

9.10.22 pm

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Date: 09 October 2022

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good evening everyone, good to see you all. I won't go through the notices, you had them all this morning, but one that was omitted this morning is the Gaelic Mother and Toddlers group is on this Thursday morning.

So for those who attend that, Gaelic Mother and Toddlers on this Thursday morning, so you can take note of that. So we'll begin now this time of worship and we'll sing to God's praise from Psalm 43, Psalm 43 verses 5 and 6, the last two stanzas of the Psalm in Gaelic.

We come to Genesis 15 tonight, we see Abraham slightly cast down in his soul and the Lord deals with him.

So we have this Psalm where we come to the Lord when we're feeling cast down and ask for his help. Why art thou cast down my soul? What should discourage thee? Why with vexing thoughts art thou disquieted in me?

Still trust in God for him to praise. Good cause I yet shall have. He of my countenance is the health, my God that doth me save. We sing these two stanzas in Gaelic. We remain seated to sing in Gaelic.

[1 : 13] And after that, John McSween will come up and lead us in prayer in Gaelic, please. It is. O Manam Kamalotura Chiva Mishritchchia O Manam Kamalotura Chiva Mishritchchia O Manam Kamalotura Chiva Mishritchchia My Is animios

Chiva Mishritchchia My Is equal to present My Is Christ 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.

[12 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[14 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[17 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Genesis chapter 15.

And if you're a lot of But Abraham said, Then he said to him,

And a young pigeon, And they will be, And a man,

[21 : 30] And a man, of his word, And to magnify, And all that in the Lord,

And he will be, And he will, And he will,

And he will, and he will, And he is, and he is, and he is, And he will, and he will, and he will, and all the He will, and many will, and let his titles, and He will, time to the cross where we see all that was done on our behalf to make it possible for us to be shown the mercy of God we know that you are a God who is just and justice requires that our sin be dealt with be punished and we thank you Lord that on the cross we see Jesus there as the substitute who stepped in to take the punishment in our place so that the requirements of the law could be met so that justice could be done and yet mercy shown to us we thank you that the one who was innocent that being Jesus your son our savior was put in the position of one who was guilty he took our guilt into his body on the tree and we thank you Lord that we who are guilty are shown that mercy that grace because of all that Jesus has done we thank you for the great exchange for our sin going to him and being punished on the cross and his righteousness being given to us and we praise you Lord that even now as we bow in prayer we bow as those who are sinners but if we have looked to Jesus we are sinners who have been saved by grace we are those who know the blessing of God the love of God the compassion of God the care of God towards us so we pray Lord that you would make us always thankful for these things cause us to be those who are continually going to the cross to survey it to see all that has been done for us to see the depths of your love for us and to see the response required from us that we would worship you that we would praise you that we would use our lives to bring glory to your name not because that will save us we thank you that salvation is full salvation is free the work of salvation is completed it's finished but as those who have received such great salvation help us we pray to be to be eager to serve you and to be zealous in our service of you

we ask that you would open your word to us now Lord that you would help us as we read this story this story that is true from so many thousands of years ago the story of how you came to a man who was far from you and revealed yourself to him and called him to follow we thank you Lord that it's a message which is locked in history so long ago and yet it's a message that's relevant to our lives today because you're the God who continues to call us when we were far from you we thank you that in the gospel we are called to come to Jesus and to find rest for our souls for find forgiveness for our sin and to follow you with all that we have so help us Lord to follow and teach us from your word these lessons that Abraham learned that we too would learn them so that we would follow you more closely than often we do we pray Lord that you would be with those who are struggling just now we thank you that you care for us and when we are anxious for ourselves or for others we can cast our anxieties our cares upon you knowing that you care for us and we ask Lord that you administer to those who are in need tonight we pray on for those who are who are sick and who are in hospital we think of Kathy

Campbell we ask Lord that you would bless her that you would strengthen her and that you would go before her as she we pray recovers and is able to come out in due course we pray Lord for Donald Morrison Scott Road and we ask that you would be near to him we thank you that although he has been through a big operation he seems to be well and recovering and strengthening and we pray for your protection over him we ask Lord that he would continue to know your hand of healing upon him and that soon he would be able to return to Harris House if that be your will and we ask Lord that in the hospital at this time that you would be near to him that he would know your presence that he would know your peace and we pray for Mary as well in Harris House that you would bless her that you would be near to her and minister to her in her body and in her mind we pray for Alistair MacLeod from Scalpy

