

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 February 2017

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning. Good morning. And a warm welcome to the service this morning. A special welcome if there are any visitors that I haven't spotted yet.

Tea and coffee at the end of the service. Please stay behind if you're able to. And just a word of thanks again for all who came and all who contributed and took part and made yesterday evening such a good, enjoyable evening.

And a thanks on behalf of everybody who was there to all those who played their part in the evening. The service this evening will be at 6pm, God willing.

They'll be taken by myself. And just a reminder to the parents and the children, that will be about an hour of that service. So please be encouraged to take the young ones along.

And if you're someone who struggles with long sermons, then please be encouraged. You can come along in the evening and you won't get a long sermon. The intimations as you've got them on the screen and on the sheets.

[1 : 04] I hope to be away from Tuesday. This coming Tuesday the 7th through to the 14th. And during that time, if there are any pastoral issues, please speak to the elders. Andrew Coggle will be on standby.

So he will be available for any pastoral issues. The Ladies Bible Study meets tomorrow at 8pm as usual. And the First Fruit Fellowship at half past 7 as usual on Tuesday.

Wrote to Recovery again on Tuesday at 8 in the community room in the North Harris Medical Hub. And the prayer meeting on Wednesday at half past 7. Anthony Latham will take that meeting in my absence.

Discipleship Explored on Thursday night. That will be the second of 7. But if you missed the first one and you would have liked to have been there, then please be encouraged just to come along.

You don't have to come every week. And you can catch up as we continue through the coach. The services next Sunday will be taken, God willing, by Angus McKellar in the morning.

[2 : 06] And Duncan McPherson at 6pm in the evening. One, two dates for your diary.

The first is the communion services. And these are the first Sunday in March. So that's the 2nd to the 6th of March. And these services will be taken by Rodney Morrison.

We'll be doing the Gaelic on a Thursday morning. And James McKeever of Stornwick, Kenneth Street will be taking some of the services. And Jodo Davidson.

Is it John Murdo? John Murdo Davidson is his full name. Jodo, as we know him, will be taking the services over the course of that weekend. So we can be praying for them in advance of that.

We're grateful to the Lord for their willingness to come. The final date for your diary is not for everybody. It's for the ladies. And there's a conference which is in the process.

- [3 : 05] So it's been organised. And it's scheduled for the 18th of March. And I think I'm not the best person to speak to this. So Shona's going to come up and say a very brief word about that conference.
- Just to say a wee bit more about the conference we're having on Saturday, the 18th of March.
- These often happen on the mainland. And it's not easy for us always to travel. And the cost as well. So we decided this year that we were going to have our own conference.
- Our speaker will be Sharon Dickens, who's from Edinburgh. And she will be speaking about discipleship and living for Jesus in a world that doesn't.
- It's open to all ladies. And it promises to be a day of fellowship and teaching. And we'd encourage ladies to come along. There are forms at the door.
- [4 : 08] So if you can fill these in and hand them in as soon as possible. So we can have numbers for catering, etc. There will be lunch provided. And there will be tea and coffees throughout the day.
- Thank you. Thank you, Shona. So please take note of that. And for the gents here. You can't go to it, but we can be praying for it.
- So let's be mindful of that as well. Just a final word to say. An intimation, a sad intimation to make is that Adiba, who worship with us quite often here over past months, she died yesterday.
- She passed away yesterday. So if we could be mindful of our family and uphold them in prayer, I think it would be very much appropriate that we would do so.
- So let's, as we will in the course of the service, keep our family in our minds and keep our family in our prayers over these next few days.
- [5 : 17] Let's begin by singing to God's praise from Psalm 139. Psalm 139.
- And we'll sing from verses 1 to verse 10 of the psalm. O Lord, thou hast me searched and known, thou knowest my sitting down and rising up, yea, all my thoughts afar to thee are known.
- And then down to the end of verse 10. To God's praise. We'll stand to sing. O Lord, thou hast me searched and known, thou knowest my sitting down and rising up, yea, all my thoughts.
- How far to thee are known. My footsteps and my lying down, thou compassed always.
- Thou walk so lost and tiredly art, how quickest oh my ways.
- [6 : 59] For in my tongue before I speak, not any word can be.
- But all together, Lord, it is well known to thee.
- Behind thee, poor, thou hast be set, and laid on me thy hand.
- Search for ages, two states for me, too high to understand.
- From thy spirit whither shall I go, or from thy presence lie?
- [8 : 20] Ascend, I have known the warped death, than if in hell I lie.
- Take thy the morning wings and dwell in utmost parts of sea.
- In the Lord shall thy hand be read, thy white hand hope shall be.
- Let's unite our hearts in prayer, let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this new day, and we thank you for the new song that you give to us to sing.
- We thank you for these psalms, which were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and written by the pen of David, and preserved over the generations.

