

23.1.22 am

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service here this morning and if there's any visiting haven't quite had the chance to scan yet you're especially welcome and also a warm welcome to those who are tuning in online. The intimations have been on the screen just before the service began and just to just to highlight a couple of things I'm not going to go through all the intimations you've you've had the chance to see them just before the service began but the the little fishes which was scheduled for Tuesday 10 to 12 that won't meet this week I think all the other meetings will be as intimated the prayer meeting on Wednesday as intimated there as on Zoom I think we'll try a hybrid again on Wednesday we'll have a an in-person prayer meeting but also the the scope for those who who want to Zoom in can do so as well. The the rest of the intimations are as they stand other than to say that next Sunday Donny Faith Mission was in touch with me just this morning and he offered to take the service next Sunday morning and on your behalf

I accepted his offer and so he's going to be taking the service next Sunday God willing and the evening service will be a Gaelic service. The final thing to say is something that's hard to say and it's something I expect all of us will already have heard but Ina Morrison who who sat with us so faithfully over the years passed away very peacefully on Friday afternoon and so we we have hearts that are sore we have hearts that are heavy and as a congregation we are sad and we're going to feel her her loss her absence I think we'll feel the absence of our prayers as well which should stir us to pray as she did but although we are sad we know that she enjoys the the fullness of joy that is found in being with the Lord the one whom she trusted so many years ago and who whom she walked so so closely and so faithfully with so we give thanks for our life we pray for Angus Alec and for Casalda and for Catherine and for Cami and for Raymond and for the grandchildren for Alistair and Ailey and Sarah and Rachel and Angus they are not with us in person but I know they are watching and they're with us in spirit and we pray for them over this week the arrangements which will be confirmed tomorrow morning but likely will go ahead as as follows there'll be a awake a worship tomorrow night Monday night at nine o'clock here in the church and then the funeral service will take place again in the church here on

Tuesday at 11 o'clock as I say that'll be confirmed tomorrow but it looks highly likely that that's the the times and the days so we we commend we commend the family to to you in prayer and we ask that we will know God's presence with us over these days and we're going to begin this time of worship with words which I chosen before Friday but they're words that speak such comfort and such peace into our our situation 275 in mission praise I heard the voice of Jesus say come unto me and rest lay down the weary one may in prayer toiken us come unto me and rest lay down the weary one

I came to Jesus as I was, weary and born and soft.

I found Him in our resting place, and He as may be loved.

[5 : 11] I heard the voice of Jesus say, behold I freely came.

The living water, thirsty one, stood down and drank and lived.

I came to Jesus and I drank of that life-giving stream.

My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him. I heard the voice of Jesus say, I am this dark world's light.

Look unto me, thy warmth shall rise, and all thy days be light. I looked to Jesus and I found in Him my star, my sun.

[6 : 27] And in the light of life I walk till traveling days are done.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer.

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

And we thank you for the words that we have been saying. The words of gospel invitation. We thank you that as we open your word and as we come together in this way, we hear the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and find rest.

[7 : 35] And we thank you that there is rest in Christ. There is satisfaction in Christ. We thank you that there is a quenching for our thirsty souls as we come to Jesus.

And we thank you, Father, that we can come to you this morning in the name of Jesus. We thank you, Father, that we thank you, for our service, for our service, for our service, for our service, for our service.

We thank you, Father, for our service, for our service, for our service, for our service, for our service, for our service, for our service, for our service. We thank you that Jesus, your Son, our Savior, came to this world and lived for us and went willingly to the cross to die for us.

So that our sin could be taken away. and so that rest which begins in time and which is known in full measure eternally can be given to all who believe.

And we come this morning to you, Father, in the name and through the finished work of Christ saying we believe and we want to know that rest.

[9 : 18] We want to know that peace. We want to know that satisfaction of soul that comes from no other place. And we thank you that the promise of your word is that everyone who comes will be received.

No one who comes to Jesus will be pushed back but those who seek to draw near to him he will draw near to. We thank you that those who look to Jesus shall be saved.

