now an old married couple.

But Andrew looked very handsome. He had a very broad smile on there. Iona looked very beautiful as a bride. Now, I want to ask a question.

[ 15 : 33 ] Start off with the boys and girls. I'll maybe open it out in just a minute. But can you tell me, can you put your hand up, boys and girls, if you've ever been a bride?

Put your hand up if you've ever been a bride. No? Okay. Well, let's extend it out to the rest of the people in the church.

Put your hand up if you've ever been a bride. Come on, let's see the hands. Yeah?

Well, some hands, you can't see at home, but quite a few hands went up to say that they'd been a bride. But I'm not sure we actually got the right answer there.

Boys? Callum? Alistair? Have you never been a bride? No? Well, I think you're wrong.

[ 16 : 38 ] I think actually there's a whole lot more people in this room who are brised and are letting on. Because, do you know what the Bible teaches?

Well, the Bible teaches that every Christian is a bride. That's the truth.

Every Christian is a bride. Jesus describes in the Bible that his church, every person who believes in him, boy and girl, he describes them as a bride.

His bride. In Revelation 21, at the very end of the Bible, you know, there's that book, Revelation, and it's full of quite complicated, but very interesting things.

And what happens in Revelation is, John, he was one of Jesus' followers, he gets, he's on an island, and he's on an island because he's been put off to a prison island, because he trusted in Jesus.

[ 17 : 44 ] And when he was on this island, all on his own, God began to speak to him. And God showed him lots and lots of pictures.

And it's as if God opened a window into heaven, and he saw a picture of what heaven was like. And he, as he looks into heaven, he calls it the New Jerusalem, he describes the people that he saw who believed in Jesus.

And you know what he said about them? He said, they looked like a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband. So if you're a Christian, boy or girl, young or old, you are the bride of Jesus. You are married to Jesus. And he loves you. That's good news, isn't it? And he promises that when he comes back, we don't know what day that's going to be, but he's coming back for his bride. And he actually describes heaven like a huge, big wedding feast where the bride, the church, all the people who believe in Jesus, and the groom, that's Jesus, are together forever.

[ 19 : 14 ] Now, if you watched the wedding yesterday, did you notice two little words that Andrew and Iona both said that actually made them married?

There's two little words that both of them had to say and if they didn't say them, they couldn't be married. What were they? Really?

I do. I do. That's true, isn't it? I heard it loud and clear. They had to say, I do. Ian Murdoch asked him the questions.

Will you take Iona to be your bride? Will you take Andrew to be your husband? And we listened and they said, I do. I will. And for us, you know, Jesus, he speaks to us in the Bible.

And he says to us, I want to come into your lives. I want to take your sin away. I want to come and be near to you and bless you and love you and live with you.

[ 20 : 25 ] Now what do you say? And he wants us to say, I do. I trust you. I love you. I want you to be my saviour, to be my Lord.

I want to be your bride. So let's pray about these things. Lord God, we thank you for this day and we thank you.

We thank you again for Andrew and Iona and for them being here and for their marriage. And we thank you for the picture of marriage that you teach us through Lord Jesus in the Bible. We thank you that you loved us so much that you came to this world to rescue us from sin so that we could be with you forever.

and we thank you that you come into our lives, you take our sin away and you give to us the amazing love of God the moment we trust you, the moment we say in our hearts, I do.

I want you to make me a Christian. So help us, we pray, whether we're very young or whether we're older, to be trusting you and to know that we are part of that group that Jesus calls his bride, his church, that he will come back for on that last day.

[ 21 : 51 ] We thank you that heaven is a place of great joy, a place that's described like a wedding feast. We pray that we would be part of that feast where we will be together forever with Jesus.

So hear our prayers and help us to understand, and help us to believe. Help us to know that you love us, that you're close to us, that you're holding us forever. And we pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Thank you, boys and girls, for listening. I think there's going to be a Sunday school next door. So, boys and girls, if you want to head through just now.

And we'll turn now to Luke chapter 8, please. Luke chapter 8, Luke chapter 8, Luke chapter 8, Luke chapter 8, and we'll read from verse 1 to verse 21 of this chapter.

This is God's word. After this, we see all the activity of the previous chapter. Luke says, After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.

[ 23 : 40 ] The twelve were with them, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had come out, Joanna, the wife of Chusa, the manager of Herod's household, Susanna, and many others.