- [9 : 39] We thank you that these are psalms, these are prayers, these are songs that we can come to each day, and we can come to at the beginning of this day, and receive such encouragement through them.
- We thank you that sometimes when we struggle to find words of our own, even to come to you with, we turn to the psalms, and we find the prayer that we could not articulate in paper before us.
- And we thank you for all that we have sung of. We thank you for the wonder of the fact that you are God, and that you are our God. And you are the one who searches us.
- And you are the one who knows us. And you know our needs. And you know our hearts. You know our actions. You know our words.
- You know our thoughts. Everything, Lord, that we are, everything that we do, everything that we plan, everything that we look back on.
- [10 : 47] We thank you, Father, that you know it. You know our endeavors. You know our aspirations, our hopes, our desires. You know how we love you and how we like to walk close with you.
- And yet, Lord, you know how we fall and how we fail and how fragile and how weak we are. You know our sin. And yet we thank you, Father, that in spite of everything that you see, in spite of your full knowledge of us, you have loved us and you do love us with that everlasting, unconditional love.
- We thank you that whilst we were still sinners, when we had no merit, when we had nothing attractive in us, Christ loved us and died for us.
- Father, we thank you for the words that we will read in due course today that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life.
- And so we thank you once more on this Resurrection Day for the hope of the Gospel and for the sure and certain hope that is given to all who are in Christ.
- [12 : 11] And we thank you that the calling that you place upon our lives is a calling that we will come to Jesus and we ask that each one of us would be those who would come to Jesus.
- Some perhaps here have come and have been walking with the Lord for many days, many weeks, many years. And perhaps there are others who are young in the faith and yet we thank you that you love each one of us.
- Some of us may be drawn for a long time in our knowledge of Christ and our sense of wanting to come to know him and for others it can be in the moment we remember the thief on the cross who said simply, remember me.
- And so we thank you for the power of the blood of Christ for the power of the cross. We think upon the words of the tune that we heard before the service began.
- The power of the cross and how death and sin and Satan was overcome through the blood of Christ that was shed for us.
- [13 : 25] And Lord, we are conscious at this time of the sadness of these recent days and of these recent weeks even. Whether there have been so many who have been taken from time into eternity.
- Some at the end of a long life and some so abruptly and so suddenly. And we pray for your comfort, for your strength, for your encouragement to be upon all those who are grieving.
- We pray for the late Tadibas family. And we commit them to you. We pray that you would draw near to them. And that they would know that you are God.

And that you are with them. We pray for the Campbell family. This day as they continue to mourn for the passing of E.N.D. Campbell.

And Lord, we ask that you would uphold them. That you would strengthen them. That you would hold them in these everlasting arms. That administer your comfort and your peace.

[14 : 37] In the way that the world cannot. Help them, Lord, we pray. And we do thank you once more for his life and for all that he did in guiding and ministering to us in this place here.

We ask, Lord, that the work of the gospel, your work, would progress and continue and go on across these islands in this place.

And we pray especially for Point. A people who are sore. A people who are hurting and confused. And yet we pray that you would be near to them.

That they may know the touch and the call of the Good Shepherd. Calling them to come and find that rest in his presence.

And we pray for the Reverend Andrew Coggle as he brings your word to these congregations this morning. That you would give him your word and that it would be preached in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[15 : 40] And that many would look to Jesus as Jesus will be lifted up in his preaching. So we pray for all who are sad and all who are sore.

Some in this congregation and this community. We ask, Lord, that you would help them. That you would help us. And that you would uphold each one of us.

We pray that you would continue with us in this service today. That we would be in the spirit. The spirit of worship. That our minds would not be drawn back to the things of this world.

But that we would be thinking upon things above. That we would be fixing our eyes upon Christ. And Lord, that we would meet with Jesus each one of us.

As Nicodemus met with Jesus in the passage that we'll read. So hear our prayers. We thank you for answered prayer. We thank you for your goodness to us and for your grace.

[16 : 46] We thank you for your touch upon our lives. And we ask, Lord, that you would enable us to be always thankful and always praising. not only when things seem to be going well but when we struggle with providences in this life.

We pray that we would continue to praise you and to know the joy of the Lord which is our strength. Be with those who are sick today and we ask that you would lay your hand of healing upon them.

We pray for those who are in their homes and who would like to be here and we ask that you would meet them at the point of their need. We pray for those who are employed in work who have responsibilities and we ask, Father, that you would equip them for the work that you've called them to and enable them to be salt and light in this world.

And we ask now that you would continue with us, that you would cleanse us from our sin, that you would fill us with the Holy Spirit, empty us of self and enable us to fix our eyes upon Jesus for us.

In his name that we pray. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come out please? How's everyone today?

[18 : 07] Boys, if you phone each other in the morning and just make sure that your talks are all going to be coordinated. Perfect matching blues there in front. The modern man.

Let me tell you about something that I ate this week. What's your favourite dinner? Macaroni?

Yes. Well, tell me some of the things did you eat this week? Did you have macaroni? No? No? No?

