

# 29.12.24 am

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Date: 29 December 2024

Preacher: Dr Antony Latham

- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     A warm welcome to our family service this morning. Special welcome to any visitors that have joined us. I've seen some visitors coming in this morning.
- That's wonderful. Tea and coffee will be served after the service just over here. And all are welcome to join us for that. Cresce provision continues as usual during the service with Sunday school running for primary and secondary age children.
- And visiting children are very welcome and can join with the youngsters as they go out after the second singing. The service this evening at 6pm will be a Gaelic service taken by Angus M. MacLeod.
- And there will be no English fellowship afterwards. The Ladies' Fellowship meets on Mondays at 8pm. All ladies are welcome. For more information, please speak to Lucy, Tor or Peggy MacLeod.
- The Road to Recovery meets on Tuesday at 7pm in the church. All struggling with issues of any addiction are welcome for a confidential time of support, informal fellowship, and a short time of prayer with a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit.
- [ 1 : 1 8 ]     Or more than one biscuit. The New Year service will be taken by Gordon MacLeod on the 1st of January at 11am. So that's the New Year service taken by Gordon on the 1st of January at 11am.
- The minister and his family are away for two weeks from the 26th of December when they left. And the Reverend Coghill will be on standby for urgent pastoral matters.
- The Friday clubs for young people will be back after the holidays. And there's something about church cleaning here. 30th of December, Isabella and John Angus. 6th of January, Maria and Flora.
- The service is next Sunday. 11am, Farrakhan MacLeod will lead that. 6pm, one of the elders will lead that. And there will be no live stream for that service, I'm told.
- So let's worship God and open our praise with hymn number 331 In heavenly love abiding  
No change my heart shall fear And safe is such confiding For nothing changes here  
The storm may roar without me My heart may low be laid But God is round about me And can I  
be dismayed Let's sing this to God's glory.
- [ 2 : 4 2 ]     Amen In heavenly love abiding No change my heart shall fear And safe in such confiding  
For nothing changes here For nothing changes here The storm may roar without me My  
heart may low be laid But God is round about me And can I be dismayed Wherever He  
may guide me
- No one shall turn me back My shepherd is beside me And loving man I lack His wisdom  
ever waketh His sight is never dim He knows the way He's taken And I will walk with Him  
And I will walk with Him Green pastures are before me Which yet I have not seen Bright  
skies will soon be o'er me Where the dark clouds have been Where the dark clouds have  
been

My hope I cannot measure My path to life is free My Savior has my treasure And He will walk with me Let's just bow our heads in prayer For a moment Lord we thank you for those words just there That you will walk with us That you will walk with us As we approach a new year And we thank you that we can Come before you now As a congregation As a group of people that Want to worship you with our hearts We want to find more of you We want to seek you We want to know you better We just thank you Lord

For this opportunity Which is only possible Because of Jesus Christ The one who came at Christmas time The one who came just as a wee baby The one who came in poverty In obscurity The one who humbled himself And came from heaven To be amongst us And we praise you for that We thank you too That Jesus lived the perfect life The perfect life That we cannot live ourselves But He lived it for us And He went as far as Dying on a terrible cross For us Taking upon Himself All our transgressions All our sins We thank you that we have freedom now We have access Into the Holy of Holies Because of Jesus Who is now alive

And has risen From the grave And is with us now And we pray Lord For each person here That we be able to put aside The concerns and the worries The difficulties Bringing them all before you And ask that you fill each one of us With your presence We confess Lord That over the past year Many times we have not Followed you as we should We confess Lord That often we have acted Or not acted In ways that we should And we ask for your forgiveness Lord At the beginning of this service We thank you that there is free forgiveness When we confess our sins You are faithful and just To forgive us our sins And cleanse us from all unrighteousness Thank you for that wonderful truth We thank you for the past year

[ 7 : 55 ] We thank you for all that you have done for us All the blessings that you have given us As a church And as a nation We pray for David Our minister As he is on His leave at the moment And his family We ask you Lord To refresh him To know your strength And your presence We pray for all of those Who are struggling at the moment Any who are struggling From sadness or depression Those who have addictions And we particularly think of this time of year When there is such temptation We pray for all those who are anxious Fearful Lord that you will be their comfort And they will find in you We pray for our nation We pray Lord That your church Will be revived Renewed