[31 : 05] Mags' father as he recovers also in hospital we ask Lord that you would strengthen him that you would be near to him and minister to him and minister to him meet him at the point of his need and for others Lord at hospital that we may not know of we ask that you would minister to them we think of Ian Ross from up in Sunny Hill and we bring him to you also we pray for those who are at home and who are ill and who are we pray recovering we pray on for the Reverend Ian Murdo that you would bless him Lord that you would strengthen him that you would take him back into your service soon and we pray Lord for Michela's father in Romania as he struggles with cancer Lord as he receives treatment as they think about the way ahead we pray that you would lay your hands upon him Lord that he would know that you are close to him we believe that you are able to heal Lord but we submit to you Lord that your ways are higher than our ways and sometimes your calling is to take us from time into eternity and so with all those that we are concerned about we bring them to you in prayer asking that you would do for them more than we can ask or imagine and from Michela's dad in particular we ask Lord that you would minister to him that you would be near to him that you would be near to all those who care for him and that you would bless

Michela and her mum and the whole family that they would know your peace and your help and we pray on for little baby Nancy as well that she would receive the treatment that she needs and that you would give clarity and direction for the way ahead so hear our prayers be with all those who are struggling physically we pray for those who may be struggling in their minds those who battle with addictions we pray for those who may be struggling spiritually and who may feel far from you at this time we thank you that when we come in repentance and faith at any time and simply pray you're the God who takes those who are far off back close again and so we pray for any who may be drifting who may be feeling that sense of distance that you would draw them that you would draw each of us close to you so hear our prayers and help us now as we study your word and we ask all these things in Jesus name amen one of the biggest issues that comes up when we speak to people about spiritual things this is not just my observation this is i think an observation that any pastor uh would make and it's probably an observation that any elder uh would make as well one of the biggest issues that come up when we actually have the honesty to speak to each other about the things uh we wrestle with spiritually is the issue of assurance and very often it's the people that you think uh are most strong and steady uh that actually have the biggest wrestles uh with the whole area of assurance uh or probably more specifically uh wrestle with a lack of assurance there are people who are christians and you can likely think of many in your mind's eye even now uh who may have been christians for for many years and yet they've never gone forward to the lord's table because of a lack of assurance there's some perhaps who've gone forward and they've been there once or twice and then there's been a a kind of crisis and again because of a lack of assurance they they've shrunk back and stopped and these questions that can crash into to our minds questions of am i really a christian you know questions of if i go forward and profess my faith in jesus will i be able to keep on going these questions as we go through scripture and we may uh have difficulties in our our circumstances these questions of of can god's promises really be trusted i mean these are real questions and these are the kind of questions that haunt us and they're the kind of questions that hold us back uh when we lack assurance and if we simply ignore a lack of assurance and and just pretend uh that these things are not in our minds if we try and take these kind of thoughts and these wrestles and just push them aside and don't deal with them you know all that happens is they they multiply and we become spiritually damaged so the question tonight with genesis 15 open is um what do we need to do when we lack assurance it's a very practical question what do we need to do when we lack assurance and uh the answer i'll give you at the beginning

uh the answer is we are to do what abram did and we're to come to the lord in all honesty with uh these wrestles we're going to sing at the end of the the service just as i am though tossed about with many a conflict many a doubt fightings within and fears without oh lamb of god i come so when we're struggling with these questions of assurance uh we're to come to god in prayer to ask him to to speak to us through the word and uh this is not something that we do once in our life this is something that we have to keep on doing and we see that as we uh track with abram and his his journey as he follows god so there's um three things tonight that uh we'll look at in the time that we have and the first thing is uh the courage that abram needed the courage that abram needed and if you go to verse 7 because we looked really at verses 1 to 6 uh the last time we were uh together in genesis uh if we go to to verse 7 we are brought into a conversation that is between the lord and abram if you glance back at the the first few verses we can see uh that abram at the beginning of chapter 15 he's shaking in his heart uh he's shaky uh he has been fearful and so the lord comes to him at the beginning of this chapter uh acknowledging his fear and in verses 1 to 4 we're not going to go through them uh the lord speaks to abram and gives him words of reassurance and then in verse 5 uh the lord kind of takes him outside the room and shows him the stars and says here's a picture of my promises here's a picture of your descendants he gives him this visual aid this illustration of how fully he would answer uh his his promise and how good he would be to to abram and it tells us in verse 6 that abram uh he did believe so from verse 1 to verse 6 we see abram and he's gone from fearfulness and a lack of faith verse 6 uh to he does believe but the thing is abram's faith is not rock solid and he continues to need strength he continues to need courage as he seeks to follow the lord i was thinking as i was studying it's a bit it's a bit like a phone michael john boys and girls you know phones devices um how long will they work if you just kind of you know leave them sitting on the desk how long will they work for a day maybe two days not that long and if you're gaming on your phone and you're using it for a few hours and then you just leave it be it what will happen to it quite quickly it will just turn off so how do you get it to turn back on well no not the button if it's got no power what do you have to do really you have to charge it see phones they have to be charged up and for ourselves as we seek to follow god as we seek to live by faith we need to keep on being charged up think about romans 10 romans 10 tells us faith comes by hearing and it's