Do you want to? Just pizza. Just pizza. All week, just pizza. Okay. Do you know what I ate this week?

I had lots of dinners this week, but one dinner that I ate this week was smoked salmon. Salmon. Who likes smoked salmon? It's good, isn't it?

[19 : 10] But this smoked salmon I had was better than any smoked salmon I ever tasted before. Mr Davidson over there made it. He smoked it. And so, I took it on the plate.

Mary's brother was with me as well. And there was a big bit of smoked salmon and we said, we'll just have a wee bit. So we got out the old cakes and we had a wee bit. And it was very, very tasty.

So we had a wee bit more. And then a wee bit more. And a wee bit more. And before we knew it, all of the big chunk of smoked salmon was gone.

Apart from a wee bit at the end, which we thought we'd better leave that for a minute. And it was delicious. But I ate so much of it that about two hours later, I was thirsty.

And I was so thirsty. So I was desperate to try and get something that would quench my thirst. Now tell me, boys and girls, have you ever been thirsty?

[20 : 18] Yep. Maybe not after smoked salmon. Maybe after a game of football or a game of, I don't know, running, whatever you're doing. You come out. rugby.

Or rugby, yes. Mention rugby, yes. Well done. Ailey, what makes you thirsty? I saw your finger run up. Salt perring in the morning.

Sometimes we get so thirsty. So if you're thirsty, what do you need to do? You can get a drink. And what kind of drink do you get?

Can you just get anything that's liquid? Well, that quenches your thirst. Could you go and, could you go out to West Lock with a bucket of water and go into the sea and take the bucket out and then get your glass and dip it in and drink it?

Would that quench your thirst? No. What would that do? Make you sick. Make you sick? Die.

[21 : 24] Make you sick, yeah. Certainly. And, Anna? Make you even more thirsty. And that's something so we've heard stories about that where people have been on sea and they've just been so desperate to drink but they cannot drink the seawater because if they drink the seawater it makes them sicker and sicker and thirstier and thirstier so we can't just drink anything.

Could you go to John's garage and say, can I get some of your engine oil please, John? Drink that. That wouldn't be good, would it? Could we go to Bo and say, can I get some paint please because I'm very thirsty?

No. No. So, what do we need to drink if we're going to quench our thirst? Heat. Water. Water. water. It's the best thing that we can drink to quench our thirst and to make our bodies which are maybe very hot, nice and cool and healthy.

Tell me this. is it only our bodies that get thirsty? Or is there anything else in us that gets thirsty?

Your mouth gets thirsty, that's your body. Is there anything else that gets thirsty? thirsty? Your heart gets thirsty.

[22 : 51] And when our hearts get thirsty, we just know that we're longing for something. Sometimes we're not quite sure what we're longing for and you see some people in life and they know they're missing something and they know their hearts are thirsty and so they maybe go and they try this bad thing and that bad thing and the next bad thing and it's like drinking seawater and oil and paint and the more they drink of it the more their hearts get sick and not quenched.

Tell me boys and girls who is it that is like water for our hearts? Who can make our hearts thirst glowing?

Really? Yeah. Water. Who's like who's who is like water for our hearts?

Bethany. God. Jesus is the one who came and he came so that our hearts wouldn't need to be thirsty anymore and when we trust in him and when we come to him and we say Lord Jesus I'm sorry for all this sin and all the things that I've tried to drink to make my heart better.

I know they're not the right things please take away all the sin and come into my heart and take away the thirst. He doesn't. He quenches the thirst in our hearts and we are at peace when we have him.

[24 : 39] We're going to sing in a wee minute as the deer pants for the water so my soul my heart longs for you because it's got a psalm about the Lord Jesus so let's sing let's do the verse and then we'll sing.

Lord God we thank you that you love us and we thank you that you have made us with a thirst in our hearts for you and we thank you that you've not left us thirsty but you've said to us come to me and I will take your thirst away I will give you rest.

We thank you that Jesus is the one who came into this world to take our sin away and to direct us away from everything that would harm us and to direct us to him and we thank you that when we come to Jesus he gives us that living water that cleanses the thirst in our souls and makes us perfectly at peace so help us we pray to trust in Jesus today and every day so that our hearts would be content in you and we pray all this in Jesus name Amen We're going to sing now and we're going to sing the words on the screen and it's our mission praise number 37 mission praise 37 as the deer pants for the water so my soul my heart longs after you John chapter 2 and verse 23

John chapter 2 and we'll read from verse 23 we looked last Sunday morning at the encounter of Jesus in the temple and the whole scene there from the temple when he cast out those who were involved in commerce etc and then we come to verse 23 at the end of that account and we head into chapter 3 from there chapter 3 now while Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name but Jesus would not entrust himself to them for he knew all men he did not need man's testimony about man for he knew what was in a man now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus a member of the Jewish ruling council he came to Jesus at night and said Rabbi we know that you are a teacher who has come from

