

2.10.22 am

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] We're actually held a he. It's all she's that I've been given. And we're very delighted to be holding another little she, Anna, this morning. So we pray for God's blessing on these wee ones.

And we sing now to God's praise. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[1 : 4 0] Amen. Amen. This child can face uncertain days because he lives.

Because he lives. I can face tomorrow. Because he lives.

All fear is gone. Because I know, I know he wants the future. And life is worth living just because he lives.

And then one day, I'll cross the river. I'll find life's mine.

I'll go war with faith. And then I'll stand. His ways to make me.

[2 : 4 6] I'll see the lights of glory and that will he lives. Because he lives. I can face tomorrow.

Because he lives. All fear is gone. Because I know, I know he wants the future.

And life is worth living just because he lives. It's good to see some who've been away for a while as well on our back today too.

Ina. Good to have Ina Glenn back with us after her surgery. So let's unite our hearts now in prayer. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day.

We thank you for this time. Where we are called to come. Apart from all the things that preoccupy us in the course of a normal week.

[4 : 0 6] We thank you that we have been gifted this day. The Lord's day where we can be still. And know that you are God and that you are with us. We thank you that in a world that is so full of noise.

A world where we can be so distracted and so preoccupied, so weighed down sometimes by many conflicting responsibilities. We thank you that in this time and on this day in particular.

We are commanded to stop work and to take time to be in your presence. And we thank you that as we gather here today, we gather on the first day of the week.

At the day where we remember that Jesus rose from the dead. And we thank you for the wonder of the gospel message that we've been singing. We thank you that God so loved the world that he sent his son into this sin-stained and this broken world.

We thank you that you are the God who looked down upon us in our danger, in our trouble, in all the grief that could be seen.

[5 : 19] And we thank you, Father, that you sent your son to be our savior. We think of the story at Christmas so often where the angel speaks to Mary and says, You shall give him the name Jesus.

For he will save his people from their sins. And we praise you, Lord, for the truth of that. That just as was promised, Jesus came.

And he lived that perfect life for us, the life that we couldn't live. We thank you that Jesus willingly went to that cross in our place to take the punishment for our sin.

We thank you that he died to pay the wages for our sin. And on the third day, he rose from the dead to show that salvation was secured.

To show that the curse of sin and death had been removed. And to give that promise that everyone who believes shall not perish but have eternal resurrection life.

[6 : 29] Because he lives, we also live if we are believing in him. So we pray for each of us, Lord, here. You know our hearts.

You know our minds. You know the details of our lives. You know who is walking with you, who trusts you, who loves you. You know those perhaps who are at a distance as well.

And who are wrestling with doubts or who may even be in rebellion. We pray for each person here. We ask, Lord, that you would be working in our hearts.

That you would be softening our hearts. That we would be given the faith to believe. To take hold of the message of the gospel. So that we would know that we are saved.

And that each of us have that everlasting, abundant, full resurrection life. We thank you, Lord, that today we remember especially your grace to us and your gift to us.

[7 : 31] And the wee ones that are here with us that we see and that we hear. We recognize, Lord, with thanksgiving they are an answer to prayer. And we pray for them, Lord, as they grow up.

That they would know you. That they would know that they are loved by you. That they would trust you. And for little Anna, especially with us today. We pray your blessing upon her.

And Stuart and Joyce and Emily. As they seek to point her to Jesus. We pray for all the wee ones. We pray for Nancy Kate as well.

And we ask, Lord, that you would be with her with her health struggles at this time. We pray that you would lay your hand of healing upon her. And we pray for Mackenzie and Ian.

That you would sustain them. That you would be especially near to them. That you would give them strength for each day and for each week. And with the challenges that can sometimes crash in.

[8 : 31] We pray for all who are struggling. Those that we care for. Those who sat with us for so many years. And who are bowed down at this time. We think of Neil Cameron.

And we bring him to you. We ask for your continued hand to be upon him. That you would bless him. That you would strengthen him. And Kate Atkin. And all of the family. And we thank you for Ina.

Back with us today. After a period away. And we pray that her strength would increase. And that she too would know your hand upon her for good. We pray on for those who are grieving.

We are conscious that there are always those whose hearts are sore. As they miss those that they have loved and spent so many years with. We thank you that you are the God of all comfort.