These women were helping to support them out of their means, their own means. While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable. A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path that was trampled on and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture.

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop a hundred times more than was sown.

When he said this, he called out, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that those seeing, they may not see, though hearing, they may not understand.

[ 25 : 02 ] This is the meaning of the parable. The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts so that they may not believe and be saved.

Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

But the seed on good soil stands for those who have a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. No one lights a lamp and hides it under a jar or puts it under a bed.

Instead he puts it on a stand so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing that will not be disclosed and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.

Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more. Whoever does not have even what he thinks he has will be taken from him. Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd.

[ 26 : 23 ] Someone told him, your mother and your brothers are standing outside wanting to see you. He replied, my mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We'll pray for a moment. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.

We pray as we even reflect on these verses that we've read, we pray that you would give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts that would be like the good soil responsive to Jesus.

Give to us faith, we pray, that we would not simply hear the message that comes through this teaching of Jesus, but give us the faith whereby we can take hold of it and retain it and believe it and be saved.

And we pray these things for ourselves here. We pray this for the children in Sunday school here and at home, that you would open their eyes and ears and hearts that they may see and hear and believe in Jesus.

[ 27 : 40 ] And we pray for the congregations around us as well, all other denominations where Christ crucified is preached and the island here and the community locally, and the nation and across all nations, we pray that wherever the word of God is open, that you would be working, that it would not come back void, but would achieve much for your glory.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I've got an uncle in Aberdeen and he says to me, I love it, he says, I love it when that watch that you've taken off, you take that big watch off and you put it on just at the end because it tells me you're just about finished.

I was given a book at Christmas time and the book was entitled entitled The Madness of Crowds. I haven't read the book yet, I have to confess, but we understand, we get the title of it.

We know that we can be very influenced by the people around us when we're in a crowd. You see that in football matches.

They can be the quietest, most respectable, softly spoken people and in the middle of a highly charged crowd, they become very animated, they start shouting and roaring and chanting and singing.

[ 29 : 15 ] There's a transformation that can go on at a football ground when you're in a crowd. And today, crowds might not even be physical things.

We can pick up phones and see that there can be virtual crowds that begin to gather on social media and they can be very influential to gather around a cause and try to push it forward.

There's a lot of power in a crowd. Something goes on in a crowd. We can be changed in a crowd. But sometimes the change that happens in a crowd, especially when there's high emotion, it's not lasting.

Once we're out of the crowd, we revert back to the way that we always were. And that can be seen on Jesus' day. And I want to begin today by looking at these crowds that we see throughout Luke's gospel.

The first point is we see crowd problems. point number one, crowd problems. Now we've reached Luke chapter 8, if you've been following over past weeks.

[ 30 : 37 ] And if we even glance back over the last few chapters, we can see that Luke, he very often directs our attention to the crowds. I think I counted 12 times in the last few chapters that

Luke, he mentions the crowds that were gathered around Jesus.

Wherever Jesus go, there seems to be a crowd gathering. And if we look at the last three chapters, five to seven in particular, we can see that wherever Jesus went, he was crowded with a people that wanted to see him and hear him and be close to him.

And some perhaps formed part of that crowd because they were looking for Jesus to heal them. they were ill. So they thought their best hope was not to go to the doctors but to try to get close to this Jesus who was able to heal miraculously.

There was perhaps others in the crowd who heard Jesus preach and they never heard anyone else preach like this and so they wanted to hear this firsthand and so they were in the crowd. Others still perhaps had heard about the miracles that Jesus performed, even the raising of the dead.

And so they wanted to be part of the crowd that was gathering around Jesus. But what we see over these last few chapters is that for the vast majority of the crowd they were unchanged.

[ 32 : 11 ] They had encounters with Jesus. They saw amazing, miraculous things. They heard awesome, otherworldly teaching. but they were unchanged.

They were emotionally moved, yes, we can see that. They were intellectually stimulated by what Jesus taught they had to be.

But what we can see tragically is that for the majority of the crowd, they weren't saved people. They weren't true disciples of Jesus.

And even if we think back to last week, when Jesus raised a young man from the dead, remember the funeral procession is going through the place, Jesus stops the procession, he touches the coffin, he speaks to the man, the dead man, and he says, young man, arise, get up.

