

17.10.21 pm: ADJUSTING THE LENS

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Date: 17 October 2021

Preacher: George Barnie

[0 : 00] Good evening and welcome to our evening service. It's good to have your fellowship here in the church and on behalf of the congregation we're delighted to see visitors with us tonight and coming from other places.

Our call to worship tonight comes from Psalm 42. Psalm 42 at verse 1. As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

Our first item of praise tonight is going to be from Psalm 18. From Psalm 18, the first two verses, and we're going to sing this in Gaelic.

Psalm 18 in English reads, Thee will I love, O Lord, my strength, my fortress in the Lord, my rock, and he that doth to me deliverance afford, my God, my strength, whom I will trust, a buckler unto me, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower is he.

Let's stand and if we can sing in Gaelic. Let's sing in Gaelic.

[2 : 00] Let's sing in Gaelic.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[4 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[7 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[9 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[11 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[14 : 29] Thank you.

Thank you.

Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[16 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[19 : 29] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

God, God, Thank you.

[22 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[25 : 29] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[27 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[30 : 29] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 59] Thank you.

We're in a restaurant.

Thank you.

Thank you.

And you, Thank you.

[35 : 59] would gobble up. And this is how satisfied our psalmist is with God. When it comes to satisfaction, the world has a certain glamour, but there's nothing and no one can satisfy the soul like God.

Soon we find that the wells of this world are empty. What our Saviour Jesus offers is satisfaction in the real world, often satisfaction in the midst of disappointment, in the midst of frustration, and in the midst of danger, and even in the midst of death.

In the 1970s, I was in a large church in Glasgow, and I was there by default. I was interested in a particular girl, and I was happy to go anywhere where she went. And this particular night, a Sunday night, she was going to church, so I would go to church with her. I was not interested in church at all. I was not in any way against church, but I was just not interested at all. The minister, the pulpit, as it was in many, many churches in days gone by, the pulpit was way up there. There was people on the ground floor, there was people in the balcony, and I would imagine there would have been about 600 people in the church of all ages. And I was stunned by this fact, because I thought church was essentially for old people. So I was very surprised to see younger people there. And the minister that night spoke about satisfaction.

And it was as if his finger was pointing at me. And he was saying, you have been looking for satisfaction in the wrong places. You have been looking for satisfaction in alcohol.

You have been looking for satisfaction in relationships. You have been looking for satisfaction in education.

[38 : 37] And that night, I had not gone there because of an interest in Christianity. And then he said these words, the only place you will find satisfaction is in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that was

the night I became a Christian. I became a Christian. And the person I was with became a Christian at the same time.

About satisfaction, I was the living example of the Rolling Stones. And it was as if someone had told him that I was there. And then that promise that you get, that the Lord's promise that when we come to him, we will know peace, we will know peace with God. We will know peace with one another. We will know peace with outsiders. And we will know what the Bible talks about as that peace that passes understanding. We will know forgiveness. Isn't it amazing that the Lord is willing to forgive us whatever we have thought, said or done, he is willing to forgive us.

And we will know love like we've never known before. That someone, someone would go to the cross and take the punishment that should have been ours.

And we will know family. We will know family. We can come to Harris and we can find our brothers and sisters. We could equally go to Timbuktu and find our brothers and sisters there. This incredible, large international family.

[40 : 26] And that we also are given a future. We know that whatever happens, if we're Christians tonight, whatever happens, that we will go to be with the Lord at the end of the day.

And I can just imagine what that's like when we've come to know Jesus. We've come to know Jesus. We've come to love Jesus. We've come to serve Jesus.

But then we will see him face to face. David, the psalmist, had to adjust the lens from the situation he was in.

And it's exactly the same for us, whatever our situation is tonight. Nehemiah chapter 8 and verse 10 sums it up.

The joy of the Lord is my strength. The missionary Hudson Taylor had a plaque in his home.

[41 : 29] The plaque was Ebenezer and Jehovah Jireh. And he would say, thus far the Lord has helped us.

Ebenezer, thus far the Lord has helped us. And Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will see to it. And Hudson Taylor said this about this plaque that they had.

This takes care of the past and the future. So why worry about the present? God is in control.

Satisfaction. Secondly, security. Where does David find security? There's none. He's in the desert of Judah.

His life is under threat. But he has security in a God that he's come to know and learn to trust.

[42 : 34] Where do we find security in 2021? Perhaps we find there's a certain security in a political party that we're attached to.

Perhaps it's the security is in our bank balance. Or the security is in our insurance policies. Or our stocks and shares.

But if the pandemic has taught us anything, it's taught us that all of these things can be so easily taken away.

Our security is the same as the psalmist. Our security is in God. Verse 2 of our psalm.

I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. The psalmist has had past experience of God in the sanctuary as a shepherd boy, as king.

[43 : 42] And knowing that God is sovereign. Because he knows three things about God. He knows God's presence. God's power. And at the end of the psalm, he knows about God's judgment.

He has seen God in the past. He sees him in the present and he can trust him for the future. How can we know that security, the same security that the psalmist have?

It's to get to know our God. And perhaps for you tonight, it's to get to know God for the very first time. I had a former pupil.