And we pray for that comfort. And we pray for those who struggle. With addictions. And difficulties. That perhaps can be difficult to talk about.

[9 : 29] But we praise you Lord. That you are the God who searches us. And who knows us. And the things that we may not share with others. We thank you that you know. And you are the one who sustains us.

As we come to you in prayer. So be near to us Lord we pray in this day. Lead us and guide us in this time of worship. Take away our sin.

As we confess our sin. We fall short in thought and word and deed. We ask that you would cleanse us afresh in the blood of Jesus. Empty us of all that would be self-centered.

And enable us we pray. To be filled with the Holy Spirit. That we would indeed see Jesus. And hear the voice of Jesus. Saying come unto me. And find rest for your souls.

So help us Lord we pray. And we pray for all other congregations. That are connected with us. We think of those visiting with us today. Some from nearby. And some from further afield.

[10 : 32] And for every place where the gospel of Jesus is preached. We pray that you would add your blessing. That you would build your church. We pray for Ian Murdo at this time. Especially as he recovers from illness.

We pray that you would speed that recovery. And that you would strengthen him. And bring him back into your public service. In due course. So hear our prayers.

Take away our sin. And help us to have our eyes on Jesus. For we pray these things in Jesus name. And for his sake. Amen. Boys and girls. Would you like to come forward please?

How's everyone today? All good? All good? All good? All good? Good to see you all.

Good to see some new faces as well. Have you had a good week? Yeah. Good. Weekend. Pardon? Weekend. A good week. And now it's the weekend. And it's a good weekend as well.

[11 : 50] Oh, here comes more. Callum Price. We can't go ahead without Callum. All right. I think Marion's trying to get a wasp out of the church.

I'm going to have to get a children's talk about wasps soon, I think. I don't think wasps were ever in the Garden of Eden. I think they came in after the fall. So, boys and girls, I've got two pictures to show you today.

Quite a short children's talk. So, give me your attention. Listen up. I'm going to move this so I can actually see you all. Now, two pictures to show you today.

And the first one is going to be on the screen in a wee second. Now, tell me, what's happening here? What are these things? There's wee baby chickens.

And there's a wasp. No, sorry. There's wee baby chickens. And tell me, is it all little baby chickens that you can see there?

[13 : 08] No, no. So, what? There's one duck. And tell me what you're seeing in the screen, in the picture. What's happening there? So, we've got the big duck.

Yes. And they're on the road. And they're on the road. And the wee chickens, the wee baby ducks, are following the big duck. Now, tell me why. Have you ever seen this kind of thing happen before?

No. In real life. No. Yes. Yes. It does happen. Because today when I went to church, I saw ducks on the road. And then I was trying to get them back for the phone.

And then I know the white chick. Good story, Calum. So, the point of Calum's story was, it does happen in real life.

Calum thinks he saw that this morning on the way to church happening. And maybe that's the case. It happens in real life. Now, why do you think that the parent duck wants all the baby ducks to follow her?

[14 : 14] Because they're so sweet and they might get lost. Well, let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Shh, shh, shh, shh. Let's go one at a time.

So, phrase her first of all. Because if they don't follow the mum, they'll get lost. They'll get lost. They'll get lost. That's right, yeah. Calum? Wait. If they get...

If the... I asked a question, Calum. If the chickens are right in front of them, why can't they just go right beside the mum?

Well, that's a good plan. The chickens... The closer they are to the mum, it's probably the better the idea. Because they could get lost. Archie, what do you think? To be safe.

Exactly. Exactly. See, the mum knows where it is to be safe. And so, the mum is trying to train the chickens so that they don't go into places that are dangerous, but that they stick with her so that they're safe.

[15 : 12] Do you think if a big duck saw like a wild dog, it would just like wander on past the wild dog, so if nothing... No. It would charge off and all the little baby ducks would fly with it.

So, that way, Archie, they'd be kept safe. And if all the ducks, the baby ducklings, wanted to go their own way, they'd all get lost, wouldn't they? Yeah. And would they be safe on their own, just as baby ducks?

No. They need to be. They need to be quite big. Yeah. When they're little, they're not safe. Not with our cats about. Slow. Slow.

Now, here's a verse. Listen to this. It says in Proverbs 22, sorry, in verse 6, Train up a child in the way he or she should go, and even when he or she is old, she will not depart from it.

So, that big duck is trying to train all the baby ducks. Pardon? Megan? Baby duck. Baby duck duck. That's right.