God for no one could perform the miraculous signs you were doing if God were not with him in reply Jesus declared I tell you the truth no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again how can a man be born when he is old Nicodemus asked surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born Jesus answered I tell you can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the spirit flesh gives birth to flesh but the spirit gives birth to spirit you should not be surprised at my saying you must be born again the wind blows wherever it pleases you hear its sign but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going so it is with everyone born of the spirit how can this be Nicodemus asked you are Israel's teacher said Jesus and you do not understand these things I tell you the truth we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen but still you people do not accept our testimony I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe I then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things no one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven the son of man just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert so the son of man must be lifted up that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life for God did not send the son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe stand condemned already because he is not believe in the name of God's one and only son this is the verdict light has come into the world but men love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed but whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God after this Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside where he spent some time with them and baptized now John also was baptizing it in on near saline because there was plenty of water and people were constantly coming to be baptized this was before John was put in prison an argument developed between some of

[29 : 56] John's disciples and a certain Jew over a matter of ceremonial washing they came to John and said to him rabbi the man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan the one you testified about well he's baptizing and everyone is going to him to this John replied a man can only receive what is given from heaven you yourselves can testify that I said I am not the Christ but I'm sent ahead of him the bride belongs to the bridegroom the friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice that joy is mine and is now complete he must become greater I must become less the one who comes from above is above all the one who's from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks as one from the earth the one who comes from heaven is above all he testifies to what he has seen and heard but no one accepts his testimony the man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful for the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God for God gives the spirit without limit the father loves the son and has placed everything in his hands whoever believes in the son has eternal life but whoever rejects the son will not see life for God's wrath remains on him amen and may God bless that reading of his word to us

John McSweeney will lead us now in prayer in the gallery the■■■ of God's attitude she is trying, to join us like a husband in prayer, to sleep like a man in prayer at breaking the world and say and to start bye■■ Jaha cassieAD per God and turn over fire He is how sill■■■ There are things that he does to espace in the Roman chapter of his days true Jaha nech Hum upon him and Economize an■■ bull.

essayinatang elochef gunsawLOK lai edigakstL■■■■ debu je■■eli us Bax head in abyeeoo ,■■uskutiklo ■■■■■■■■■ odoo helen nota from there seg■■■ goto send, of the map that he visited would keep old within a six hour hour and the future.

This is where the erstmal to a Pike applications needed. So how they come to me and wear all your clothes Ahama Magdala's story is an important And also wha'er what they come with Is a long time in gin At I get my work in theassembly ■■■ I'm with my students and find my job and finding my job.

I'll tell you what I ■ed through and hello. And close to me. I'd say goodbye.

[33 : 37] I will deliver you from the people ... and have positive, I've been working for you, When people have no toothpaste onto acrylic dynamics, they don't need to hit the toilet to let the net and remove anything isksomified.

voiceover After the statue-in-law hundred andvé I prepared to fight Husky and modest abilities, I startled this bird, Youth 91 000s Once again, I don't remember the meat of the tree or thing, A man's can't feel, with his heart and mercy of the poor people who bless them, and NPI say humanity's becoming people who use the knowledge of their faith.

Our children always exist asRETI came today, and the surveillance of the mundial Assition Society of the Antiracles It's like an in■■■■ and became free First, working in Romani's energy at 7123 Stories Three months at the time Three months now Six months later And along the■■■■■■■■ chce■■■■ Sir Htut ■■■■■prisesavil ■ standing back.

They wrote down, and they wrote, what Rilah saved us, and was, this was in witness, now sent to the Ozymusk.

Thanks to the people of God, Jesus and the Jesus Seanbill, who umparring, who became a man who threatened me he stopped andzekket Stalk tree starks, storeings, space.

[37 : 05] Going on he■g began to see Amaz, it ran the other day, the other day to dann and party and Kranaz is not too thick and He is singing again to God's praise.

This time from Psalm 62. Psalm 62 and the first two verses in Gaelic. My soul with expectation depends on God indeed.

My strength and my salvation doth from him alone proceed. He only my salvation is and my strong rock is he. He only is my sure defense, much moved I shall not be.

These two verses in Gaelic to God's praise. Lesbogary na pilot. Lesbogary na pilot.

Deserje humannam Tophilary na pilot. Bostad Gaelic. Thank you.

[39 : 07] 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. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[41 : 33] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Jerry Phan. Public, ma■■■ lire, you do a small souls, that you would open eyes that perhaps have been blind and enable us to see Jesus and the salvation that is offered to us in him.

And we thank you that it is sure, it is certain. And we pray that you would encourage us as we meditate upon these verses. We pray for the young ones as well.

We thank you for them and ask that as we seek your blessing and your help in looking at your word here, that you would be with them and those who teach them, that they would understand the gospel message clearly and receive it readily in their young years.