And he comes to life, he's brought back with his mother. And the crowds, they're amazed, but what they said, this is chapter 7, verse 16, is a great prophet has appeared among us.

[ 33 : 28 ] God has come to help his people. But they didn't trust Jesus as saviour. They didn't bow before Jesus as Lord.

After being in that crowd, after the wonder of the miracle had passed, they just got on with their lives, which they had done before. And that's a thread that we can follow all the way through Luke's gospel.

Now, for those who follow the church calendar, we don't follow it too closely, but you'll know if you follow the church calendar at all, that this is Palm Sunday. And on Palm Sunday, the passage that we would often go to is Luke chapter 19.

So, maybe take just a moment, and if you could turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 19. And we see another crowd in Luke chapter 19. We're going to read in from verse 36, just through to verse 40, but just by way of context, what's going on here?

what's happening is Jesus is approaching the area of Jerusalem. He's coming close to the completion of his mission. He's drawing near to the cross.

[ 34 : 48 ] And as he enters this familiar place, Bethphage and Bethany, the place where Mary and Martha and Lazarus were from, a place where he enjoyed warm fellowship on many occasions, as he comes into this place, the crowds begin to respond to Jesus.

And it says in verse 36 of Luke 19, as Jesus went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory in the highest. Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, teacher, rebuke your disciples.

I tell you, Jesus replied, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out. So we have this great crowd in this triumphal entry narrative, and it seems to be such an encouraging picture, as they spread their cloaks in the road, as they cry out with loud voices, giving a blessing to God, worshipping, it would seem, Jesus.

It seems to be such an enthusiastic, genuine response. But Jesus knew that everything was not as it seemed.

[ 36 : 26 ] and as the camera zooms in on Jesus just after this, we see Jesus not so much thrilled by the great numbers, the crowds that had gathered to worship him on that day.

But we see Jesus in a quiet place, weeping. Because it says in verse 41, as he approached Jerusalem, he saw the city and he wept over it, and said, if you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes.

and it's a very poignant, it's quite a disturbing picture, this apparently enthusiastic crowd that seemed to be in worship and in the sorrow in Jesus as he's able to see what was really going on behind the hysteria of the crowds.

Jesus saw problems in the crowd. He saw one large problem in the crowd, and the problem was unbelief. He could see that for all their emotion and for all the volume, there was a refusal to believe in Jesus.

So there were crowd problems. Now for us, we have so much longed to be able to come back together as a crowd, even a crowd of 50.

[ 38 : 28 ] And that's a good longing to have. It's a right longing to have. It's good to see each other. I can't tell you how good it is to see people in the church building.

It's good to be able to look each other in the eye. it's such an encouragement to be able to speak to each other at the door. There's such encouragement, there's such emotion even that you can feel and sense when we come together in this way.

And we should take all the positives, all that. But one thing that we learn through these passages is that being in the right crowd is not enough to save.

We don't get saved by being part of the crowd. We don't get saved by being back physically in a church building, wherever it might be.

We don't get saved by attending physically a tent mission. We don't get saved by going to an SU group in school. in terms of the physicality of that.

[ 39 : 43 ] We don't get saved by joining a church Facebook page, or subscribing to a YouTube channel, or tuning into a radio broadcast. We don't even get saved by simply hearing the words of Jesus, or even feeling the presence of Jesus, or even knowing the supernatural touch of Jesus.

Many of the crowds knew all of these things. They had experienced it in greater measure than we have first hand as Jesus walked amongst them.

And yet they were unchanged at heart level. They were unsaved, these crowds, in vast numbers. And as Jesus looked into them, he wept.

and so the point here that runs through Luke's gospel and comes out at various junctures is we're not saved by crowds and being in them, but we're saved by Christ and being in him.

and that takes us back to Luke chapter 8. So if you've been in Luke 19, if you could head back to Luke chapter 8 now, we'll come to the second point.

[ 41 : 11 ] We see the crowds and the crowd problems. And the second point we come to is we see committed people. Now sometimes when we're watching coverage of an event on television, some kind of huge public gathering, whether it's a sports event or whether it's the royal wedding or one of these huge public events, you'll see the coverage on television and there's one camera, perhaps the drone camera, and it's flying overhead and we're seeing the mass of people.

We get a perspective on the scale of the event. We just see all these people, all these faces, this mass of crowd and then the shot changes from that camera to another camera and the camera person zooms in on just a small group of people.