[16 : 22] The big duck is trying to train all the little baby ducks to go in the right way. So that when they're a bit bigger, they'll know where it's safe and they'll know where it's dangerous and they'll keep on going the right way.

And do you know, do you know these people over there? Where? One, two, three. My little baby Anna, who's asleep just now. So, today, do you know what we're doing today?

Do you know what's happening today? And I'll give you a clue. So, little baby Anna is going to be baptized.

And Stuart and Joyce are promising to train little baby Anna in the same way that they're training Emily.

That's right, your cousin. And they're promising that they're going to try and help her to know the right way to go. So, Archie, you know, she'll be safe in her heart forever.

[17 : 33] So that Fraser, she won't get lost, but that she'll know the right way to go. So I'm going to show you another picture now. So, do you get the message?

Get the message. So, do you know why I put that? Well, I didn't do that. That was Michael McLean at Photoshop Services that made this picture.

And do you see what's happening in the picture? Do you know the point I'm trying to make? I wouldn't put Joyce's head on there because it would be rude. But I don't mind putting Stuart's head there.

So, we've got a picture there. And we've got a picture. What's happening today, really, is Stuart and Joyce are following Jesus.

And they want Anna and Emily to follow Jesus too. So, it's like, as mum and dad promise to follow Jesus, then our prayer is that the boys and girls, the two girls in this case, that God has given them as precious gifts will also follow Jesus.

[19 : 04] And that's our prayer. So, what we're going to do now is I'm going to ask Stuart and Joyce just to come up. And they're going to take their vows, which is a fancy word for promises, and they're going to promise that they'll bring up little baby Anna to know about the Bible and to know Jesus.

So, can you all see fine? Why don't you come round a little bit here so you can see better. So, Stuart and Joyce, do you acknowledge the Bible to be the word of God and your only guide in all matters of faith and conduct?

And do you confess God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as revealed in Scripture, in the Bible, to be your God? And do you profess faith in Jesus Christ as the only saviour of sinners and as your saviour and your Lord?

And do you promise independence on God's promised help by your prayers, teaching, and example to bring up your child, little Anna Caitlin, in the instruction and discipline of the Lord?

Well, can I get a little shot, please? Anna Caitlin King, I baptise you in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit.

[21 : 05] The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. And we'll cap. I'm going to pray now. And I'm going to hold her as we pray.

That's okay. Lord God, we thank you for the blessing of little baby Anna here. We thank you for the fact that she is such a rich answer to prayer.

We thank you, Lord, that she is made in your image. We thank you that she has been made, as we have all been made, to know you and to trust you and to walk with you. And we pray, Lord, that as she grows up, she would grow up to know day by day that Jesus loves her.

And we pray that as she comes to an age in due course where she has to make up her own mind about who she will follow, we pray that she will follow Jesus.

[22 : 17] That she will walk with Jesus and that her life would be a life lived close to Jesus, a life where she brings glory to the name of Jesus. We pray for Stuart and for Joyce and for Emily.

We ask that you would help them as they seek to point little baby Anna to Jesus. And we thank you that in their home and in their lives it's so clear to all of us that your presence is with them and your hand is upon them.

We thank you that as we sang in the hymn that you are the God who knows the future and we thank you, Lord, that we can trust you. We can face every tomorrow that you give us because Jesus is the one who came and who lived and who died and who rose so that we could be safe forever.

So bless we, Anna, we pray and help us as well as a congregation and help all the boys and girls here as well that we would keep on praying for Anna and all the wee ones who have been baptized and those who haven't as well.

Help us, we pray, to point each other to Jesus and we ask that each of us would be found walking close with you today and all the days of our lives and we pray this in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake.

[23 : 39] Amen. And you were super quiet. Extra points. Now we're going to sing and we're going to sing a hymn.

All the hymns today Stuart and Joyce have chosen. So we're going to sing a hymn and again it's a beautiful hymn about the fact that although sometimes in life things seem chaotic and they can seem a bit unsettling we know that God is the God who reigns over all and whom we can trust with our lives.