And she was telling me, I saw her in a church one night. And I was quite, she was the kind of person I didn't expect to see in a church. And I didn't like to ask her, why are you here?

I didn't expect to see you. I thought that was a bit rude. So, but at a later date, I said to her, I saw you in church. Tell me more. And she said, I woke up one day and I just wanted to know about God.

[44 : 52] Just out of the blue, she woke up and she wanted to know about God. She went to a local church and it didn't seem to suit her.

And she thought, oh, I'll forget about that idea. But when she went into the office the following morning, she asked, she said to someone, I woke up with a strange thing.

I wanted to find out about God, but I realized, no, the church is not for me. And the girl in the office was a Christian and said to her, why don't you come with me to my church?

She said as soon as she heard the minister start, she was hooked and she was fascinated. And she just knew when he talked about God from the Bible, she was finding out about God.

And she later became a Christian. And perhaps for us, for Christians tonight, isn't it good for us to get to know our God better and better and better?

[45 : 53] And it's like a lifelong friendship. We know the person. We know how they think. We know so much about them. But yet, as the friendship or the relationship develops, we get to know them better and better.

It always amazes me that the Bible, according to Google, is still a bestseller. Still a bestseller in 2021.

And yet, it remains a book that's largely on people's bookshelves or beside their bed, but so seldom read.

Verse 7 in our psalm says this. Isn't it like a protection for fledglings?

There's safety there. And in verse 4, we read these words. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

[47 : 06] In your name I will lift up my hands. Now, that's still the case in some Christian traditions. They still lift up my hands. They still lift up their hands when they praise God or when the word is read.

They still lift up their hands. But in the Old Testament, it was very much a posture of prayer as they lifted up their hands. And the idea was, as they lifted their hands, the prayers went up and the blessings came down.

How is such intimacy possible? Only through our Lord Jesus Christ. He, by his death and resurrection, he has made our way to God possible.

So that we, by trusting in him, become children of the living God. Sons and daughters. Sons and daughters. Isn't it amazing?

I always find it amazing when someone adopts a child. My mother was an abandoned baby.

[48 : 23] We don't know a lot about her. She was an abandoned baby. And I thought she was adopted by, I learned just fairly recently, she was not adopted formally, but she was taken in by a family.

Don't you admire someone who brings up a child that's not their own? And aren't we glad there are these people around that bring up their children?

And as we see that person becoming more and more like their parents, who of course aren't their parents biologically, but they become more and more like their parents, in their mannerisms and sometimes in their looks.

When I've been at parents' nights over the years, some parents have said, did you know my son was adopted? Well, it was none of my business to know whether they were adopted or not.

But I would have looked at the child and looked at the parents and said, they look like you. And their mannerisms and their mannerisms and the way they spoke, the way they turned around, so like it.

[49 : 32] And that's like us when we become Christians. Now, there are many, many people who will never, ever be in any church or at any church service, even on Zoom or anywhere else.

They will see you in your workplace. They will see you in your community.

They will see you in your social life. And they will see me, too, in all these places. And they will see when we are Christians that we're being changed from one degree of glory to another.

None of our own doing, all of the Lord, as we take time to be with him, to be in his word, to be in prayer, to be with him.

And isn't it amazing that we can call the God of creation, we can call him Abba, Father. One of the books I read at university when I was studying German was a book called Tonio Kruger, who was the main character of the book.

[50 : 47] And Tonio Kruger was very much an outsider. He didn't fit in at all. But there's one particular scene in that book that stands out in my head.

It was at Christmas. And you saw, well, you didn't see, I was reading the book, but there was a family gathering. The lights were on.

They were having a party. All the joy of being together as a family. Tonio Kruger, the outsider, he is at the window, his face pressed against the window, wishing he could belong.

But he didn't. Wishing he could belong. I don't know about you, if you're a Christian here tonight, but I've had friends saying to me, I wish I had your faith.

To which I reply, no, no. You maybe wish you had the God that I have faith in. You maybe don't wish for my faith.

[51 : 52] And I want to invite them to have faith in the same God. A bit like that man pressed against the window to know someone could have opened the door and said, come and join us in here.

And a sovereign God will have the last word. When he says, in judgment, the mouths of liars will be stopped.

Vengeance is mine. So we've seen satisfaction. We've seen security. And in his security, again, he had to adjust the lens.

And finally, single-mindedness. In spite of his awful circumstances, his focus is not on the desert or the danger, but on his God.

And his God is not a theological idea, but a personal reality. What about us? What is God for us?

[53 : 03] Isn't it amazing that we can come to know God in that intimate way? And we can have Jesus Christ as our elder brother.

His longing for God that we've got in verse 1 is like a longing for someone we're in love with. Do you remember the days when you were first in love?

You remember these days. Now, for some of us, it was a long time ago. We're having to use our memories. And we couldn't wait to be with that person again.

We couldn't wait for tomorrow to see that person. It doesn't have to be love like that. It could equally be love that's come from a friendship, where we get on so well with that person.

We love their company, though we can't wait to be with them the next time. In verse 1 in the message, it says this about the psalmist feeling about God.