We thank you that those who believe in Jesus who come to the foot of the cross that we will not perish but we will have eternal life.

and we thank you that this day this Lord's day the first day of the week the day on which Jesus rose is a reminder not only of the fact that our sins have been forgiven through Christ but it's a reminder of the amazing truth that resurrection life is promised to all who believe.

and help us we pray this morning to meditate upon these truths help us to take hold of the promises of the gospel by faith and minister to us Lord we pray the comfort that we need at this time.

[10 : 48] our hearts are sore we do feel that sense of loss we grieve as a congregation we grieve as a community we grieve and as the nearer family meet together they grieve but we thank you that we do not grieve as those who have no hope we thank you that our hope is sure and certain in Christ and as we remember Ina and as we give thanks for our life we thank you for the the testimony that she gave over the years and the testimony that she leaves with us a testimony where we are called as we look to her to look past her and to see Jesus we thank you that we saw Christ in her we thank you that we heard Christ from her and we thank you that today we know that she is with Christ that all she has hoped for all she has believed in and she knows in full measure so we thank you Lord for the comfort of the gospel but we pray that you would be near to us as we as we look for that comfort to be ministered to each of our souls we pray for Angus Alec especially we thank you for the strength that he has been given and he has even today as we see him we thank you for your upholding of him and we pray that you would continue to to be near to him over these next few days especially we pray for

Catherine and for Crisalda and we pray for Cammie and for Raymond we bring to you the grandchildren once more we pray for Ailey and for Alistair here with us week by week we pray for Rachel and for Sarah and for Angus we pray for Aina's brother Alistair as well all whose hearts will be will be sore and yet we thank you for the the evidence of the joy of the Lord that is so clearly seen in them and we thank you that as Aina approached the end her testimony was that Jesus is close to me and I am protected and I have peace and I have joy and we know that this is something that comes not from this world but from heaven so we pray for the comfort and the strength and the peace and the joy of heaven to be received by us and by the family especially as we bow before you this day and we pray

Lord that you would help us as we saw the witness in Aina each person who walked into the hospital ward she spoke to about Christ I have a new job she said I am a missionary in this ward and we thank you that she did that even in her suffering she spoke to everyone about Jesus and we pray that you would help us as we go about our business day by day to have that same courage that same conviction that we would have that same obedience to the call of Jesus to make his name known to lift his name up so help us Lord we pray pray for anyone here today or watching at a distance who does not yet know Christ we pray for anyone today whose souls are still thirsty who

are still looking for something and don't know what and we ask
Lord that even in these moments that they would see and hear and trust Christ we pray for anyone who does not yet have the peace of God that sense of rest deep within the soul and that hope of eternal life we thank you that that is offered each time we open your word and we pray Lord that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear and that you would give us hearts that would respond to the call of Jesus to come to me and find rest so hear our prayers help us Lord we pray as we feel our weakness as we know our need help us Lord we pray and minister to us in the power of the Holy Spirit and we pray these things in Jesus name and for

Jesus sake Amen boys and girls would you like to come forward please how are you this week you doing okay good good I've got something to show you this morning and I wonder if you can help me to see what's this first of all yeah it's a bit of paper pardon it's a bit of paper from a tree yeah that's an interesting fact but yeah it's a bit of paper from a tree Johnny what were you going to say made of wood yeah yeah they're trying to they're trying to know where this children's talk's going right from the beginning it's a bit of paper

[17:40] Callum Callum have a new haircut by the way looks very smart tell me what's on this bit of paper something on the other side what's on this bit of paper nothing what's on this bit of paper what can you see on this bit of paper you can't see anything on this bit of paper for those who are at home if I if I show you on the camera there what can you see on the bit of paper well just like the boys and girls here you can see nothing on the bit of paper nothing on this side nothing on that side but watch this watch this if I take this closer if I it's what it's not a heart if I show you this you have to watch very closely you watching sin you see what does it say so you can you see that at first you could see nothing if I shine that light you can see that on the page there it says sin

I'll show you them at home as well I don't know if you can see that can you Joyce so you can see on the page there sin what is sin Jesus doesn't like sin yeah every mistake we make is well yeah sin yeah John Roddy everything that's bad yeah stuff that makes Jesus sad sin is what sin is really what keeps us away from Jesus isn't it sin it happens in our hearts happens in our minds happens in the things that we do and we say and sometimes when we should speak and we don't speak we sin and sin is what stops us from being God's friends sin is a problem isn't it because every one of us has sin in our hearts we all have that same problem but if I turn this page around what is it going to say can you see that what does it say