And we pray for those around us as well, other congregations at the same point who will be gathering around your word, that your blessing would be upon them. And we pray that you would help them as you help us, we ask in Jesus' name.

[42 : 44] Amen. I'm conscious that today we're looking at a fair chunk of scripture. So I'm going to skip introductions and stories and anecdotes and just launch straight in.

We're looking at the section that we read from verse 23 of chapter 2 to the end of chapter 3.

And I would like to do so this morning under three heading, just to order our thoughts. First of all, we see Jesus looking in to the heart of man.

We see Jesus looking in to the hearts of the crowds who were gathered around him. And the second thing that we'll look at hopefully is Nicodemus as he's looking for Jesus.

And thirdly, we'll see how through the conversation, the meeting with Jesus that Nicodemus has, he comes to understand the importance of the lifting up of Christ.

[43 : 50] So three points to govern our thoughts. Jesus looking in to the heart of man. Nicodemus looking for Jesus. And then Nicodemus coming to understand the importance of the lifting up of Jesus.

So first of all, we see Jesus looking in to the heart of man. The last few weeks, I had a problem with the car.

It's not uncommon for me to say this, is it? But I had a problem with the car and it was fine when it was cold. It was fine when it was running. But if you were running it for a wee while and then it had warmed up and you went to try and start it, it just would not start.

And so at the outside of the shop and the engine's turning over and the starter's toiling and we're not getting anywhere. And so I've been living with this for the last few weeks and I took it to John.

And what did John do? Well, he opened the bonnet. He had a look at the engine. He looked into the car. And after diagnosing it, thankfully, he found where there was a faulty component, identified it and got to work and hopefully fixed it.

[44 : 58] You know, it's that simple in some ways with a car. It's very easy for us to pop the hood, pop the bonnet and look in.

We can do that with cars, but we can't do that with each other. We can't do that with people. We can look at each other and we have a presentation.

We have an outward appearance of how we're doing. We can listen to each other as we have a cup of tea and tell each other that we're all fine. But we cannot look in to each other's hearts and minds.

But Jesus could. And Jesus can't. So what did Jesus see as the people who were mentioned at the end of chapter 2 crowded around him?

Remember, at this point in Jesus' ministry, he was doing the most amazing, miraculous signs. And so there were crowds who were gathered.

[46 : 02] And they were eyes on him. Wondering what he was going to do next. They heard about the water turning into wine in the wedding. For the bride and the groom.

Their day was made by the intervention of Jesus. They would have heard, because the whole place would have been speaking, about how Jesus tipped the tables in the temple and caused such a scene.

Ruining the day of the religious leaders. So there was a buzz around Jesus. And there was a crowd that was gathering. And it says in verse 23 of chapter 2, Many people saw the miraculous signs that he was doing and believed in his name.

And we read that. And we can imagine the disciples as they were gathered around Jesus. And you would think that that would draw a positive reaction.

We would see crowds gathered. I think it would lift our hearts. I have to say, when there is a good congregation that gathers, it lifts our hearts.

[47 : 11] There's such encouragement in seeing people just here. And Jesus, I'm sure, was happy to see those who were gathered.

But he could see not only on the surface, he could see in. And so even though the disciples might have wanted to sign them up, as followers of Christ, Jesus was not so quick.

And it says in verse 23, That Jesus would not entrust himself to them. For he knew all men.

All people. And it seems that for most of these people in the crowd, Yes, there was a real interest.

And yes, there was an emotional stirring. But there was not much deeper than that. There was nothing lasting about the majority of the crowd.

[48 : 14] They were miracle chasers. They were sign hunters. They weren't disciples of Jesus.

And although the disciples would not have been able to see that, Jesus, as he looked in to their hearts, he could. And so he did not entrust himself to them.

And the fact is, Jesus still can see what is going on in their hearts. And he knows better what's going on in our hearts than we ourselves know what's going on in our hearts.

We sang from Psalm 139. And we have it in verses 1 to 4. That searching knowledge of God.

O Lord, you have searched me and know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down. You're familiar with all my ways.

[49 : 18] Before a word is on my tongue. You know it completely. O Lord. And that was the degree of knowledge that Jesus had and still has.

As he looks into our hearts. And so there's two points in application on this particular aspect of the verses.

There's a question that we must ask. And there's wisdom that we are given to follow. The question is a predictable one, but it's a necessary one.

The question is simply this. What does Jesus see when he looks into your heart and mine? Does he see people who have that deep soul thirst to truly know him and walk with him and be with him and follow him as disciples and lift him up above ourselves?

Or does he see those who are like the crowds who love Jesus for the things that he can do for us and the things perhaps that we can get from him?

[50 : 48] Does he see people perhaps who have no real lasting desire to know him and to glorify him and to follow him closely?

See, what Jesus is looking for is disciples. not a crowd, not a buzz, but disciples.

Those who will walk with him, those who will talk with him, those who will listen to him, those who will truly sing as the deer pants for the water.

