

10.3.23 evening Service

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Date: 10 March 2023

Preacher: Reverend Iain Morrison

[0 : 00] Good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening. Good to see you all this evening and good to have Ian with us. Ian Morrison, who's well known to all of you. We're looking forward to hearing God speak through Ian over this weekend and a warm welcome to him in particular.

A couple of notices just to say that after this service, the manse is open. So for anybody who would like to come up and have a time of fellowship, it would be good to see you and join together. So that's after this service. Tomorrow, the service will be at seven o'clock. And as we did last time, it will be a kind of prayer meeting stroke service.

So I'll ask a couple of people to pray and I'll leave the first part of the meeting and hand over to Ian and he'll share God's word with us. And then after that, we'll have a fellowship here in the church as we've done in the past.

And on Sunday, as usual, 11 and 6 for the service times, we celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on Sunday morning.

[1 : 08] And on Sunday evening, we have a fellowship again. Plenty of seats down here at the front. Thank you. The only other thing I think to say is that the session opened this morning after the Gaelic service and it will remain open over the course of the weekend.

And if there are any here, as I believe there are some here who know the Lord, who trust the Lord, but haven't yet come forward and professed faith and come to the Lord's table, be encouraged to do so.

Or maybe those who've been away from the table for a while and who are hearing the call back, be encouraged to come forward. If we know that Jesus has died for us, if we've asked him to forgive us for our sins, if, as Newton said, we know that we are great sinners and Christ is our great saviour, then our calling is to do this, to come forward and to remember his death.

So the elders will be meeting just through in the wee room next door and we'd be delighted to meet with any who want to come forward tonight or tomorrow.

And these, I think, are all the intimations. So I'm going to sit down and hand over to Ian and welcome him again. Thank you, David.

[2 : 39] It's good to be with you this evening and we pray that the Lord's blessing will be here and the Lord will be amongst us as we come together to worship him and to praise him.

We're going to start a service. We're going to sing Psalm 116. Psalm 116, the first six verses of the psalm.

It's a psalm of praise to God, of course. I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear. I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear.

And we'll sing verses 1 down to verse 6. And we praise God together. Amen. I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear.

I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear.

[3 : 52] Of death the corpse and sorrows did about me compassed round.

The pains of hell took hold on me. I, grief and trouble found.

Upon the name of God the Lord, Then did I call and say, Delivered thou my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly brave.

God merciful and righteous is De gracious is our God.

God saves the meek. I was brought though. He did me help afford.

[5 : 19] Let's come before God in prayer. Let's all pray.

Eternal and everlasting God, we bow in your presence and we acknowledge that you are the King of kings.

You are the Lord of lords. You are the great creator king who created all the ends of the earth. And as we look around us, we see your handiwork.

The God who by the very power of his word brought all that there is into being. You are the God who comes to us this night revealing your greatness, revealing your power, revealing your might. But you are also the God who comes to us, revealing your heart. The God who created us in his own image.

[6 : 29] The God who breathed life into us. The God in whom we live every moment. The God who gives us the God who gives us the very breath that we breathe.

And Lord, as you've created beings, you have shown your great love for us. You have showered us with your love. And that love you revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

You sent him into this world to live amongst us, to be one of us. Yet as he lived, he did so without sin. And he came to die.

To die on a cross. To bear our shame. To take the penalty that was ours. And Father, tonight we come into your presence.

And we acknowledge that it is only in his name. In the name of Jesus that we can come before you. It is only in the name of Jesus that we can be accepted.

[7 : 39] So tonight we thank you for your great grace and your mercy. We thank you for the cross. We thank you for that death of Jesus on the cross.

That great sacrifice. And we rejoice tonight with the glorious resurrection. That death did not have dominion over him. And that he rose again on the third day.

And that by the presence of the Holy Spirit, he is here with us now. And Father, each one of us bowed here. We thank you that he knows us.

He knows our situation. He knows everything that we're going through. He knows what's on our heart and what's on our mind. And Lord, we needn't fear that.

Because he draws close to us in his grace. He understands us. He knows exactly who we are.

Lord, your word reminds us that even the number of hairs on our head are numbered by him.

[8 : 40] So it is with confidence that we come. We come before our Heavenly Father in and through the name of Jesus. We come to the one who desires to give us what we need this evening.

His desire is to hold no good thing from us. And we thank you tonight for the gospel. For that good thing. And we pray, Lord, that by your Holy Spirit, you would minister to us through it.

That you would speak your word to our hearts. Lord, that we would know your presence in a very special way tonight. The reason Christ moving amongst us. Prompting us by the Holy Spirit.