Filled with your spirit That in this coming year That you will do mighty things Through your people And indeed we pray for the leaders Of our nation That they will look to you And seek you Particularly when Making decisions about important ethical matters That are coming up We pray for our world We pray for all who meet in churches This Sunday Pray for the denominations in Tarbert Everyone who is worshipping you And throughout this world We pray Lord that you will Fill your church with your peace And your presence and your strength Particularly those who are struggling With oppression Or danger In different parts of the world We pray for the conflicts Trouble us so much And are so distressing Whether it be in Ukraine

Or the Middle East Or Africa Wherever there is conflict And suffering We pray that you will bring some peace And hope And forgiveness We pray for those areas of the world That are suffering from famine Places like Sudan And as we go into the new year We ask you Lord That we will walk in the light of Jesus Christ Who is the light of the world Help us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus And to be renewed And to follow faithfully For we ask all this in Jesus name So boys and girls Would you like to come forward?

Well Well Well Well Well Well Well Well Well Well Well Yeah, got some nice ones.

I won't ask you everything that you got. However, I got a present. I'm really, really thrilled about it. Here it is. It actually came in my stocking.

[ 11 : 39 ] It's the best thing I've ever had in my stocking, I think. What's this? It's a light. It's a light, exactly. It's rather an excellent light.

Look at this. It's got that torch. It's got that light. It's incredibly bright. It's rather good because it bends like that.

It's got a magnet here so I can do all sorts of things. I'm always losing torches, so I hope I don't lose this one. But this torch actually is just a brilliant torch.

And it lights up the darkness. I'm going to try and turn off the lights here, actually, and see if this works. Yeah. See that? Isn't that fantastic? And the light goes right up into the corners there where it's dark.

This is a wonderful torch. I'm really thrilled with it. Light always wins over darkness, doesn't it? Is it ever too dark for a torch?

[ 12 : 41 ] Never too dark. The light always lights up the darkness. Darkness can never win over the light of a torch. And in these dark nights, it's really good, isn't it, to have a torch when you're going outside.

Have you got a torch, Michael? I think so. You think so? Okay. Okay. Now, this is a funny question. Could you have a torch that shines darkness?

It's a bit of a weird. Could you actually shine darkness out of a torch? I don't think so. Emily says no. No, that's impossible.

Because light is always the thing that wins. You can't have darkness shining. Now, here's another question. What does the Bible say about darkness in our lives?

What does that mean, darkness in our lives? Yes, Michael. Sin. Sin, exactly. The problem with all of us is that there is sin in our lives.

[ 13 : 53 ] That's why we're here today. That's why we need Jesus. That's why all of us, grown-ups and young ones, are here. Because we do have sin. We have this darkness in our lives.

But what does the Bible say about the light of the world? Who is the light of the world? You're answering everything today, which is okay, Michael.

Who is the light of the world? Heavenly? Jesus. Jesus. Jesus actually says, I am the light of the world.

And the Bible actually says a lot about this. In fact, we're going to have, with the grown-ups later on, we're going to have a reading out of a letter by one of the disciples.

That's one of the followers of Jesus called John. I'm sure you've heard of John, one of the disciples. And he says that God is light.

[ 14 : 56 ] And there is no darkness in him at all. And John says something very important. He says, because God is light, we have to walk in the light.

We have to walk in the light. Because Jesus is the light of the world. And we have to walk with him. Now we've got a new year coming up. And we need to do that.

Each one of us here. The grown-ups as well. We need to be able to walk with Jesus in the light. And what does that light do? Just like this torch. It shines into the darkness.

So if there's darkness or sin or evil, the light of Christ always, always wins. Isn't that wonderful? It is wonderful.

So we have to walk in the light of Jesus by putting our trust in him and living our lives with him in charge.

[ 15 : 56 ] Now when you see another torch, just think of that. The light of the world, Jesus. And let's have his light shining in our lives.