So my soul longs for you. Does Jesus see that when he looks in my heart and yours? That's the first question to ask.

The wisdom that we are given to follow comes from that same verse, verse 23. Jesus would not entrust himself to them, the crowds, for he knew all men, all people.

[52 : 16] And I think there's teaching here for us to grasp. And we are taught in that verse that we're taught who we can trust and who we can't trust.

And the fact is we can't even trust ourselves when we know our own hearts. and we can't really trust any man or woman or boy or girl in that ultimate absolute sense.

Why not? Simply because we're sinners. We are far from perfect. We are those who fail. We are those who fall. Even those who look the holiest, who look the steadiest, we fail.

And we fall. We prove ourselves to be untrustworthy time after time. And so we are reminded here that it's wisdom imparted here for us that we will not elevate anyone in this world to a God-like position.

Whether it's a spouse, whether it's a political leader, whether it is a spiritual mentor, or whatever, they, we, cannot be fully trusted because of what is in us and the sin that we struggle with.

[53 : 49] I was looking at this this morning and in the study it caught my eye. It was four or five shoeboxes and the bottom shoebox had nothing in it.

And then there was a couple of shoeboxes that had shoes in them and then there was five or six books on top of the pile and the bottom box was collapsing under the weight of everything that was on top of it.

And as I looked at that I thought that's a good picture of any human being. we cannot take the weight of anyone's faith.

Only Christ can take the weight of the faith that we lean upon him with. And when we put that degree of faith in another thing or another person, they crumble.

because we're not designed to take that weight. And so we're shown here, even in Jesus' response, that we do not trust ourselves.

[55 : 05] We do not trust fallen man and woman, but we trust him. Because he is the one who is the rock of our salvation. He is the one who takes the full weight of our faith.

We trust him. We believe in him. And the promise that we are given is that those who believe will never perish, never perish, but will have everlasting life.

And that's a promise that takes us into chapter 3. As we see Nicodemus is looking for Jesus. So Jesus is looking into the heart of man.

And he would not fully entrust himself to the heart of man, because he knew what was in a man. And now we see Nicodemus looking for Jesus.

It's not a passage I think we need to do a lot of spade work in terms of who is Nicodemus and what was going on in this passage, because it's probably one of the most famous chapters in the whole of the New Testament.

[56 : 17] You will probably have heard a thousand sermons so a Nicodemus and his encounter with Christ. So very briefly, who is Nicodemus? Well, we're told here he was a man.

That was a good start for the Jew. He was a Pharisee. He was a religious man. He was, verse 1, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin.

So he wasn't only a religious man, but he was a religious man who had great authority in that sphere. Verse 10 tells us he was Israel's teacher.

And so on the outside, Nicodemus seems to have it all. He has power, he has influence, he has kudos in the religious scene, which was the high scene of that day and age.

He was a man that people would have looked up to. He was a man that people would have gone to, but what is clear from the conversation is that none of these accolades that Nicodemus could take to himself, none of his religious, none of his worldly credentials secured entry for Nicodemus into the kingdom of God.

[57 : 31] And likely Nicodemus sensed that and knew that, which is why probably he was there looking for Jesus.

you'll hear lots of sermons about how bad Nicodemus was and how he went there to trap Jesus and trip him up.

And I've read various commentators this week who've got wildly different views on the motivation of Nicodemus coming by night in the darkness, etc. The more I've looked at it, the more I think Nicodemus was one who came to Jesus by night.

Why? Well, he couldn't come by day. Look what happened in chapter 2. The huge furore in the temple. Jesus was one of the most inflammatory characters of that time.

So Nicodemus came by night to see Jesus. He's looking for Jesus. He has a respect for Jesus, which we'll come to in a moment. He's not trying to catch him out, I don't think.

[58 : 39] He's looking for Jesus. And the application here at this first point is predictable, but it's necessary for us to underline it again.

We can be men and women, we can be well respected, we can know our Bibles, we can have influence in our workplace, we can have influence within the church community, but that is not what secures our entry into the kingdom of God.

we need to be those who have gone and looked for and sought out and found Jesus.

Have you done that? The truth is, it's the work of the Holy Spirit to draw us. We don't decide one morning, today I'm going to seek Jesus as if it was all down to us.

It's the Holy Spirit who draws us and who leads us into these chairs and who fuels our minds in such a way as to have this interest that's sparked and questions that emerge within us.

[59 : 50] That's the Holy Spirit's work. He's the one who draws us. It's a sovereign work, it's a mysterious work. And Jesus speaks of it in verse 8.

He says, the wind blows whatever it pleases. You hear it sign, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it's going. So it is with everyone that's born of the Spirit.

On Tuesday Neil came, Mary's brother Neil came through from Uist to Harris. And he was talking about the fact that when he left Uist it was blowing in an absolute gale.

The wind was horrendous. And then as we sat in Tarbert just a wee while later with a cup of tea, it was flat calm. And the question he asked, he says, where does the wind go?