hearing the word about Jesus and so day by day in the same way that devices have to be charged up in the same way that we need to go to sleep and be charged up spiritually speaking we need to be in the Bible we need to be in God's word if we're to get the strength the faith the courage to follow the Lord and Abram he needs that he continually needs that so look at verse 7 and verse 8 he also said to him I am the Lord this is God speaking to Abram I am the Lord who brought you out of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it but Abram said oh sovereign Lord how can I know underline that word how can I know that I will gain possession of it see Abram wants to know that he can trust God Abram wants to know that God's promises the promise of a son the promise of a home he wants to know that these promises can be trusted and so he asks the Lord for reassurance you know he's just had reassurance through the word through a picture but he's still shaking so he asks the Lord again for reassurance he wants to hear from God and there's a lesson for us here in application and it's a very straightforward lesson and I suppose the simplest way to put it is it's okay not to be okay you know we keep hearing that in terms of mental health when we struggle with mental health there's that phrase that gets used it's okay not to be okay when you're struggling talk about it and when we're struggling in our hearts then it's okay to tell the Lord I'm struggling with this it's okay to ask for assurance and then it's okay the next day to ask for assurance again faith is a gift of God Phesians 2 and we have to keep on coming to the Giver and asking for that gift Abram needed to come to the Lord continually asking for courage to keep on keeping on and you and I need that same courage that only God can give and so we need to keep on coming to the Lord as Abram did we'll keep seeing that in this life story Abram he keeps having to come back to God you and I need to keep on coming back every day to the Lord so first of all the courage that Abram needed the second point is the compassion that the Lord shows towards Abram now many of us here are parents some of us are grandparents and we know that as parents or grandparents there are times in life when our children need reassurance sometimes put your hand up boys and girls put your hand up if you've ever struggled sleeping yeah I'm just checking all our girls have their hands way up in the air yeah yeah he's got both hands up just now you know maybe that's the problem maybe there's a struggle with sleeping maybe we have children and they've been they've seen a video on YouTube and it's a

bit grisly and there's monsters or whatever and it's it's freaked them out and they now believe there's monsters under the bed so you tell them to go to bed and go to sleep and they're five minutes in the bed and they're starting to worry that there's monsters under the bed and so you hear these steps going downstairs and you're sitting just trying to have a quiet evening and the door opens and they're maybe crying and they're in a little bit of distress and you say what's wrong it's the monsters there's monsters under the bed and you get to the heart of it they've seen a video in somebody else's house and there's monsters under the bed and there's definitely monsters under the bed and so you take them upstairs and you hold them by the hand and you give them a cuddle and you show them under the bed with a torch there's no monster see it's safe you can go to sleep and they're fine for about four minutes and then you're sitting downstairs and you hear the footsteps on the stairs again and they're back down and they're still in a they're back in a state of distress again what is it it's the monsters they're definitely monsters

[45 : 45] I heard something it's definitely there so you go upstairs again and give them a cuddle and you show them under the bed there's no monsters five minutes later what happens it happens again and speaking hypothetically maybe the first time they come down the stairs you know you're okay with that and you say it's okay it's fine don't worry about it and the second time you're maybe slightly impatient hypothetically and you say it's fine just don't worry about the monsters but when they come down the third time on the fourth time on the fifth time on the sixth time usually at this point some parents start to run out of patience and you say something like there's no monsters under the bed we've checked it once we've checked it twice we've checked it three times get upstairs do not move from that bed I do not want to see you again till the morning that's the end of it now that's us but that's not God that's the point the Lord shows us endless compassion