Shall we say a wee prayer? Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are the light of the world. There's so much darkness in the world.

And we know that sometimes and often there's darkness in our own lives and hearts. But we thank you that your light dispels that going into every single corner of our lives.

And your light always overcomes the darkness. So help us to walk in the light of your light. In Jesus' name. Amen. So we're now going to...

It's still Christmas time. So we're going to sing a well-known hymn called See Him Lying on a Bed of Straw A drafty stable with an open door Mary cradling the babe she bore The Prince of Glory is His Name Sing that to God's praise, please.

[ 17 : 06 ] See Him Lying on a Bed of Straw A drafty stable with an open door Mary cradling the babe she bore The Prince of Glory is His Name All the Galilee to Bethlehem To see the Lord appear to men Just as poor as was the stable then The Prince of Glory when He came Star of silver sweep across the skies Show her Jesus in the danger lies Shepherds swiftly from your scooper eyes To see the Savior of the world To see the Lord appear to men

Just as poor as was the stable then The Prince of Glory when He came Angels sing the song that you began To bring God's glory to the heart of man Sing that Bethlehem's little baby can Be salvation to the soul Oh, now carry me to Bethlehem To see the Lord appear to men Just as poor as was the stable then The Prince of Glory when He came I am of Jesus from your poverty From your innocence eternity Mine forgiveness by your death for me Child of sorrow for my joy Oh, now carry me to Bethlehem To see the Lord appear to men

Just as poor as was the stable then The Prince of Glory when He came Let's turn in our Bibles to The first letter of John First letter of John Chapter 1 Beginning at verse 1 First letter of John Chapter 1 Beginning at verse 1 That which was That which was from the beginning Which we have heard

Which we have seen with our eyes Which we have looked upon And have touched with our hands Concerning the word of life The life was made manifest And we have seen it And testify to it And proclaim to you the eternal life Which was with the Father And was made manifest to us That which we have seen and heard We proclaim also to you So that you too May have fellowship with us And indeed our fellowship Is with the Father And with His Son Jesus Christ And we are writing these things So that our joy May be complete This is the message We have heard from Him And proclaim to you That God is light And in Him Is no darkness at all If we say we have fellowship with Him While we walk in darkness We lie And do not practice the truth But if we walk in the light

As He is in the light We have fellowship with one another And the blood of Jesus His Son Cleanses us from all sin If we say we have no sin We deceive ourselves And the truth is not in us If we confess our sins He is faithful and just To forgive us our sins And to cleanse us From all unrighteousness If we say we have not sinned We make Him a liar And His word is not in us We're now going to sing In Gaelic Psalm number 23 The beginning part of Psalm number 23 I'll read the first verses in English The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want He makes me down to lie In pastures green He leadeth me The quiet waters by My soul He doth restore again

[ 22 : 18 ] And me to walk doth make Within the paths of righteousness Even for His own name's sake We remain seated as we sing this psalm NINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNING CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SING

O the good who we may have come Let's just turn back to that passage of Scripture from the first letter of John.

John, first letter of John, chapter 1. And we're going to look at the whole of the chapter.

It's just 10 verses, but it's a wonderful chapter to look at this morning. Before we do that, let's just say a word of prayer. Lord, we thank you for this opportunity of looking at your word.

[ 26 : 07 ] Lord, we depend completely upon you for opening it up to ourselves by your Holy Spirit. We pray, Lord, that each of us here will learn what you have to say to us individually and as a congregation.

We depend completely on yourself, Lord. So speak to us. Speak through your word. Guide and lead us and bring us closer to you.

For we ask it in the name of Jesus. Amen. So let's look again at that passage, beginning at verse 1. I'm going to go through the chapter verse by verse.

John, as I hope you'll see, the chapter beautifully holds together. It's a bit like a diamond with many facets. John does bounce around in his letter or letters from one topic to another very suddenly.

But he always comes back again to the main points. And I think you'll see it all connecting. So the author, John, is the disciple of Jesus, who was now an apostle when he wrote that.

[ 27 : 19 ] It's believed that it was written round about A.D. 90 when he was an old man. He would have already left Jerusalem and may have been in Ephesus.