So we're going to sing now Though the nations rage kingdoms rise and fall there is still one king reigning over all. So I will not fear as his truth remains that my God is the ancient of days.

none above him none above him none above him none before him all of time in his hands for his throne it shall remain and never stand all the power all the glory I will trust in his name for my God is the ancient of days though the dread of night overwhelms my soul he is here with me I am not alone all his love all his love is sure and he knows my name for my God is the ancient of days none above him and before him all of time in his hands for his throne it shall remain and never stand all the power all the glory

I will trust in his name for my God is the ancient of days though I may not see what the future brings I will watch and wait for the saviour king then my joy complete standing face to face in the presence of the ancient of days none above him none before him all of time in his hands for his throne it shall remain and never stand all the power all the glory I will trust in his name for my God is the ancient of days for all the glory that he of our

[27 : 50] Thank you.

And we can turn in our Bibles, just as the wee ones head out to Sunday School, to Psalm 116. The words are on the screen if you don't have a Bible. Psalm 116.

This is God's Word. I love the Lord, for he heard my voice. He heard my cry for mercy.

Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me. The anguish of the grave came over me. I was overcome by distress and sorrow.

Then I called on the name of the Lord. Lord, save me. The Lord is gracious and righteous. Our God is full of compassion.

[29 : 20] The Lord protects the unwary. When I was brought low, he saved me. Return to your rest, my soul. For the Lord has been good to you. For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

That I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I trusted in the Lord when he said I am greatly afflicted. In my alarm, I said everyone is a liar.

What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants. Truly, I am your servant, Lord. I serve you just as my mother did. You have freed me from my chains.

I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

[30 : 28] In the courts of the house of the Lord. In your midst, Jerusalem. Praise the Lord. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word.

To us, we're going to sing again now to God's praise. We'll sing from Psalm 61, verses 4 and 5 in Gaelic. Psalm 61, verses 4 and 5.

I'll just read this section in English. Since better is thy love than life, my lips thee praise shall give. I in thy name will lift my hands and bless thee while I live. Even as with marrow and with fat, then my soul shall filled be.

Then shall my mouth with joyful lips sing praises unto thee. We sing in Gaelic and we remain seated to sing in Gaelic. At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis ist, ach trau.

At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau.

[31 : 47] At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau.

At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau.

At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau.

At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau.

At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau.

[33 : 35] At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no, n jete'n, kachemischis, ach trau.

At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau.

At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n, kachemischis, ach trau. At the bayan, no, nie miche ta'n.

Amen. If you could turn, please, if you've got Bibles, to the section that we read, Psalm 116.

And let's just pray as we turn back to the word. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that these words that we have sung and these words that we have read are not simply the words of man, but they are the words of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, so many years ago and relevant still to our lives today.

[34 : 58] But we recognize that without the help of the Holy Spirit today, we are struggling. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, I cannot speak with any clarity and we cannot listen, we cannot respond in a way that brings glory to your name.

And so we pray for the help of the Holy Spirit, that he himself would be our teacher, that our eyes would be opened, that our ears would be unblocked, that our minds would be decluttered, that our hearts would be stirred.

And Lord, we pray that you would meet with us, that you would speak to us, that you would minister to us, that our hearts would burn within us even, as we meditate upon these verses of Scripture.

So we pray that you would be near to us now. We pray for the young ones as well in Sunday school. We thank you for so many of them going through there. And we thank you that the message of the gospel is not a message that is complicated, it's not out of reach for the young ones.

Help them, we pray, to hear and to believe. We remember the words of Jesus, saying, Let the children come to me, don't hold them back, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

[36 : 16] And we thank you, Lord, that we need that childlike faith to become Christians, and to continue as Christians. And so we pray for that, even today.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Psalm 116, and we're taking a kind of break. For those who come week by week, you know that we've been going through Luke's gospel for a while, and we're taking a break from Luke's gospel today.

And we're in Psalm 116, and we have a text that was chosen, not by me. I asked Stuart and Joyce if they'd like me to focus on a particular passage.

And this is the passage that they've underlined. This is the passage that they want us to meditate upon today. And it's Psalm 116, and the first two verses of the Psalm, which says, Now I think the first thing we need to do today is get back to the day and the place where this was first written.

This is a word that speaks to each of our hearts today right here. But it would be wrong of us to bypass the original context and head straight to our own universe.

[37 : 53] We need to go back to the first day that this was written. And this was a line that was written by a man called David, who was a king in Israel, probably the greatest king in Israel.

He was certainly the most prolific songwriter who ever lived, because all across the world his songs are being sang every day.

