

John Lachie Macleod Testimony 13.3.22

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Preacher: Reverend John Lachie Macleod

[0 : 00] We don't really need to introduce you because I think people here have known you for longer than they've known me. So you're limited in terms of what you can say.

Some of them have known me longer than I've known me. You spoke tonight about YFs in Northton.

When you heard the call, you felt that sense of wanting to follow Jesus. And you didn't for years. And then obviously something changed.

So do you want to maybe just tell us a little bit about what changed and how it changed? Yeah, I think there's a wonderful verse that says we know we've passed from death to life because we love the brethren.

We love the brothers and sisters in Christ. And I think I came to realize one time in my life that was the reality of what had happened in my life.

[0 : 59] The truth of God.

I mean, I'd always known it. And like so many of us, so thankful for the homes we were brought up in where we learned the gospel. So thankful for the schools we went to.

I went to Northton Primary School, which again is no longer a school like many of the... But Mary McCush, those who know her will know that we were well taught in the things of God.

She would probably go to jail today, the amount of time she used to spend teaching us the Bible and the catechism and the metrical psalms. But every morning we learned it and so it was always there.

But there was that period in life where the things of the world are attractive and the things of God don't seem that important when you're young. And there was, I guess, that kind of warfare in my soul for a number of years.

[2 : 20] And I think ultimately every human being wants to know peace. They want to know their purpose in life. They want to know why they exist and have peace about that.

And even though I pursued the things of God, the things of the world, it never brought lasting peace. It never brought any kind of meaningful purpose.

It's quite remarkable. A few weeks ago I was at a pastoral refreshment course. It was held in a place in the Lake District I'd never heard of called Newby Bridge.

I don't know if anyone ever heard of Newby Bridge. I'd never heard of it. It's a tiny village. There's about 20 houses and two hotels. And this conference was in one of the hotels. When I checked in, the lady asked for my name and I said, McLeod.

And, but she says, oh, you're a proper one. I said, what do you mean? She said, oh, you sound like you're from the islands. And I said, well, I am. I said, how did you know? She said, well, I lived in Stornoway a year ago.

[3 : 21] And a very short, long story short. But as we start talking, discovered she had been a barmaid in the Seaforth. And thankfully there's a generation who grew up and don't know where the Seaforth was.

But I started sweating when she started saying this. Anyway, it was remarkable because when I started sharing about some of the people I used to hang out with and she's looking at me and she says, so how come you're at a pastor's conference?

And I think that was a reminder to me of the work that God had done in my life. It was actually amazing being able to tell her some of the people she could remember and tell her that they today are following Christ as well.

It was absolutely remarkable. So there came somewhere in the midst of that. And I did feel my life often torn. I would sometimes be in the company of Christians, sometimes be head first into the

things of the world.

One of my friends in the world who had been one of the worst in the group in terms of things you got up to, he got saved. And that was a profound challenge. But through it all, God was speaking to my soul.

[4 : 28] And thankfully, I did come to a place where I realised that the things I thought would satisfy didn't. And the things that I thought I could put off, I couldn't put off any longer.

And I was just glad that God brought me to a place where I was able to surrender my life to him. And how old were you then, Joe? I think I was round about 19.

19. Yeah, last century. And tell us, after that, as a Christian, have you always walked steady? I know the answer to this question. Yeah.

Or have there been dips and have there been twists and turns? Yes. Yeah, there are twists and turns. It probably comes out in my preaching when I say some of the things I say.

It's not just because I think it happens to you. It's what we all go through. I think there are times when you think you're very faithful and then God shows you you're not. These are some of the sorest lessons.

[5 : 23] And when you think you're very holy and discover you're not. These have been some of the hardest lessons. But things come that challenge. Things come that can leave you very low and disappointed and sore in life.

And the amazing thing is that Christ doesn't lose sight of us. Like I say, the hymn I referenced, I think it was in tonight's sermon, it's really become a favourite in our congregation.