Abraham as you look at him here he's dithering and he's stressing and he's fearful and the Lord comes to him and he speaks his word to him and he shows him the stars that settles him down for a little bit and then he's fearful again he's saying how can I know that your words trusted and the Lord he continues to speak to him so gently and so tenderly he's given him his word he's given him a picture he speaks to him with such warmth and yet Abraham he's still asking for more and for more and yet the Lord doesn't at any point here scold him or drive him away and send him upstairs and tell him I don't want to see your face again for the next two weeks there's none of that the Lord does not lose patience with Abraham he shows such great warmth and compassion to him you know we're given a picture of what we sang in

Psalms 103 the Lord is compassionate and gracious slow to anger and abounding in love and in application this is slightly repetitive but it's purposefully so because we need to hear this in application let us just look to see again who God is you know we're so prone to project our sinful failures onto the Lord we're so prone to sometimes think that he will treat us the way that we keep treating other people but the Lord he's compassionate and he loves us and he's patient to us and he's so kind and tender towards us and he understands far better than we understand how weak we are and he knows better than we know how much we need him and the truth is the Lord is so much readier to receive us and help us than we are to come to him and ask for that help so we've got a lesson here from Abram and the point that we need to take on board now is that we can keep on coming to the

God who is always ready to meet us at the point of our need so what happens next how does the Lord answer Abram and help Abram how is this assurance that Abram needs given to him well that takes us to the last point it comes in the form of a covenant the covenant that the Lord makes boys and girls little question for you here just to keep you awake for the last five minutes what's a covenant it's not a word we often use is it any ideas what is a covenant because we're talking here about the covenant that the Lord makes with Abram he's speaking to Abram and he makes a covenant with him what do you think a covenant is any ideas not sure really it's like a promise yeah it's a it's an agreement between two or more persons to do or not do something so

Abram speaks to God and God speaks to Abram in the form of this covenant so if you want an example of a covenant marriage is a covenant where husband and wife they promise to use the words here to love each other and be faithful to each other for as long as they both shall live that's a covenant between two people and here God makes an agreement he makes a covenant with Abram verse 9 and verse 10 so the Lord said to him that's Abram bring me a heifer a goat and a ram each three years old along with a dove and a young pigeon Abram brought all these to him cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other the birds however he did not cut in half now this seems kind of weird to us if truth be told but this is what they did this is how covenants were made animals would be cut to formalize a promise back in that day and that age you know we talk we still talk today about cutting a deal and that phrase

[51 : 52] I understand comes way back from this ancient tradition so as these animals are cut it's a bit like lawyers with contract documents the documents are being prepared the lawyers are getting everything ready and the covenant here is sealed not with ink but with blood verse 11 then birds of the air came down on the carcasses but Abram drove them away what's all this about well we don't really know I think is the answer to that question various theories about this some commentators think that the birds of prey were like a picture of doubts and fears other commentators think that the picture of the bird of prey is a picture of the devil's attacks and Abram he has to actually drive them away you can make up your minds on that I'm not sure verse 12 as the sun was setting

Abram fell into a deep sleep and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him then the Lord said to him know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own they will be enslaved and mistreated for 400 years but I will punish the nation they serve as slaves and afterwards they will come out with great possessions you however will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age in the fourth generation your descendants will come back here for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure so this is God's word this is his covenant this is his promise to Abraham you know we've had a promise that's been given to Abraham and then it's made a bit clearer and then it's made a bit clearer still and again in this section the Lord he's given more definition to this promise and he's saying to

Abraham my promise to you will be fulfilled you can count on that but the Lord is honest enough to say Abraham this is not going to be a trouble free promise and this is not going to happen immediately but everything that I've promised you Abraham to happen it will happen that was God's message to Abraham and that remains God's message to us as his people today you know if we are following the Lord we have been given such great promises we know that our sins are forgiven and that's a promise that has already come true if we are trusting in Christ but we've been promised that when we come to the end of our lives here then there's a home that's been prepared for us we've been promised that we are part of a family where all tribes tongues nations will be united together in this place of amazing beauty and perfection we've been promised that there's going to come a time when we are not simply saved from the power of sin and the punishment for sin but we'll be saved from the presence of sin there'll be no more attacks of the devil there'll be no more disunity there'll be no more of the things that we struggle with these are rich promises that God has given us but we have to wait for some of them we need faith to keep on keeping on and Jesus has promised that in this world as we seek to follow him it won't be trouble free he loves us enough to tell us that