And David, as well as being a king, and as well as being an inspired songwriter, he's described by God, in 1 Samuel 13, verse 14, as a man after God's own heart.

Which is an incredible description. This is a man after God's own heart. Now at the point that this psalm, this song was written, was composed, David was struggling.

What was he struggling with? Well, we don't know for sure. Some of the scholars would speculate that his health was breaking down, and that's perfectly possible.

[39 : 18] But if you dip into David's life, as we have it in the Bible, his life is full of struggles. So it could be any number of things. But there's a very real sense of struggle in the psalm, but there's an even greater sense of the fact that God can be trusted in the midst of the struggle.

And there's that clear message that comes through this psalm, that even though there's a wrestle, even though there's a struggle, God can be trusted today, and God can be trusted with the future.

So if you want a text that kind of gives us insight into the Christian life, if you're sitting here today, or maybe there's somebody watching far away at a distance, who doesn't know very much about the Christian life, and wonders, what is it all about?

Well, this is a psalm that gives us a window in, that gives us insight into what it looked like for David to trust God two and a half thousand years ago.

And equally, it's a text that helps us to know what it looks like to trust Jesus today. So there's four things I want to highlight in the time that we have.

[40 : 40] And the first of these four things, as we see in this psalm, and these two verses that we're going to drill down into, the first thing we see is there's a personal relationship. David, he describes a personal relationship.

The second thing we'll see is that David, as this psalm is written, he's speaking about prayer. That personal relationship with God that he has is expressed in prayer.

The third thing that comes through here is the need for purification from sin. David was a sinner. We don't have to look at his life for long to see that.

And all of us are sinners, and so there needs to be that purification, that cleansing of sin, for the relationship with God to begin and to continue. And the final thing we hear in verse 2 is that David, he makes this promise that he will follow the Lord all the days of his life.

And so, first of all, we'll look at this personal relationship that David has with God. You know, and that's what being a Christian is.

[41 : 52] It's about a personal relationship with God. In fact, I remember, probably four years ago now, I guess, maybe even longer, and I remember taking a service here a few years ago, and it was a children's service.

And I was asking the children the question, what does God want us to do? And they were all kind of clustered around there, and they were firing answers at me.

And one of them said, he wants us to trust him. And I said, yes, the Lord, he wants us to trust him. God wants us to trust him. Good answer. And then I said, do you have any more answers? And somebody said, yeah, God wants us to obey him.

He wants us to do what he says. And I said, yeah, that's another good answer. Somebody else put their hand up. He wants us to listen to him, to read the Bible.

Excellent. Good answer. He wants us to come to church. Yep, he wants us to be in his house. Good answer. And then, just when I thought all the answers were finished, there was a wee hand that went up just over where Ruthie is.

[43 : 03] And it was Michael. And he was very small. That's why he wasn't sitting down there. And he hadn't quite found his voice. But the wee hand went up.

And I said, Michael, have you got an answer to the question, what does God want us to do? And he said, does he want us to love him? And I said, yes, that's exactly it.

You know, all the answers were right. But that answer was actually most right. Because God has made us for himself. And our hearts are restless until they find rest in that loving relationship that he calls us into.

God wants us to love him. You know, God loves you. That's so clear in the Bible.

This whole book is a letter from God to us saying in so many different ways, I love you. And also we hear in the Bible this call of God to love him.

[44 : 24] And when we love the Lord, everything else, trust, prayer, reading the Bible, wanting to be in his house, it flows out from that. And for the psalmist, David here, he begins this song, this psalm, with that declaration of love for God.

He says, I love the Lord. See, David, the psalmist, he knew the Lord. He didn't know just about God, but he knew God personally.

He was in this personal relationship with the Lord that shaped his whole life. That was his identity.

It wasn't David the shepherd. It wasn't David the king. It wasn't David the military commander. His identity was rooted in the fact that he loved the Lord.

And the word that's used there in the Hebrew, and I'm no Hebrew scholar, is a word, ohab, I think is how it's pronounced.

[45 : 41] And it's a word that is a big, wide word that takes in the kind of depth of love that we have in close friendships. It takes in the kind of love that we have within the family unit.

it's a word that speaks about a deep soul thirst. A love for God. And David knows that, and he declares that.

The first note of this song is a confession of love for the Lord. And I want to ask the question of all of us, do you know this personal relationship with God?