I can't hear you what does it say it says Jesus Joyce there you go you can see that on the page there it says it says Jesus and who is Jesus the son of God somebody said and he is anyone else got a hand up he's the saviour and he saves us from our really from our sin so we look on one side and we see sin that's the problem and then we look on the other side and we see Jesus and he is the one who saves us from our sin now where do we find this message about sin and about Jesus where do we find it in the Bible and you know this boys and girls there's lots of people and when they open the Bible lots of because when they open the

Bible they just can't see anything they can't hear anything and they can't understand the message of the Bible and it's like they open it and they'll read it for a bit and they just say this is no use I can't understand I can't see anything I don't know what the message is here now who is it that helps us to understand that we are sinners and Jesus is the saviour who is it John Roddy give me a bit more God is the one who helps us to understand that we are sinners and that Jesus is the saviour God the Holy Spirit and when God the Holy Spirit starts to work in our lives it's like this light and we might have been reading the Bible for years and not really understood and then all of a sudden it's as if the lights go on and we start to see that we are sinners and we start to see that

Jesus he's the saviour and he went to the cross and he died for us to take our sins away and it's the Holy Spirit who does that work we can be sitting in sermons for years and falling asleep every week not hearing anything and then all of a sudden it's as if the lights go on and our ears are unblocked and we start to hear that we are sinners we start to worry about that which is a good thing because that makes us ask the question how can I be saved and then as we read the Bible and as we hear sermons we hear the message of the cross and we understand Jesus died for me and that's the work of the Holy Spirit Jesus said that in John 16 I think it was he said when the Holy Spirit comes he will convict the world of sin and he shows us

[23:54] Jesus so boys and girls of all ages if you know that you are a sinner if you know that you are not perfect who's not perfect and if you know and can see that Jesus came into this world and went to the cross to die to take our sin away then God the Holy Spirit is working in our lives and he

shows us these things so that we will trust in Jesus and how do we trust in Jesus what do we do to become Christians we just pray don't we and we say to God thank you for showing me that I'm a sinner thank you father for sending Jesus to be my savior please save me if we mean that that prayer will give us the everlasting life that we've been talking about that we know

Ina has and enjoys today in full measure it's offered to all of us so we pray now let's pray and speak to God Lord God we thank you for the Bible and we thank you that in the Bible you tell us the truth about who we are and about Jesus and we thank you that in your love you tell us what's wrong with our hearts you tell us that we are sinners none are righteous everyone is a sinner we thank you that you don't leave us in sin but father you sent your son Jesus into this world and we thank you Jesus that you went to the cross to pay the price for our sin and we thank you Holy Spirit for working in our lives to show us that we are sinners and that

Jesus died for us and we thank you that you show that to us not to show us what we can't have but you show us what we can have the salvation that we can have and we thank you that all we have to do from our hearts is pray those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus we're told in the Bible will be saved those who look to Jesus those who believe in Jesus will be saved so hear our prayers as we confess our sin Lord and say to you we know that we are guilty and hear our prayers as we say please forgive us for our sin through all that Jesus did and hear us as we pray that you would make us Christians that you would give us everlasting life and we pray all this in Jesus name

Amen thank you boys and girls for listening we're going to sing now and we're going to sing a hymn that will be on the screen in just a second hear as love vast as the ocean we'll stand to sing in just a moment and this is the four verse one city as voice the if top of r prices as us as sing his praise he can never be forgotten through the dense eternal days of the mount of crucifixion fountains open deep and wide through the flood gates of God's mercy through all the past and gracious time grace and love a mighty river for the sense and from above

God can't peace and perfect justice kiss the guilty world in love oh thy love accepting love thee ever all my days let me see thy kingdom only and my life be to thy praise thou thou hast shall be my glory nothing in the warmth I see thou hast planned to find me thou thyself help us set me free help us set me free in thy truth thou dost direct me by thy spirit through thy word not like this my need is meeting as I trust in thee my Lord all thy fullness power flowing thou hast power flowing that in love of God only without measure full of promise throwing out my heart to thee thou hast thou hast take that remember as they go to be praying for them and we can turn now in our Bibles to to Luke chapter 18