And I know it is with many people. He will hold me fast. And I think that is a real testimony song for so many people. When I fear, my faith will fail.

Christ will hold me fast. And there's a tremendous liberty in knowing that at times. Sometimes you go through things in life, you feel you can't pray. You find it hard to read.

You find it hard to hold on. That's when it's wonderful to remember that his grasp of us is always going to be far greater than our grasp of him.

[6 : 26] Do you have anything you would want to say? My guess is that if not in the room, there might be some people, I don't know, are they watching or are they listening at a distance, who are in the place that you were in, where you were hearing the call, not responding, wrestling.

What would you say to your 18-year-old, 17-year-old self today or somebody in that position? There's plenty.

I think the one thing I would encourage people is find Christian company. Find people who know the Lord and spend time with them. And in fact, that's, I think, even for people in the Christian life, I think it's one of the dangers that we can miss out on in churches.

Find people who've walked the road before you. People who have experienced, I know in ministry, I've learnt more from men who have been in the ministry a long time than I've sometimes learnt from the latest books and the latest conferences.

If you get the chance to sit with people and be in company with people who know the Lord and who are honest and truthful with you, find these people and make time with them.

[7 : 48] I was blessed and privileged in that, like I say, one of my own close friends had been converted just maybe about a year before I was converted myself. And he was a great help in guiding me into the company of others and just being able to explore the faith.

In fact, I met, when I was coming over, I met a guy in the ferry that I hadn't seen for years as well. And he was converted around about the same time as me. And we were reflecting, there was an elder in Stornoway, he was quite well known.

He was really good at speaking with some of the young guys. And a friend I met in the ferry said, he says, I always remember, he says, when I was wrestling with spiritual things, he went to this man and, no, in fact, he didn't even go to me.

He had just been somewhere. He felt this hand on his shoulder. And this man said to him, we're here to help you. And I think for anyone who is wrestling and wondering, and you think maybe the thoughts you're going through, nobody's ever gone through them, you'll discover that people will identify with your struggles.

And there'll be people, and their intention will be to help you. There are people, the people of the Christian church. We know there are always difficult people. There's difficult people in every walk of life. But those who are following Christ, I found that the vast majority, there's more who are willing to

help and able to help than those who would harm you in any way.

[9 : 11] So find Christian company that you trust. Find people that you can share your life with and allow them to help you to walk with Christ and to come to him.

Yeah, I think I go back to that verse. We know we've passed from death to life because we love the brethren. We love God's people.

And I think that was the amazing thing for me. I used to think church was incredibly boring. And in many ways it is. If you don't have Jesus and you're not worshipping in the spirit, a lot of church doesn't make sense.

But when you're coming to church and part of church because the Lord's in your life and the Lord's working in your soul, it's an incredible privilege, an incredible blessing.

And we give thanks to God that he is still working in lives, as we've heard so much of tonight. And he wants to work in your life and wants you to know his saving love.

[10 : 16] Do you have to be 19 years old? We've got some young ones here. How young can you be to become a Christian? I think you'll find that whenever someone becomes a Christian, they wish they'd done it sooner.

I've never met somebody who was a Christian who said, you know what, I wish I'd put it off for a few years. And certainly when I came to Christ, and that's very young, still 19, I would have wished I'd done it earlier in life.

I wished that I'd been saved from some of the mistakes and things we do when we're in a sinful lifestyle. And it is the wonder of the fact that Jesus is available and he hears everyone's prayer.

There's no age limit at the bottom end or on the top end. It's never too late either. It's never too late to come and to trust in the Lord's mercies. Yes. I hope my questions didn't take you off track.

Anything else you wanted to say? No, I think I've probably said more than enough. Unless I was too dangerous to ask for questions. Well, I was just indirectly asked if anybody would like to ask a question.

[11 : 25] Any questions for John? Any questions for John just now? I think we'll move on. Sounds like you're off the wheel. Yes.