Do you and I have a personal relationship with God? Do we know him? Now, can you sing with David? I love the Lord.

Or can we pick up the words of a Christian hymn we often sing, what a friend. we have in Jesus. Because that's what it means to be a Christian.

[47 : 05] It means to be in a loving, personal relationship with God. To be a Christian means that we have a friend in Jesus that sticks closer than any brother.

to be a Christian means that we are children of God and we can come to God and we can call him our father.

To be a Christian means that our soul's deepest thirst is quenched through this personal relationship relationship with Jesus.

And if you were to read through the Psalms, which I would recommend, take one each day and read through them. As you progress through this altar, these songs of David, David doesn't write them all, but he writes the majority of them.

In the song book in the book of Psalms, every experience, every emotion, you know, the highs and the lows of life, the reality of life, the struggles, the pain, it's all there.

[48 : 27] But what's so clear with David is that he goes through all these experiences with the Lord personally. And if we were to fast forward from the Old Testament into the New Testament, and as we look at the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels, what does Jesus do?

Well, we see his ministry begin and the first thing he does is he calls these disciples who were far away fishing, tax collecting, a terrorist, various different professions, and Jesus he calls them all to be with him.

That's the call, the first call of the disciple on the life of Jesus, with Jesus when he approaches the disciples. He doesn't say, I want you to be my servants, I want you to be the guys who will be my lackeys.

he says, I want you to be with me. He gathers them close, he gathers them around, he calls them to be with him, and to stay close with him, and to walk with him, and to talk with him, and to trust him, and to follow him, but above all, what Jesus calls the disciples to do, and what he enables them to do, is to love him.

And they loved him, not perfectly, but they loved him. And it's an incredible thing to consider, that we can be in a loving, personal relationship with the God of heaven and earth.

[50 : 12] The nights the stars are shining in the sky, and everything is so clear and crisp, you can look up into the sky, see the vastness of it all, and take a moment to think about the fact that the one who put the stars in the sky, and we can only see a minuscule amount of what's out there, the one who made everything from nothing, the one who holds everything together, the ancient of days, he calls us to know him, we can know him, and our souls will remain thirsty, you can have money, you can have reputation, you can have stuff, you can have all the approval in this world, but our souls remain thirsty until we are brought into this relationship where we can say, I love the Lord.

God. So the first thing here is the Christian life that David describes, this life of walking with God, it's a personal relationship.

The second thing that we see as we continue in this text is prayer. prayer. You know, if we want to check someone's alive, then we check for a pulse.

That's the vital sign of life, and the sign of spiritual life is the pulse of prayer. The evidence that we are alive as Christians, the evidence that we have a living personal relationship with the Lord is we will pray.

The evidence that a church is alive, if we can extend this a bit more, is not finding a busy notice sheet, it's not finding several kids clubs, it's not finding an overflowing morning service, as encouraging as that can be, but if you want to see whether a church is really alive, look at the prayer meeting.

[52 : 29] That's the pulse. that's where we get a measure of how alive or not a church is. Octavius Winslow, this must be one of the best names ever, Octavius Winslow said, prayer is the pulse of the renewed soul, and the constancy of its beat is the test and measure of spiritual life.

To David the psalmist, he is in this personal relationship with the Lord, he loves the Lord, and prayer is an expression of that love. It's an evidence of that relationship, so he says, I love the Lord, verse 1, for he heard my voice, he heard my cry.

And maybe there's someone here this morning saying, I don't know how to pray, I wouldn't know where to start with prayer. Well, prayer is just speaking to God.

one of the best read men that I know, who was a minister in Scalpy for years, Malcolm McLean, I remember him saying one day, I've read many, many, many books on prayer, he says, none of them have helped me all that much, because prayer is just speaking to God.

We use our voice, sometimes our audible voice, sometimes that inner voice, from the heart, and we speak to God.

[54 : 02] That's what prayer is. And sometimes we cry, as it says in the NIV, it's a deep kind of cry from the heart, sometimes we make a plea, as it says in the ESV, sometimes our prayers are desperate prayers, there's a fervency, there's an intensity in them, or we make supplication, as it says in the King James Version, which means that we seek the favour of God.

So there's levels of intensity in prayer, there's different types of prayer, sometimes we're in danger, we're struggling, we don't know where to turn, so we just cry out.