[30 : 39] Luke chapter 18 and we'll read from verse 1 to verse 17 this is God's word then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up he said in a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men and there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea grant me justice against my adversary for some time he refused but finally he said to himself even though I don't fear God or care about men yet because this widow keeps bothering me

I will see that she gets justice so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming and the Lord said listen to what the unjust judge says and will God not bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night will he keep putting them off I tell you he will see that they get justice and quickly however when the son of man comes will he find faith literally will he find this faith on earth to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else Jesus told this parable two men went up to the temple to pray one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector the Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself God I thank you that I am not like other men robbers evil doers adulterers or even like this tax collector I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get but the tax collector stood at a distance he would not even look up to heaven but beat his breast and said

God have mercy on me a sinner I tell you that this man rather than the other went home justified before God for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted people were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them when the disciples saw this they rebuked him but Jesus called the children to him and said let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these I tell you the truth anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it Amen and may God bless that reading of his word to us we're going to sing again now to God's praise and we sing from Psalm 57 the first verse two stanzas and I'll read these verses in English be merciful to me

O God thy mercy unto me do thou extend because my soul doth put her trust in thee yea in the shadow of thy wings my refuge I will place until these sad calamities do wholly overpass and we sing these two stanzas in Gaelic to God's praise we remain seated to sing in Gaelic a Thank you.

Thank you.

[35 : 54] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[38 : 24] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[41 : 10] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We're not. We're not here.

calendar. But we need to be ready. We need to be preparing to meet with Jesus. And this week we're, you know, very much feeling that sense of loss with Ina, not with us. But having been back and forth to the hospital over the days of the last week, I can tell you and the family will tell you that Ina, although she knew that her life here was coming to an end, there was no distress. There was no anxiety.

She wasn't fearful. She wasn't in a state of alarm, as can often be, as the end draws near. But she was at peace. The peace of heaven was in that room. The peace of heaven was in her heart. And she spoke about that sense of joy that she had. She spoke about the assurance that she had that Jesus was close to her all the time. And the enemy couldn't get near her.

[44 : 39] You know, it was a sad time. But it was a special time. Because we could see so clearly that she was ready to meet Jesus. She was looking forward to meeting Jesus. And we know now that she is with Jesus.

And I want to just ask the question this morning of all of us. Are we ready to meet Jesus?

All of us will. We just don't know the day. If Jesus was to return today, or if he was to very suddenly call us from this world to stand before him, are we ready to meet him?

It's the question I want to ask. And Luke 18, the passage that we read, addresses that question.

The question of how we can be ready, how we can get ready to meet with Jesus, addresses the question of what Jesus will be looking for when he returns, or when he calls us to stand before him. He's going to be looking for something in us. You know, whenever I go to the mainland for meetings, when I return, and the girls come to meet me, they're looking for one thing.

[46 : 41] It's not a hug. It's crispy creme donuts. And they're looking for that. Now, the question is, what is Jesus looking for from us?

And the answer to that question is, he's looking for faith. Verse 8 says, When the Son of Man, this is Jesus speaking, and he says, When the Son of Man, that's the title he used for himself, he says, When the Son of Man, when I come, will, will I find faith on the earth?

So when Jesus comes to us, or when we stand before Jesus, the thing that he is looking for from us and in us is faith.

And more precisely, faith in him. We're to be trusting in Christ. So the issue really to think about in the time that we have is, how can we live today faithfully?

How can we live today in a way that pleases God? How can we live in a way that shows, that evidences the fact that we have faith in Jesus?

[48 : 04] And there's three points. The first thing is we're to live prayerfully. We're to live prayerfully. And the second thing is we're to live humbly.

And the third thing is we're to live close to Jesus. So three very simple points in the time that we have. First of all, we're to live prayerfully.

And if you look at the first parable, that message comes through clearly. And it says there in verse 1, let's just step through the verses. Then Jesus told his disciples a parable.

Now for anyone who's not sure of the word parable, what it means, a parable is a short story. It's a this-worldly story with a heavenly meaning. And this parable we're told, Jesus, he told to his disciples.

So this was not a story that Jesus told for the unbelieving masses. He tells this story for his disciples. This is a story that he tells to those who have faith in him.