We're not sure. But he wrote it to the church and that means he wrote it to ourselves. It's wonderful to know, isn't it, that this same John, who was called by Jesus to follow him at the beginning of his ministry, when he left his nets, fishermen, is the same one who wrote this amazing letter.

And of course the gospel as well. And revelation. So quite something. The first point I want to bring out from this is the historical reality of Jesus.

The historical reality. As we continue to celebrate the fact that Jesus came into this world as a baby, it's good to read of the reality of Jesus from John.

He can't contain his joy at the fact that he was with him here. And the incarnation was real. He came to have a human body. He was one of us.

[ 28 : 42 ] John wants to proclaim his own first-hand knowledge of him being here on the earth. And it's wonderful to have this first-hand account of someone who was with Jesus for three years.

Let's read verses 1 to 2. And we can immediately see the similarity.

to the first words of John's gospel. The word, the beginning, life. And once again, John proclaims the fact that the word, the Son of God, Jesus, was from the beginning of all things, eternal.

Now, there are many people who will cast doubt upon the truth of the gospel accounts. You just ask somebody in the street or a neighbor or somebody.

And the same was true in those days, in the first century. After all, John was writing to folk who themselves had not actually physically seen Jesus like he had.

[ 30 : 11 ] Just like us, we have not physically seen Jesus. But it's as though John wants to shout from the rooftops that he is a witness of the reality of Jesus coming and living on the earth.

And he had this immense privilege of being with him. He says here that he heard him. He had seen him. He looked at him.

He touched him. This we proclaim, he says. This is firsthand knowledge and experience that he's so keen to pass on to us. And he continues to emphasize this in verse 3.

Where he says, That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you. So that you too may have fellowship with us. And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Now, John was writing at a time when heretics were distorting the truth about Jesus way back then at the very beginning. Suggesting that he was not actually physically the Son of God.

[ 31 : 20 ] And somehow that the physical was unimportant. John was saying loud and clear that Jesus was born and actually walked the earth and was a living, breathing human being.

How often do we find false views of Jesus when we talk to people? Or read books by supposed experts who question the authenticity of the Gospels and who deny the historical reality of Jesus.

And who cast doubt on the truth written by those who lived with Jesus. But John is emphatically and joyfully, he mentions joy here, proclaiming the absolute truth of Jesus.

He heard him, he saw him, and he touched him. Now, perhaps there are some here also, or people who are listening online, who question the reality of the Gospel claims.

Did Jesus really come from eternity to save us? How can we trust the Gospel accounts which were written so long ago? John helps us here if we doubt the reality of the living Jesus coming into the world.

[ 32 : 36 ] We need to be encouraged. Because we have in John a first-hand eyewitness of the events of Jesus' life. We can trust him.

It rings true. He was there. In a court, the best witnesses are eyewitnesses. And if someone in court says, I was there. I saw this happen.

I spent time looking at what happened. Then this counts better than any other evidence in a court. John Stott wrote, John Stott wrote, The Christian message is neither a philosophical speculation, nor a tentative suggestion, nor a modest contribution to religious thought, but a dogmatic affirmation by those whose experience and commission qualified them to make it.

And so we can trust the Gospel accounts. And when some people tried to tear them apart and rewrite history, let us instead have a simple trust in the writer John who is telling the truth.

He heard. He saw. He looked at. He looked at. He touched. Now he proclaims this news to us here in Tarbert on Sunday, the 29th of December, 2024.

[ 33 : 50 ] The long time that's passed since then makes no difference. Facts are facts. And at this time of Christmas, we marvel that this same Jesus came to us as a baby.

He was willing to lower himself, to emptying himself to our level. Not considering it too base or humiliating to enter our world as a vulnerable baby.

He came to us in poverty. An animal feeding trough for a crib in a dirty stable. Who would make that up?

It has to be true. He identifies with the poor. He came in obscurity. No fanfare of trumpets. Only revealed to a group of despised shepherds and some foreign eastern men.

Wise men. He never seeks worldly adulation, does he? And we must never forget the ultimate goal of his mission. To die on that terrible cross for us.