We're not far away, where does the wind go? I could ask that between Kylos and Tarbert. I mean, top of the hill in Kylos, blowing a howler. You arrive in Tarbert and there's nothing and you think, where does the wind go?

[60 : 58] And that's the kind of question that we are confronted with as we think about the work of the Holy Spirit. We don't understand his work.

We can't put a formula to his work. We cannot predict that work. We don't understand what he's doing and where he is working. But if he blows on us, if the Holy Spirit is at work, blowing on us, as he did on Nicodemus, if we feel that sense of spiritual awakening, if there are questions, if there is an increasing sense of being drawn to explore who is Jesus, what are we to do?

We're to do what Nicodemus did and go and seek Jesus. God's responsibility, God's sovereign work is God's sovereign work.

We can't compute it. But my responsibility and yours is to seek Jesus. We can't sit in our chairs and say, well, if I'll be saved, I'll be saved.

We can't sit in our chairs and say, well, if the Lord wants me to go on with him, I'll just go on with him. No, if he is giving us answers, if he is drawing us, if he is troubling us, the spirit is at work and our responsibility is to seek Jesus.

[62 : 34] And the promise that we are given, Jeremiah 29, 13, you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. All your heart.

the promise in Matthew 7, 7, is ask and it will be given. Seek and you will find.

Knock and the door will be opened to you. And that would be Nicodemus' testimony in time. Jesus didn't turn him away. But as he sought Jesus, he found Jesus.

As Nicodemus sought Jesus in a high risk situation with a very real risk of his colleagues looking at him and saying, what are you playing at?

As he seeks Christ, he finds Christ. And we could go to John 7, we could go to John 19 and see that in time he comes to faith.

[63 : 44] Was he in a position where he had faith at this point? We're not sure. Was he converted now? I don't know. Did he walk away as a born-again believer? I'm not sure. But in time he did.

And so the question for us in application is, are we seeking Christ? Are we truly seeking Christ?

More than anything else, are we seeking him? Last week we looked at the passage where Jesus was in the temple. The temple was the place where people went and seek God and meet with God and yet there was all this din and stuff that was going on.

It just wasn't possible and so Jesus threw the tables over, cleared the temple so that genuine seekers could come and seek and find God. are we seeking Jesus today?

No, we are here in this place. We are meeting in the name of Jesus. The promise is that he will be here and he will meet with us. Are we here with that intention?

[65 : 02] Truly seeking him, expecting that he will meet with us? Now we don't have pigeons and stuff being sold around here.

We don't have a whole lot of din and clatter within this hall. But what's going on in your mind? Are you seeking Christ? Or are you making plans for the week on Thursday?

Are you thinking about how to pay this bill and that bill? Are you thinking about this pleasure and that pleasure? We can take the world into our minds and be seeking things of this world when we are here to be seeking Christ.

And if we seek him in that way, if we seek him with all our hearts, if we seek him in such a way as to say, Lord, clear my mind, all the things that trouble me, take them away and meet with me.

I'm seeking you, sail me. we have the promise that he will find us. I pray that we are seeking Jesus, that we are looking for him as Nicodemus was.

[66 : 31] So Jesus looked into the heart of man. he knew what was in a man. What does he see in our hearts? We see Nicodemus looking for Jesus, sincerely seeking, looking for Jesus.

And as Nicodemus spends time with Jesus and listens to the conversation that is unfolding, he comes to understand the crucial nature, the absolute importance of the lifting up of Jesus.

And that's our final point. The question Nicodemus has on his mind, the question that's heavy on his heart, the question that he's seeking an answer to is how can I enter the kingdom of God?

That I think is why he's there. Because although he knows all this stuff, he has no assurance about the kingdom of God and his place in the kingdom of God. God, and so he comes to meet with Jesus and Jesus turns the question back on him and begins to speak to him about the need for Nicodemus to be born again.

And the crucial thing that we need to see, as Nicodemus needed to see, was that we must be born again. In verse seven, the word there for you, is not a singular you, that was just for Nicodemus, it's the plural you in the Greek.

[68 : 06] And so Jesus is saying to Nicodemus and all who would listen into that conversation in times to come, in North Harris, you must be born again, not just Nicodemus, but you and I, we must be born again.

The good and the bad, the well respected and religious circles, and those who are not, the religious, the secularists, the moral, the immoral, Jesus is saying to all, you must be born again.

So how could he be born again? How can we be born again? How can we be saved? How can we be assured that we have a place in the kingdom of God?

Well, the answer to that question is that Jesus must be, verse 14, Jesus had to be lifted up. Notice that the answer to the question about the security that we can have, the place that we can have in the kingdom of heaven, it's not about us, it's about him.

It's not about me and you and what we have done, are doing, may well do in the future, it's about what Jesus would do and has now done. Jesus must be, verse 14, Jesus had to be lifted up.