[49 : 10] And we're told up front what the punchline of the parable was, what the point of it was. It says there in verse 1, Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

And I think immediately we, as disciples of Christ, as those who are trusting in Christ, immediately we should hit pause there and take some encouragement from that.

And you might ask, well, what's the encouragement in that opening verse? And the encouragement for believers is that Jesus knows that we struggle with prayer.

Jesus knows that we don't always pray when we should pray. And Jesus knows that sometimes we will be tempted to give up.

That's why he says, I'm telling you this story so that you will always pray and not give up. Prayer is hard work. And like all hard work, sometimes we want to take a break and have a snooze.

[50 : 28] Sometimes we want to give up. I remember a minister in Aberdeen who I listened to for years and he was a great man of prayer.

William Still was his name. And somebody spoke to him one day and said, Mr. Still, we're hearing about the work in Gilcompton Church and just to let you know, we're praying for the work.

And he responded by saying, you're praying for the work. He said, prayer is the work. And it is.

Prayer is work. And this parable of Jesus is told to encourage us in the work of prayer. And so Jesus continues, verse 2, he said, in a certain time there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men, about people.

And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, grant me justice against my adversary. So that's the picture that Jesus paints. That's the scene that's set.

[51 : 39] And this is not some far-fetched story. This kind of thing was happening all the time in that place. Wives could become widows very young because life was cheap and life was brutal in that culture.

And widows had no rights. They had no one in their corner. They were very exposed and very vulnerable when they became widows.

And judges could very often be very unjust people. And Jesus, in painting the picture of this judge, he's painting the picture of a Roman judge and they were known to be notoriously dishonest.

The way you got a good decision from a Roman judge was you bribed them. If you had no money, you got no decision, no justice. And so, because of the vulnerable position of this widow and because of the character of this unjust judge, things don't look good for this widow.

And predictably, verse 4, although she's asking for justice, it says, for some time he, the judge, refused. But finally he said to himself, even though I don't fear God or care about men and women, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming.

[53 : 14] So this widow she doesn't have much in the way of rights, she doesn't have money to trade with, but she has perseverance. Now that was her one weapon and she just keeps on coming at this judge.

In verse 5, the judge talks about him wearing her out and the word used in the Greek there is a word that came from a boxing ring.

Literally, what the Greek says is, because this widow, he says in verse 5, I will see that she gets justice so that she won't eventually wear me out.

Literally, so that she won't beat me up. That's what it is, literally. Or it could be translated so that she won't give me a black eye.

Because that was the nature of the way that she came at him. She just came at him. Relentlessly, time after time after time, she's coming at this unjust judge and so eventually, because of her perseverance and his exasperation, he gives her what she asks for.

[54 : 32] And then the Lord said in verse 6, listen to what the unjust judge says. as he grants justice. So what is Jesus teaching here?

You know, is Jesus saying that God is like the unjust judge, irritated with our prayers, you know, and reluctant to grant us justice?

Well, oh no, he's not saying that at all. He's saying by way of contrast that God is absolutely not like this unjust judge.

God is our Father. He loves us. And he loves justice. And he loves to hear our prayers.

And he loves to answer our prayers. so Jesus is saying because of who God is and his character, which is so unlike this unjust judge, come to him and pray.

[55 : 42] Verse 7, will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

I tell you, says Jesus, he will see that they get justice and quickly. You get the point of this widow comes to an unjust judge with such perseverance and such hopefulness.

How much more should we be encouraged to come to the just judge of all the earth with our prayers? And then there's that word of challenge in verse 8.

However, says Jesus, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith, this faith, on the earth?

And that's the question that comes to us this morning. as the Son of Man, as Jesus, looks today into our private lives, as he has power to do, as he looks behind the door of our closet, does he find us praying, like the widow did?

[57 : 09] Yes. Yes. Are we people of prayer? You know, I'm increasingly convinced that the greatest action, the greatest power, the greatest activity comes not from us running around on our feet, but it comes from us being still and on our knees before God.

I think some of the people who we see very little of because of their infirmity are very often the greatest warriors in God's work.

prayer because they're people of prayer. We've lost someone in our congregation, a prayer warrior. And that should encourage us, it should motivate us to pray. All of us will face injustice.

us. All of us in this world will encounter trouble. Jesus told us we will. We will struggle with various things.