It's an arrow prayer, it's going to be five words long, and sometimes we sit for an hour, we're quiet for most of it, and it's a much more devotional prayer, but in each prayer, we are speaking to God, we are reaching out, and the psalmist tells us here, that not only does he, does he cry out, but that God hears, and God doesn't just hear some kind of distant voice, but he listens intently to your prayer, he understands your prayer, even when I can't see it, even when we can't articulate our prayers in the way that we want, and it frustrates us, God knows our hearts, and he hears, he listens, he gives attention to our prayers, he wants to answer our prayers, so pray, you know, we know what it's like, don't we, to sometimes talk to somebody, and we know we're not getting through, we know what it's like sometimes to try and have a conversation, and somebody's sitting there, and you know, they're sitting, and they've got a wee thing behind them, and they're making occasional eye contact with you, but you can see they're fingers on their phones, they're not with you, they're not listening, you're not getting through, well as we pray,

God never has a phone in his hand, he listens, he gives us his attention, he hears, he, he hears our cries, but Lana, here today, you know, her life has been filled with prayer, her early days were not easy days, before she was born, in the womb, when there were struggles, we prayed, and during birth, which wasn't the most straightforward, it was prayer, and the days after birth, life was fragile, her life was saturated in prayer, God heard these prayers, and he answered these prayers, and this is such a huge part of the

Christian life, as the Holy Spirit guides us, we come to God, our Father, we come to Jesus who knows us, and we can pour out our hearts, thoughts, in prayer, we're never completely at the stage with anyone in life, I think, where we entirely let our guard down, we're always hiding something, of our thoughts, our motivations, whatever, prayer, but as we come to Jesus in prayer, we can pour out everything, and know that he hears us, he knows us, he loves us, he wants to help us, what a friend we have in Jesus, I keep on quoting, all our sins and griefs to bear, what a privilege to carry, everything, everything, and everyone that we care for, we can carry them to God in prayer, so being a Christian is about being in a personal relationship with God, where we speak to him and he hears us as we pray, third thing, purification of sin, here's a question, we'll move more fast now, don't worry, is everyone a

[59 : 02] Christian? You don't have to answer that, but is everyone a Christian? You know, there are some people in this country who would say, well, yeah, it's a Christian country, so everyone's a Christian, but the Bible makes very clear that everyone is not a Christian, everyone is not in a relationship with God, and the reason that is the case is because of sin, if we rewind to the very beginning of the Bible, we see Adam and Eve in a garden in Genesis 2, and the garden is beautiful, and the relationship they have with God and with each other is beautiful, it's perfect, there's no sin, sin, then in Genesis 3, sin comes in, and the relationship with God is broken, and the relationship with each other becomes broken, and that brokenness has been passed down generation after generation, all the way from the garden, right to the present tense, and David the psalmist, as he wrote the psalm, he felt it, and if you know yourself at all, you and I will feel this, we are sinners, and the

Bible tells us that, Romans 3, 23 says, for all, not some, but all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, and sin separates us from God in this world, and sin will separate us from God eternally, sin will take us to hell if we are not purified from it, that's the bad news about our condition, but the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news, and the good news is that Jesus came into this world to save us from our sins, it's the message of Christmas, we're going to be, we're moving at speed towards it, one of the girls told me this week, it's only 80 something days, dad, get saved, the message of Christmas is that, that Jesus came to be, to be our savior, he came to save us from our sins, so how can you and I be saved personally from our sin, how can we enter into this personal relationship relationship with God, well the answer is very clear and the children would tell you any day of the week, we simply believe in the Lord

Jesus, that he is who he said he is, and we ask for mercy, we just ask for mercy, we ask for that purification, you, John Blanchard, the author said, we are saved not by merit, but by mercy, we're not saved by all the religious things we do, we're not saved by all the bad things that we try not to do, we don't save us, Jesus has saved us and he promises he will save us if we just ask him to show us mercy, and so that's what the psalmist does, he says, I love the Lord for he heard my voice, he heard my cry for mercy, he heard my cry for mercy,

Jesus tells a story in Luke 18, I won't go there just now, time's out, and it's a story about two men who went to the temple, the church to pray, one is very religious, he can pray at length with great eloquence, he knows his bible, the other is very irreligious, he's a tax collector, he's the kind of lowest of the low in terms of the non-religious, and the Pharisee stands up and he pushes out his chest and he prays and he says, thank you God that I'm such a great guy, I'm so religious, I'm far better than anybody else, and especially I'm far better than that tax collector sitting across the pew from me, and the tax collector, Jesus says, 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, and I tell you, says Jesus, that this man, the tax collector, rather than the other, the religious

Pharisee, went home justified, forgiven, purified, from his sin.