We get to see the expressions and we see something of the interaction in the event and that's kind of what Luke does here. He's given us many shots of the crowd over the last few chapters, these vast crowds that gathered around Jesus and now he zooms in and he focuses on this much smaller group and it's a very different group.

So look at verses 1 to 3 of chapter 8. It says, after this Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.

The twelve were with him. So that's part of this group of committed people, although we know from further on that one of the twelve was a traitor.

[ 43 : 00 ] And also verse 2, some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases, may recall Magdalene, from whom seven demons had come out, Joanna, the wife of Cusa, the manager of Herod's household, Susanna, and many others.

These women were helping to support them out of their own means. So we see this small group now, quite different to the crowds.

This is a small group of committed people. The crowds, see, they came and they went. They dispersed as quickly as they gathered. They came to get blessings from Jesus and then they were gone.

But this group, they seem to have stickability. Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another proclaiming the message of the good news and this group, as difficult as it would be to be tracking with Jesus, they stuck with him.

We're told that they were with him. The twelve were with him. Some women were given the description they were with him.

[ 44 : 15 ] And I'll never tire of that phrase. You're probably sick of hearing me talking about it. But wherever I see it, I'll home in on it.

I think it's an amazing phrase to note in the Gospels. They were with him. Just the simplicity of it and the clarity of it and the awesomeness of it when you stop to think about it. they were with him. So we ask the question with who? And then we remember they were with God the Son. They were with Jesus.

The creator of heaven and earth whom we sang of in Psalm 100. They were with him. They were with the sustainer of the universe. The one who holds everything together in his hands. They were intimately with him. The one who would be the destroyer of the devil. The one who would be the savior of sinner. The one who was able to give eternal life to those who came to him. [ 45 : 26 ] The sovereign eternal God. They, this small group of committed people, they were with him. Are you with him?

Are you with him? Are you with him? Because that's what a Christian is.

A Christian is not someone who made some emotional response in a big event a long time ago, then got on with life.

a Christian is someone who is continually with him, with Jesus, continually walking away from sin, repenting, and continually seeking to walk close with Jesus.

Now, as we look at these people in verses 1 to 3, it's a strange group.

[ 46 : 38 ] The disciples, I noted this a few weeks back, they were not a particularly normal group of people in terms of the mix. They were normal as individuals. There was no royalty there, there was no celebrities there, they were just normal people, but they were a strange mix of normal people.

Malcolm Maclean, I think I quoted him a few weeks back, and he said they were ordinary men. Some were fishermen, one was a tax man, one was a former zealot terrorist. We don't know about the others.

They were imperfect men. Peter was impetuous, James and John were a bit wild, Jesus did call them the sons of thunder. Thomas could see everything in a negative way, and no doubt the others had their feelings.

So it's a strange group. If you and I were going to choose twelve people from the whole population of the world to try to change the world and start a movement, it probably wouldn't have been these twelve.

But these are the disciples that Jesus called to be with him. And then Luke tells us that there were some women. And we read that and it doesn't make much impact on us, but back then that would have made huge impact, that Jesus had some women there with him as he travelled from place to place.

[ 48 : 01 ] They weren't his disciples, we know that, but we see that Jesus, he gave a place to women which was revolutionary.

The rabbis of that day would dismiss women. there was no conversation, there was virtually no interaction. But the way that Jesus treated women with such respect and kindness and dignity, it was scandalous to the rabbis who looked on.

He had some women who were with him as he travelled around. And again, as we think about these women, they're a strange mix of people. There were some who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases.

There was Mary Magdalene who obviously was notorious from whom seven demons had come out. There was Joanna, the wife of Cusa, the manager of Herod's household, which meant that she was a woman of high standing with an important job in some means.

And then there was Susanna. What does she do? Well, we haven't got a clue what she did. But she did something. She served Jesus and Jesus noticed, Jesus knew.

[ 49 : 31 ] And the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to say, Susanna, put her name in there. We don't know what she did. but the Lord knew and knows what she did.