[ 34 : 58 ] John knew all this. And he now wants us to rejoice in the truth of it. So that's the first point. The historical reality of Jesus. We then have the fellowship that we need to have.

John says in verse 3 to 4. That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you. So that you too may have fellowship with us.

And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. He states here that he proclaims this truth of the reality of Jesus.

Taking on human flesh. So that we too may have fellowship with him. And with all other believers. He's reaching out to us. He's reaching out to you and me this morning.

Why is this important? Why does he say that this will make our joy complete? Fellowship is a very specific Christian word.

- [ 36 : 02 ] It's about having a common faith with one another. And joins us together and with God. One commentator describes it as that common participation in the grace of God.
- The salvation of Christ. And the indwelling of the Spirit. Which is the spiritual birthright of all Christian believers. And we're reminded of the words of Jesus in John chapter 17, 21. Where he prays for all believers. That all of them may be one Father. Just as you are in me and I am in you. So fellowship is precious.
- Something to be treasured and encouraged. And it's quite different from all other forms of social gathering together. Another writer says of it.
- We cannot be content with evangelism. Which does not lead to the drawing in of converts in the church. Nor with a church life whose principle of cohesion.
- [ 37 : 06 ] Is a superficial camaraderie. Instead of a spiritual fellowship. With the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And so fellowship is something both practical.
- That's coming together. And spiritual. It is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we can't manufacture it. With just meetings socially.
- Because we cannot bypass these essential elements of belief. Faith. And the work of the Holy Spirit. And John knew this. And he just wants to draw us in to this fellowship.
- We become literally one family. When we come to Christ. And in John's Gospel chapter 1. He says. Yet to all who received him. To those who believed in his name.
- He gave the right to become the children of God. Children born not of natural descent. Nor of human decision. Or a husband's will. But born of God.
- [ 38 : 09 ] We are children in God's family. Now since fellowship amongst believers is so important in God's eyes. We must encourage it.
- And we must participate in it. We grow as Christians. By meeting together. We need each other. And when we do meet.
- We experience God with us. And in us. Jesus after all said those famous words. Where two or three are gathered together in my name. There am I with them.
- And I know it's a repeated old illustration. But I'll say it again. Because it actually illustrates it rather well. If you take a coal out of a fire.
- And then it cools down. The fire leaves it. And it needs to be in the fire. To keep burning. And so we must be with one another.
- [ 39 : 07 ] To keep spiritually alert. And alive. It crosses denominations and cultures. Doesn't it? There's a wonderful fellowship that we can experience. Even with someone who can't even speak English.
- We can't explain this. We just know it when it happens. And the application here is very simple. Let's not give up meeting together.
- And let's not just see church as a Sunday morning event to be ticked off. It does take effort. I find it hard sometimes going to a meeting.
- When I don't feel like it. The Bible study groups. The prayer meetings. The services. The youth works. The meeting at home. With people. But it is absolutely vital.
- So John verse 4. Here proclaims and writes all this. To make his and our joy complete. He's filled if you like. With an expectant joy.
- [ 40 : 08 ] At the idea of others. Joining in fellowship with him. He seems here to be looking beyond this world alone. After all. Perfect joy in this world.
- Is not possible. Joy is a strange thing. Even Paul says in 2 Corinthians. Always sorrowful.

Yet full of joy. You can be sorrowful. And yet be joyful. Because there are many reasons why we can be sorrowful. As well as being joyful.

Which is something deeper. So we're looking forward. As Psalm 16:11 says. In your presence is fullness of joy.

So we have the historical reality of Jesus. The fellowship that we need to have in him. And then he goes straight to this amazing statement.

[ 41 : 07 ] That God is light. So that's the next point. God is light. As we come to believe. And have fellowship with one another. We discover one of the most wonderful characteristics of God.

And John declares that he is light. Verse 5. This is the message that we have heard from him. And proclaim to you. That God is light. And in him is no darkness at all.

He's declaring what he's heard. We read in John's Gospel 8-12. Jesus said. As we said to the kids here. I am the light of the world.