[64 : 16] So to become a Christian, you know, if there's anyone sitting here just now, or sitting somewhere else just now, thinking, I'd like to become a Christian, I'd like to enter into this relationship with God, I'd like to know God, I'd like the guilt that I feel in my heart to be removed, I'd like my sins to be taken away, I'd like to know that I'm safe forever, I'd like to know that when I die, I'll pass through death into life that's everlasting, I'll have this secure place in heaven.

If you want that, then all you need to do is ask for it. It's that simple. We just need to pray what the psalmist prayed.

Have mercy on me, God. And his promise is that if we pray that, if we ask for mercy, he will show us mercy.

1 John 1 9, if you're wanting a backup text, says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Not some, but all unrighteousness. mercy is, as the children tell us in the Sunday school song, mercy is when God does not give us what we deserve.

[66 : 03] And the reason that we don't get what we deserve, the reason that we don't get punishment for our sin, when we cry out for mercy, is because Jesus on the cross was treated as we deserved.

He died for sin, even though he had no sin. And he promises that if we cry out to him, he will give us that forgiveness, that purification, that mercy that is available.

all. So have you cried out for mercy? When you think back to a day, maybe a long time ago, where you first cried out for mercy, if you've never asked for it, you've never been shown it.

But if you will ask for it today, and you'll have it today. And for those who are Christians, are we still day by day asking for mercy?

Because we're still sinning, all of us. So are we asking day by day, Lord, have mercy on me, cleanse me from sin, purify my heart, look upon me in mercy.

[67 : 42] Purification of sin is the third thing, and the last thing, very briefly, is that there is this promise that the psalmist makes to follow the Lord. And today we heard Stuart and we heard Joyce making promises that they are currently following the Lord and that they will continue to follow the Lord as he enables them.

And David does that too in verse 2, he says, because he, the Lord, turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

So he makes this promise to follow God. And that's something that's important to know as well. Being a Christian is not praying a prayer when you're emotional in some meeting and then just carrying on life as if nothing ever happened.

Being a Christian is not going forward at a meeting in a moment of kind of high drama and signing a form, meeting a few elders, having your name added to a communicant role and then just carrying on life with no change.

Becoming a Christian, to put it another way, is not a one moment in time thing. It's an as long as I live thing. when we become a Christian, we are promising not only that we want Jesus to be our, we're not asking Jesus simply to be our saviour, but we're asking him to be our Lord, to come into our lives and we're promising that we'll follow him.

[69 : 23] Come what may, wherever he takes us, we're saying I will follow you. And David, having, being saved by the Lord, he said I want to follow the Lord as long as I live.

And he did. He didn't follow perfectly. He sinned. Sometimes he sinned spectacularly. But he kept on calling on the Lord for mercy.

He kept on trusting the Lord. He kept on following the Lord. And the question for you and the question for me is, will we promise to follow the Lord?

He is calling us. He is asking us to come into this personal relationship where he takes away our sin. He draws near to us.

He hears our prayers. And we are to respond by trusting him and promising that we will follow him as he enables us.

[70 : 39] we are going to sing now to finish the psalm that we were studying. And we will sing just the first six verses of the psalm to finish.

I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear. I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me as he are of death the cords and sorrows did. About me compass round the pains of hell took hold of me.

I grief and trouble find upon the name of God the Lord. Then did I call and say, deliver thy my soul O Lord. I do thee humbly pray. God merciful and righteous is, yes, gracious is our God.

God saves the meek. I was brought low. He did me help afford. These verses to God's praise. We'll stand to sing. I love the Lord because God's love.

God's God's love. He's lost my voice and dare she did hear. I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me is dear.

[72 : 04] of death, of death, the course and sorrows did about become a slough.

The pains of hell took hold on me.

I grieve and trouble found. upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, pray.

He did and love my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray.

God mercy for unrighteousness, yea, gracious is our Lord.

[73 : 30] God saves the me I was brought low he did me help afford.

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 forevermore. Amen.