And I think, you know, there's encouragement for us when we think about that. If we're trying to serve God, others may not see, but God sees everything. the building's warm this morning. I didn't put the heaters on. Not sure who did. Somebody did. For those who are watching at home, there's a lot of technology involved in that. I didn't do it. I don't know how to do it. Somebody did. the way the church looks on the outside even. Tidiness of it. Somebody does that. Not me. But the point I'm trying to make, and I'm not going to start naming names because it kind of defeats the purpose, but there are people who seek to serve God behind the scenes and we may not see them, we may not know, but God knows. [ 50 : 56 ] He sees those who are serving. William Bartley says, many of Jesus' greatest servants are in the background, unseen, but essential to his cause.

So whatever it is we seek to do to serve God, take encouragement from knowing that although others may not see it, God sees it.

Our names may not be on a board, but they are known to the Lord Jesus. so we see these strange disciples, we see this peculiar mix of women as well, and one thing we know as we track through Luke's gospel is that these women stayed the course.

Because if we were to fast forward, we won't go there now because time is almost gone, if we were to fast forward to Luke 24, we see that when Jesus rises, the first ones on scene were who? Well, they were Mary and Joanna. They're the ones who are telling the good news of the resurrection to the disciples.

[ 52 : 25 ] so we see this small but eclectic group of committed people who are with Jesus. And they had nothing very much in common in terms of this world, but they were brought together as believing people who were with him.

So why are we told this? what's the application here? Why do we need to see a profile of this odd mix of believers?

Well, I think it's so that we'll see that no one is excluded. We see men and we see women who are with Jesus. We see rich and poor who are with Jesus.

We see those who would have been considered to be good upright people and those who had even a dark demonic past and they are with Jesus. We see professionals and tradesmen who are with Jesus.

We see mild-mannered gentle souls and a couple of the sons of thunder and they're with Jesus. We see people who are glass half-empty types and we see those who are glass half-full types and they're with Jesus.

[ 53 : 50 ] and I think that the message for us to grasp is that everyone is called to come to and to be with Jesus. Jesus said in Matthew 11 28, come to me all who are weary and burdened.

If we see our sin, if we know that weariness, that burden of sin, we are called to come to Jesus for the rest that only he can give. Psalm 145 verse 18, we read it last Sunday evening, the Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

Or Psalm 100 and verse 1, which we began with, all people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord. So we see this small group of committed people.

And I want to simply ask, have we committed our lives to Jesus yet? That's the crucial question. We see them, but what about us?

Have we committed our lives to Jesus yet? His commitment to us was absolutely unquestionable. He was faithful unto death on the cross, but what about our commitment to him?

[ 55 : 17 ] Are we with him? And if the camera was to zoom in on our lives, could we be seen as part of that small but committed group of people who are trusting in Jesus, who are with Jesus?

It's easy to hide in the crowd. Jesus calls us, all of us, to come to him, to commit our lives to him. I have two more points, but I have no more time, so let's pray. Our heavenly father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for the wideness, wideness, the inclusivity of the gospel call.

We thank you that all who see Jesus, who he is, all who see the cross and what he did there, all who see and who feel the weight of sin are called to come to Jesus and find the rest that he alone can give.

[ 56 : 48 ] So we pray that you would enable each of us not simply to hear the call, but to respond. We see the different types of heart in the passage that we read and we pray that our hearts would not be shallow, they would not be crowded, they would not be hardened, so that we pray push

Jesus away and we close our ears to the call of Christ, but we ask that our hearts would be like the good song and that we would trust in Jesus.

Help us, we pray, to commit our lives to you, to be able to say what we'll sing in a moment in our hearts, trust and obey. There's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. We will conclude by hearing Mission Praise 760, son, that speaks about our walk with the Lord and the call that he places upon us that we are to trust him and to obey him and there's happiness, there's joy as we live that way.

so, 760, when we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way.

when we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way.

While we do his good will, he abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey.

[ 59 : 00 ] Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, us, but to trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies, but his smile quickly drives it away.

Not a doubt, nor a fear, not a sigh, nor a tear, can abide while we trust and obey.

trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, but our toil he doth richly repay.

[ 60 : 05 ] Not a grief, nor a loss, not a frown, nor a cross, but is blessed if we trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

obey. But we never can prove the delights of his love until all on the altar we lay.

For the favor he shows, and the joy he bestows, are for them who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

[ 61 : 09 ] Then in fellowship, sweet, we will sit at his feet, or we'll walk by his side in the way.

What he says we will do, where he sends, we will go, never fear, only trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

We'll stand for the benediction. and I 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 forever more.

Amen.