[58 : 51] Do we take it to the Lord in prayer? Or are we running around like headless chickens trying to fix everything? Speak to myself first.

Christians. And all of us who are Christians, we have friends. You know, we have family members, we have people that we work with.

We have people whom we love, whom we are close to, and we've prayed for them for years. And maybe there's some here this morning of God's people and you're looking at those that you love, and you just feel it giving up.

Nothing's happening. Well, if that's you, then this is a word for you. Jesus teaches us through this parable to always pray, to keep on praying, not to give up.

So one of the ways that we can exercise faith, one of the ways that we can be prepared and ready for the coming of Jesus is to live prayerfully.

[60 : 17] And the second thing here is we're to live humbly. And we have the second parable still in the realm of prayer. And you can see it from verse 9 down to verse 14.

We'll just very briefly go through it. Jesus says, to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable.

parable. And we asked the question at the beginning, who is this parable for? Is this a parable that was not for the disciples but only for non-disciples?

And the answer to that is no, this parable was for everyone. The last parable was for the disciples to encourage them to keep on praying. This parable is for everyone.

This picture has everybody wrapped up in it. the reality is, the sad reality is, that sometimes Christians can be the worst people at looking down on others.

[61 : 19] Sometimes Christians can look at other people and think that we are somehow better than other people, which is completely counter to everything that Jesus teaches. One of the devil's greatest weapons against Christ's people is pride.

So we all need to be alert to that pitfall. And Jesus teaches us here in this parable that we're to be those who live humbly.

So he paints the picture again, verse 10. Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. And for the crowds who were listening into this, immediately they know what they're thinking.

In their minds, what they're thinking is Pharisee, good guy, righteous guy, godly man, tax collector, bad guy, unrighteous, an enemy of God.

Pharisee, saved, tax collector, lost, right off. That's what was in their minds if we take ourselves back to their culture.

[62 : 32] And so then we have the prayers that Jesus outlines for us in verse 11 and following. The Pharisee, it says, stood up and prayed about himself.

So already we can hear this by definition is not prayer. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself. God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even this tax collector.

I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. So hit pause there and ask the question, where is the Pharisee's confidence?

confidence. And the answer, very obviously, is his confidence is in himself. Four times in two verses he says, I, I fast, I give, and I fast and I give far more than the law requires of me.

My confidence, says the Pharisee, in his prayer, is in me, in my good character, in my respectability, in my religion. His prayer is just saturated with pride.

[63 : 50] He is, by definition, confident in his own righteousness. He's looking down on the tax collector. So that's the first character in prayer.

And then Jesus introduces us to the tax collector and says, but the tax collector stood at a distance. And he would not even look up to heaven. But he beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

The Greek actually is a bit stronger than that. What he said in his prayer was, God, have mercy on me, the singular sinner. sinner. So where is the tax collector's confidence and hope?

Is it in himself? Well, absolutely not. Because all he can see in himself is sin. All he has to say about himself is, I am the sinner.

He can't even see anyone else who's a sinner. He just sees himself, his own heart, and the fact that he is the sinner. So where is his only hope?

[65 : 11] Well, it's in God. It's in the character of God, in the compassion of God, in the mercy of God. He knows his only hope is found in crying out and asking God to show mercy.

And so he bows his head and he beats his breast and he cries out, looking for mercy.

And Jesus says, I tell you that this man, the tax collector, rather than the other, the Pharisee, went home justified, forgiven, before God.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. I remember in the scene, the old minister, who's preached here on a number of occasions, he told a story about a man in his congregation.

And this man, he was starting to hear the gospel message. You know, the message of sin and Jesus was starting to come on the page for him.

[66 : 40] And in some ways he wanted to know the benefit of the gospel. He wanted to know that God approved of him. He wanted to know that he was saved, that God said, I accept you.

But he said to Anassia one day when he came to see him in the vestry, he says, I hear this message, I want this forgiveness, I want this salvation, I want God's approval, but I'm not crying out for mercy.

All this stuff about groveling on your knees and getting on your knees and begging forgiveness, that's not for a man like me. I'm a professional man. People look up to me.

I have a reputation to maintain. I can't be groveling around in the gutter. And so he couldn't be saved as long as that spirit was in him, that pride was in the way.