What can we make of this statement. God is light. Firstly. It's God's nature. To reveal himself. Light shines.

And is visible. God wants us. To know him. There's nobody here. That he does not want. To know him.

[ 42 : 08 ] Nobody in this room. Nobody who's listening online. May that alone be a message to us. He reveals himself. He's not hidden away. He is accessible. Light's also positive.

We hinted at this with the kids as well. Darkness is negative. Light always wins over darkness. God's light eliminates the dark.

John 1-5 says. The light shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not overcome it. And when you shine a torch in the dark. The dark never wins.

The light always overcomes it. We can see this in our own lives. When we direct our lives to God. He shines his light into us. We find that all the dark areas.

Are illuminated. Sometimes this takes time. It does take time. It can be painful. And it requires our cooperation. Healing and purity comes from his light.

[ 43 : 12 ] We all need his light in our lives. He is light. We read in Daniel 2-22. He reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what lies in darkness.

And light dwells with him. Light also speaks of purity. God is perfectly pure. We can completely trust a God who is pure in every way.

His love is pure. John later states categorically even that God is love. That amazing statement. God is love.

Pure love. Light also speaks of his majesty. He is in another sense the majestic God. Who we cannot see directly in this life.

His holiness and majesty would blind us if we did. It certainly blinded the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. Blinding light.

[ 44 : 15 ] Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6. 15-16. God the blessed, the only ruler, the king of kings and lord of lords. Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light.

Whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. And this shows us the immense privilege of being able through Jesus to actually approach now such an awesome God.

No one can approach him unless they are part of his family. The next point is that we need to walk in the light. In verse 6, John is warning us against walking in the darkness.



And in verse 7 he shows us how essential it is to walk in the light. Let's just look at those verses. Verses 6-7. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin.

[ 45 : 28 ] What does walking in darkness mean? He was first tackling this heresy that I hinted at before. What is called the Gnostic heresy. They thought the body was quite separate from the spirit.

And that they could do anything in the body. Even grow sinning without affecting the spirit. And for us, we need to guard against claiming to have fellowship with God.

Without needing to go to the cross of Christ for cleansing and forgiveness. We have to remember that sin is always a barrier to fellowship with God.

And our only hope is forgiveness through the cross. And there is a brand of Christianity or churchianity, you might call it. It's not too uncommon, which tries to bypass the cross of Christ.

And yet claim to have fellowship with him. And that's impossible. But in verse 7, we have this great encouragement to walk in the light. What does it mean?

[ 46 : 33 ] Somebody has said it's to have absolute sincerity. To be all of a peace in our lives as Christians. To have nothing to conceal.

And to make no attempt to conceal anything. I think we know when we've met some people who are really walking consistently in the light.

There's an openness about them. There's a joy of fellowship with the Lord. There's a simplicity in their faith. Which shines the light back out. And they're the easiest people to be with.

Because they have nothing to conceal. There are no hidden motives. And when this happens, we find the truth of what God says here. What John says here. We have fellowship with one another.

There are no hidden motives or guile or judgments. Just openness and oneness in Christ. This is the ideal we need to seek. And as we've already said, we can't walk in God's light without confession and cleansing at the cross of Christ.

[ 47 : 41 ] Which is confirmed by the last words of verse 7. If we walk in the light of God, the blood of Jesus his son purifies us from all sin.

Now, I don't know about New Year resolutions. Because we tend to sort of fail easily with them. But if there is going to be a New Year's resolution, perhaps a good one is.

Let me walk in God's light this New Year. Completely open with him. Confessing anything that needs to be done to confess.

To walk in his light this next year. And all the years after. If we're given those. Now, I'm going to read verses 8 to 10. If we say we have no sin.

8 and 10. I'm going to miss out. 9 just now. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Verse 10. If we say we have not sinned, we make him to be a liar and the word is not in us.

[ 48 : 47 ] His word is not in us. So that's the next point. Never deny sin. Now, I don't know about you, but talking to people outside the church using the word sin is very difficult.

There's a pervasive philosophy or worldview which denies sin. We're told to look inside ourselves and find the good and the angelic.