Jesus doesn't put all this trouble in the small print he tells us from day one if you're following me there's going to be some hard things to deal with John 15 Jesus says to his disciples if the world hates you keep in mind that it hated me first if you belonged to the world it would love you as its own as it is you do not belong to the world but I have chosen you out of the world that is why the world hates you hard thing for the disciples to have to hear but Jesus just a few verses on from that says at the beginning of John chapter 16 all these things I have told you so that you will not fall away so if you're finding things hard just now if there are struggles if there seems to be trouble if it just seems difficult to follow

Jesus keep on is the message he will give you and I the strength to keep on keeping on through the trouble and keep your eyes on the fulfillment of that promise that Jesus has given us we're only here for a while and it may be turbulent for seasons but then there's eternity then there's perfect peace and joy and life endless if we are those who are keeping on following the Lord verse 17 when the sun had set and darkness had fallen a smoking fire pot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces what did this mean well it meant that

[58 : 20] God was there in the name in the animals that had been cut as Abraham was there physically we have this picture here the smoking fire pot the blazing torch it was a picture of the presence of God if you want to see a bit more of that go to Exodus these are the symbols these are the things that indicated that God was there and we see here in this verse 17 that as this covenant is made God is there and he passes between the pieces of these animals now in a covenant arrangements in that day both parties those were promising things to each other they would pass between the pieces to promise that they would be faithful to the terms of the covenant that's what they did but notice here only

God passes between the pieces Abram is in a deep sleep he is absolutely inactive there's no activity on the part of Abram as this covenant is made all the activity is on the part of God because only he is faithful to make this covenant and keep this covenant hail the commentator says God alone was the author of the covenant the covenant was made totally by his grace Abram did nothing to deserve it and so we see a picture here of the covenant that the Lord makes the question just as I finish is why

I do have one more point but we'll leave it tonight but the question just to take with us is the question of why why did God make this covenant with Abram did the covenant make the promises of God more sure more true well of course not God cannot lie his word is absolutely solid and steadfast so why make a covenant and the answer is the covenant was another token of the Lord to help Abram believe it was for Abram to help him believe and for us we also have tokens that help us to believe we have

God's word and it's sure and it's true and it's dependable but the Lord knows us he knows our weakness and so he has given us tokens to help us believe and think back just two or three weeks and remember we handled them we tasted them we had bread and wine on the table here it was passed around the church to us and those who believe we we took it and we tasted these tokens of a new covenant that was sealed in Christ's blood Abraham was looking forward to a supernatural promise that was still to be fulfilled but we look back on a supernatural promise that has already been fulfilled in and through the life and the death and the resurrection of

Jesus the covenant the Lord makes let's pray as we finish Lord we thank you for your word we thank you that your word is true and we can trust it we thank you that you know us well enough to know that we are those who find it hard to trust like Abraham we are fearful often like Abraham our faith levels can run low and like Abraham we we need these helps that you give to us in your compassion these tokens that help us to believe and we thank you Lord for all that you do for us to help us believe we thank you that not only do we see as we track forward in the story of Abraham that all your promises came true we thank you that as we follow the line of

[64:11] Abraham it leads us all the way to Jesus the one who was the answer to every promise ever made to your people we thank you that Jesus was and is the Messiah the promised one of God we thank you that he came into this world as was prophesied we thank you that he lived for us that sinless life that we cannot and do not live we thank you that he died for us in our place his blood was shed his body was given as part of that new covenant whereby we are saved eternally if we believe so help us Lord we pray to believe and to keep on keeping on as you call us to follow you we pray these things in Jesus name amen we'll sing to finish 396 in mission praise just as

I am without one plea just as I am without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee O love of God I come I come just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one that brought to thee whose blood can cleanse me so

O love of God I come I come just as I am no tossed about with many a call and many a doubt my things within and fears without O love of God I come I come just as I am pure wretched life sight riches healing of the mind yea all I need in thee to find

O love of God I come I come I come just as I am the wilt receive wilt welcome pardon cleanse relief because thy promise I believe O Lamb of God I come I come I come just as I am thy love and Lord hath broken every barrier down thou to me thy yea thy thou hope O Lamb of

God I come I come and 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 now and forever more Amen