William Barclay says, the gate of heaven is so low that no one can enter save upon his knees.

[68 : 01] Pride has to give way if we are to be justified before God. Pride has to give way before our sin can be taken away.

So all of us need to pray this prayer of the tax collector and come before God and say on our knees, God, have mercy on me, the sinner.

And that's not a once in a lifetime prayer. That's an everyday prayer. I keep something every day, every hour. So I need to keep on repenting.

I need to keep on crying out to God, God, have mercy on me, the sinner. And I want to ask the question, have you prayed that prayer yet?

God, have mercy on me, the sinner. And I want to ask that question, did you pray it today?

[69 : 13] Today, today, God, have mercy on me, the sinner. In order for us to be prepared to meet with Jesus, in order for us to be ready for his coming, we need to live humbly.

No pride. need to live humbly. We need to live prayerfully and just in a word to close, we need to live close to Jesus.

It's that simple. And we finish with not a parable, but with a very simple picture. Verses 15 to 17, people were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them.

to bless them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. And so we have this beautiful picture to finish of little children being brought to Jesus and little children coming willingly to Jesus.

[70 : 50] What do they have in their hands? Nothing. What have they got to offer Jesus to make him accept them?

Nothing. They just came to Jesus. They understood that they could trust Jesus, that he loved them. And they understood that it was good to be close to Jesus. And so they came to him. Jesus says, let them come.

This is how everybody is to come. Jesus wants us to come to him this morning like little children. Trusting in him. Trusting in what he's done for us on the cross. not trying to prove ourselves like the Pharisees saying, Jesus, did you notice that I was in church four times last week?

[72 : 02] I read 16 chapters of the Bible on Thursday. I've done this, I've done that, I've done the next thing, I fast, I pray, I do this, I do the next thing, showing it all to Jesus. Is this enough for you?

See how much better I am, how much more effort I put into my religion than the guy across the road? It's not how we come to Jesus. We don't come shaking our good works at him, we don't come shaking our religious CV at him, saying, is this enough to make me acceptable?

Because there's nothing that's enough to make us acceptable. Even our best good works are like filthy rags before God. The way he wants us to come to him is with empty hands, humble hearts. saying, God have mercy on me. A sinner. He wants us to come like little children who love him and who want to be close to him.

You know, like the hymn puts it, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling, naked, come to thee for dress, helpless, come to thee for grace, foul, the sinner, I to the fountain fly, wash me saviour, or I die.

[73 : 41] That's the way we come to Jesus. It's so simple, so childlike, that's the way we come.

And that's the way we stay close to Jesus. So can I ask, have you come to him? Are you still trying to build up some religious portfolio, beef up your theology?

If that's going to open the door of heaven for you, it's not going to open the door of heaven for you. the work is finished, the price is paid, and he says, come to me, trust me, believe in me, stay close to me.

And if we live that way, close to Jesus, prayerfully, humbly, trusting in him, we will be ready.

We will be prepared for the day when he comes or for the day when he calls us to come to him.

[75 : 08] We'll pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord Jesus, we thank you for these parables and these pictures that tell us how we can be your disciples, how we can be Christians, how we can be saved eternally, how we can be ready to meet you.

And we pray for faith that we may not just hear, but that we may act on all that you teach us so that we will know the assurance of being ready for the day that we stand before you.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We sing to finish 396 in Mission Praise, the words on the screen, which really is a response to this message.

If you believe, if you want to be a Christian, then sing this from your heart and you can be assured that Jesus will have you.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[76 : 37] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. on three, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bids me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come. Just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blood, to thee whose blood can cleanse his full arm of God, I come, I come. Just as I am not lost about, with many a conflict, many a doubt, by things within and fears without, O

Lamb of God,

I come, I come. Just as I am, poor wretched life, sight riches, healing of the might, yea, all I need in thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come, I come. Just as I am, thou wilt receive, with welcome, pardon, cleanse, relief, because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God,

O Lamb of God, I come, I come. Just as I am, thy love, O Lamb of God, I come, I come. Just as I am, thy love, O Lord, a broken heavy fire done, now to be thine, yea, thine, O Lamb of God, Lord, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship, the comfort of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and evermore. Amen.