We're told that, and many believe, that all evil comes from without. In other words, from other people and other systems. And this is one of the reasons why the church is sometimes held in contempt by so many.

They feel the church is repressive, patriarchal, and they blame us for so many problems. Or if it's not the church, they blame politicians or the rich or the economic system.

We blame anything or anyone apart from ourselves. And partly this is derived from a famous French philosopher called Rousseau, who lived in the 18th century.

[ 49 : 58 ] And Rousseau is very influential. He claimed, essentially, that we're all good. It's the systems around us that have caused all the problems in the world.

And so for him, it was the ruling classes. And as a result of this, there was a revolution in France. But instead of good coming of this, there was terrible oppression, atrocities, mass executions.

Jesus said quite clearly that it's from within us that evil arises. Mark 7.20. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come.

Sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly.

What a list. All these evils come from inside and defile a person. These are the words of Jesus. And as Christians, we don't want to spend our time talking to people about sin and condemnation.

[ 51 : 06 ] But what we all need to do is to have a real understanding of what Jesus said is absolutely 100% true. Sin comes from within us. And it's the first step in conversion, knowing that we are sinners before a perfect and holy God.

As John says, we make him out to be a liar if we deny this. The last point. And this is the wonderful point. There is forgiveness in Christ.

Forgiveness in Christ. Thankfully, John doesn't leave us there. And in this wonderful verse 9, we have the remedy. We have the answer. We have the glorious truth.

Verse 9 says, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We must confess. We must go to God on our knees if needed, but often and regularly confess. We often need to be specific about certain sins and to name them before God.

[ 52 : 17 ] Here is the magnificent promise to the lost soul, to those who even today may be feeling hopeless. He is faithful. He will do what he says.

He is entirely trustworthy. The gospel of free forgiveness and grace is true and he will forgive. He is also just, it says here.

He will act entirely justly. Why? Because Jesus, the one that John proclaimed so loudly, is the one who took the penalty for our sins on the cross.

Look again at the end of verse 7. The blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin. This is an amazing truth.

He doesn't only forgive, but he purifies. You are cleansed and purified from all. Not some unrighteousness.

[ 53 : 16 ] The devil will tell us, oh no, that's not all done. You know, it's not complete. It is complete. It's total. Now, you may find this hard to believe and many people do.

It's really beyond anything we can rationally imagine God would do. We don't deserve it. But the gospels and the scriptures tell us again and again that this is true.

He is faithful and just and will forgive and will purify. Why would anybody withhold themselves from such grace, such love, such forgiveness?

So just going back over what we've learned here. John says, I knew him here on the earth. I heard, I saw, and I touched him.

He's real. Knowing this, we can have fellowship with one another and with God if we would believe and trust him. God is light.

[ 54 : 22 ] We can and must walk in God's amazing light. And we can come to that realization that the problem is sin within us. No one else's fault.

But we can receive forgiveness and be purified from all unrighteousness if we believe and if we confess our sins. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for your wonderful truth that is proclaimed by your servant, your disciple, the one you loved, John.

We thank you that it's so immediate, written such a long time ago, but absolutely exactly what we need to hear. That wonderful reality of him being with you.

The truth of your being light. The truth that we need to walk in that light. And as we come into this new year, may we do that.

[ 55 : 31 ] The wonderful truth that though we are sinners, there is free grace, forgiveness, purification as we confess our sins when we come to Christ.

Help us all to do that. In Jesus' name. Amen. So we're going to finish with hymn number 393.

393. Joy to the world. The Lord has come. Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room. And heaven and nature sing.

Let's sing this to God's praise. Joy to the world. Joy to the world. Joy to the world.

!! The Lord has come Let earth receive her King Let every heart prepare Him room At heaven and nature sing At heaven and nature sing At heaven and heaven and nature sing Joy to the earth the Saviour reigns Your sweetest songs employ Wild fields and streets and hills and plains Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy Repeat, repeat the sounding joy He rules the world with truth and grace

[ 57 : 18 ] And makes the nations move The glories of His righteousness The wonders of His love The wonders of His love The wonders of His love And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ And the love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with us all evermore Amen Amen