[69 : 43] Just as Moses, verse 14, lifted up the snake in the desert, so the son of man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

And this verse that Jesus uses takes us back to Numbers 21. Go there just for a moment, please. Jesus always used illustrations to help people to understand understand.

And remember, Nicodemus was an Old Testament scholar, he was an expert, he knew his Old Testament back to front, inside out, he knew it, and so when Jesus spoke to him about these things of the Old Testament, he understood, he was familiar with it.

In Numbers 21 and verse 4, we have this account of Israel, and they're in grave danger. they traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea to go around either, but the people grew impatient on the way.

They spoke against God and against Moses. Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread, there is no water, and we detest this miserable food.

[71 : 05] Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them. They bit the people, and many Israelites died. the people came to Moses and said, we sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you.

Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us. So Moses prayed for the people. The Lord said to Moses, make a snake and put it up on a pole.

Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. So Moses made a snake and put it up on the pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

So Jesus directs Nicodemus to that slightly obscure passage. Israel in grave danger, bitten by snakes, venom in their system, facing certain death.

How could they be saved? But they couldn't save themselves. And so the Lord through Moses said, you can be saved by the means that I will set.

[72 : 09] The bronze snake lifted up on the pole and everyone who would look to it would be saved. So Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, you remember that story Nicodemus? That's a teaching aid for you.

That's an illustration to help you understand how you can be healed of the venom of your sin and how you can be saved and brought into the kingdom of heaven and born again from above.

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the son of man, the term Jesus, is always used to identify himself. The son of man must be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

What is Jesus talking about? Well, he's talking about the cross. Lifted up was he to die.

that was the place that the son of man would be lifted up. The cross was the place where he would take the venom of our sin into his own body in order that we, if we will look in faith to him, will be saved.

- [73 : 27] That's the only way we could be saved. God didn't say to the Israelites, here's some options. He says, there's one way. You look in faith, my way you will be saved.
- And Jesus said in John 14, I am the way, no other way to the Father, only me. The son of man must be lifted up.
- Jesus says to Nicodemus, your salvation, your place in the kingdom of God, the new birth, the eternal life that you crave comes that way.
- J.C. Ryle's got a quote here, which I'm going to read out. The brazen serpent lifted up in the camp of Israel brought health and cure within the reach of all who were bitten by serpents.
- Christ crucified in like manner brought eternal life within reach of lost mankind. Christ has been lifted up on the cross and man looking to him by faith may be saved.
- [74 : 39] The truth before us is the very foundation stone of the Christian religion. Christ's death is the Christian's life. Christ's cross is the Christian's title to heaven.
- Christ lifted up and put to shame on Calvary is the ladder by which Christians enter into the holiest and are at length landed in glory. It is true that we are sinners, says Ryle, that Christ has suffered for us.
- That's a great thought. because he looks in our hearts, verse 1, chapter 1, not chapter 1, but point 1, he looks into our hearts, he sees the sin, and we see our sin.
- It is true that we are sinners, but Christ has suffered for us. It is true that we deserve death, but Christ has died for us.
- It is true that we are guilty debtors, but Christ has paid our debts with his own blood. this is the real gospel.
- [75 : 48] This is the good news. On this let us lean while we live, and to this let us cling when we die.
- Christ has been lifted up on the cross, and has thrown open the gates of heaven to all believers.
- And Nicodemus had to see the absolute necessity of Christ being lifted up for him.
- Do you see it? Do we see the necessity, the centrality of the cross?
- Do we sing from our hearts, nothing in my hands I bring, no religious PhDs, no Pharisee, no ruler of the Jewish ruling council?
- [76 : 55] We don't come with CVs that we wave at Jesus saying, look at all the things that I've done, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.
- That's what Nicodemus had to sing. My faith looks up to thee, thy lamb of Calvary, saviour the vine.
- Let's pray. Our heavenly father, we thank you for your word and we thank you that as you look into our hearts, you are honest with us and you tell us what you see.
- You see sin in our hearts and we see sin in our hearts and we know that we cannot trust ourselves and we cannot look to anyone or anything else to save us. Nothing else is able to take the weight of our sin.
- Nothing else is able to take the weight of the faith that we need to be saved. Save Jesus. love to love to us. We thank you that Jesus came and he came to seek and to save sinners like Nicodemus and like us.
- [78 : 22] We thank you that as we look in faith to him, as we look up to that cross, as we put our faith in Jesus, we thank you that we are assured of a place in the kingdom of heaven.

we pray that we would leave this place today sure of where we are going. We don't know how long we are on this world for, but we pray that we would be found ready on the day that you call us from time into eternity and we thank you that you have made it possible for us to be ready through the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Grant us faith that we would believe and know the assurance of salvation and we pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. We're going to sing the hymn that we quoted there in a second to go to finish.

4, 6, 9, a listen phrase and the words on the screen. My faith looks up to thee thy lamb of category saviour.

divine. And I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forever more.

[79 : 48] Amen. Thank you.