[54 : 13] It says, I can't get enough of you. I can't get enough of you. Is that how we feel about our God? Human relationships sadly can go stale.

We can take one another so much for granted. And isn't it the same with God? Yes, we're Christians. But do we spend that time with our Lord?

It's so easy for us that we can worship the gifts that he gives us rather than the giver. And in Revelation 2, when the writer is writing to Ephesus, and the words are quite disturbing, when the Lord is saying, you have abandoned the love you had at first.

And sadly in human relationships, sadly when people divorce, it's often the end of that relationship. You do hear on occasion that people will get back together again. But so often it's the end. That relationship, and because of that, many other relationships are severed.

[55 : 32] We've all known that. Some of us know that in our own families. But to know our relationship with God can be restored.

If we have fallen away, if we have sinned against God, isn't it good to know he will have us back when we come to him and we confess?

Isn't it good from time to time to read Psalm 51, where David had been challenged by Nathan about his adultery?

And then he came to God. A wonderful psalm. David's single-mindedness is seen in verse 1, where he says, earnestly I seek you.

Not someone groping in the dark for God, but a man confident in this God. earnest, perhaps because he's in desperate straits.

[56 : 34] It's his top priority. In verse 1 in the Scottish Psalter, that we'll see in a moment or two, it says this, Lord thee my God, I'll early seek.

Lord thee my God, I'll early seek. early in that it might be our first port of call in a crisis. Is that always our response in that kind of situation?

Or it could be early in life. We can come to Jesus in repentance and faith when we're young, when we're children.

We don't have to wait till we're grown up. We don't have to wait till later in life. Early in life. I know someone who came to Christ when he was eight years of age.

And I remember thinking about that and thinking, really? Is that true? Is that a real relationship with the living God? Well, that person's now nearly 40.

[57 : 39] And he's still a Christian. With his ups and downs, unlike the rest of us, unlike the rest of us, the rest of us, now, the statistics say, I don't always believe statistics, but statistics say that 90% of people become Christians before the age of 24.

Well, I knew a lady in her 70s who became a Christian from an atheistic background. Now, the early could mean early to be in the word.

Now, some of you are morning people, and some of you like early morning before there's any stir in the household to be up and just have some private time with the Lord in the word and in prayer.

Now, had you been alive in John Wesley, the hymn writer's day, you would have been in for a big surprise. He was very generous in having you to stay.

But, one of the conditions was, you joined him for worship at 4 a.m. Yes, I'm glad, but it's not quite like that in the months.

[58 : 57] Well, David's not there. What time's best for you? We want to seek the time where we are at absolute freshest to spend with the Lord.

David, in this desert, is physically so far away from God. You see, he associates God with the sanctuary as Old Testament believers did.

And then, in the New Testament, they came to realize that we can worship God anywhere. And, Jesus met the woman at the well and made this clear.

That gives us inspiration, much as we love our church, that we can worship God anywhere. And, even when we had to stay away from church during the pandemic, and we had the live streaming, and we could worship God together.

We weren't physically together, but we were together. verse 8 says, I cling to you. I cling to you, the psalmist says, speaking about God.

[60 : 06] It's, the cling is the same Hebrew word as, as is used in Genesis 2, 24, when it says, therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

It's the same word. And doesn't it give us that oneness that we can have with God? When we become Christians, as soon as we become Christians, we are united to Christ.

And when Jesus died, he paid the ransom to set us free. If we're Christians tonight, we belong to him, and he belongs to us.

We are living in an age where people don't have that feeling of belonging. You are particularly fortunate here on the island is that there is still a sense on the island of belonging to one another and looking out for one another.

But so many people live very isolated lives these days. Song of Songs, chapter 6 and at verse 3 says this about our relationship with our Lord.

[61 : 21] I am my beloved's and he is mine. It's as if we were engaged and one day, if we're Christians, we will be sitting at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Revelation 19 and 9 says this, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. We're all invited.

Everyone is invited. Isn't it amazing? I don't know about a Harris wedding, but most of us who are organising weddings, we have to restrict the numbers just because of the cost or because of the venue.

But there's no restrictions. There's no restrictions in this marriage supper of the Lamb. We're all invited and there will be three responses.

There will be yes please. There will be no thanks. And there will be I'll see. But that last response, I'll see, is almost as good as a rejection.

[62 : 34] because we may never get another chance to come to Christ. David is single-minded in his relationship and it encourages us to be single-minded too.

Jesus just reminds us of what we know from the Old Testament. But in Matthew 22, verse 37, he says, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, and with all your mind.

Who else would we want as our God? Who else would we want who is loving, caring, forgiving, powerful, majestic?

So let us be like the psalmist and let us refocus the lens. Let's pray together. Our Father, we do just thank you for your word and we thank you for what we learn about you and just how great a God you are.

Lord, and we just thank you for the inspiration from the psalmist who trusted you, learn to trust you in all circumstances. And Lord, we pray for each one of us.

[63 : 58] Thank you for each one and each family represented here tonight. And pray that you would draw us either to yourself if we've never come or closer and closer to yourself.