And Father, that you would indeed continue to change our hearts. To melt our hearts. That you would continue to mould us.

To become more and more like Jesus. And Father, if there are those here who have not yet embraced the Son. Who have not yet bowed the knee to him.

[9 : 44] Father, we pray that you would come with words of power and with authority. And that you would draw close to such. And Father, that you would indeed move in the only way that you can.

By your Holy Spirit. And that you would change lives. And Father, that as we leave this place, we would indeed all be glad that we were here.

Because we met with our risen Christ. So, Father, as we come with our doubts, our fears. As we come with our sins. Father, we place them before you.

And we pray that through the tender mercies of our God. That you might cleanse us and forgive us.

That we might be acceptable in Christ. And Father, that you would draw close to us and hear us.

For all we say and all we do, we do for your glory. That all the praise and all the honour may be yours. So, accept us, we pray.

[10 : 47] Accept our worship this evening. In Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing again. And the hymn is, Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken.

The words will be up on the screen. Glorious things of Thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God, He whose word cannot be broken, For the for his own abode, On the rock of ages founded, What can shake thy sure repose?

With salvation's walls surrounded, Thou may smile at all thy foes.

See the streams of living waters, Springing from eternal love, Well, supply thy sons and daughters,

And all fear of want remove, Who can't faint while such a river, Ever flows the thirst of stage, This rich like the Lord the giver, Never fails from age to age.

Savior, Savior of Zion, city, I through grace a member am, Let the world hear ride or pity, I will glory in thy name, Fading is the worldlings' pleasure, All his boasts upon and show, Solid joys and lasting treasures, None but Zion's children know.

[13 : 31] This evening we're going to be looking at One of the parables of Jesus, A short parable, A parable about two men, And we find it in Luke's Gospel in chapter 18.

But just before we read it, It's I think helpful to kind of get the context Of where this parable is situated in Luke's Gospel.

Jesus at the end of chapter 17 Is starting to talk about the kingdom, The kingdom that he had come to set up here on earth, And the call of that kingdom of people To come and put their faith and their trust in him.

And part of that teaching in this passage, In chapter 17, at the end of it, He's talking about his second coming, That this world is not going to continue, That it's going to come to an end, And he reminds us of Lot's wife, Who chose to lose her life, Rather than to turn to God.

And then into verse, Chapter 18, We have the parable of the persistent widow, And the earnestness of prayer there, With regard to the coming kingdom, And the coming of the son of man.

[15 : 04] And then, We have, In verses 15 onwards, In chapter 18, That short passage about Little children being brought to Jesus, And Jesus saying, Unless your faith is like a little child, You can never enter the kingdom of God.

You must have childlike faith, To trust in God. And then there's the story of the rich young ruler, And he's wanting eternal life, He's asking about the kingdom, You know, What do I need to do?

And of course Jesus tells him to go, And sell everything he has, And he doesn't, The demands of the kingdom, Is too great for him. And then at the end, Near the end of verse, Chapter 18, Jesus talks about, His own death, That people will mock him, Insult him, Spit on him, Flog him, And kill him.

But on the third day, He will rise again. He's beginning to share with us, How the kingdom is going to come about, Is going to come about, Not through power and might, But through self-sacrifice, On a cross.

And, Then, He continues, On about the kingdom, And, How you can enter the kingdom, And how he himself, Gives sight to the blind.

[16 : 26] And then, In the middle of all this, There's this parable, It'll be very familiar to you, The parable of, The Pharisee, And the tax collector. I think this is, One of his most, Theological parables, If I can say that, About all the parables.

Because Jesus here, Is talking about, Salvation. He's talking about, What's at the heart, Of this kingdom, That he's come, To inaugurate. So, Reading from, Chapter 18, And verse 9, Jesus, Says this, To some, Who were confident, Of their own, Righteousness, And looked, On everybody, Looked down, On everybody else, Jesus told this parable, Two men, Went up to the temple, To pray, One a Pharisee, And the other tax collector, The Pharisee stood up, And prayed about himself, God, I thank you, That I am not, Like other men, Robbers, Evildoers, Adulterers, Or even like, This tax collector, I fast twice a week, And give a tenth, Of all I get, But the tax collector, Stood at a distance, He would not even, Look up to heaven, But beat his breast,

And said, God, Be merciful to me, A sinner, I tell you, That this man, Rather than the other, Went home justified, Before God, For everyone, Who exalts himself, Will be humbled, And he who humbles himself, Will be, Exalted, Amen, And may the Lord, Add his blessing, To the reading of his own, Holy word, Let's continue, Praising God, As we sing together, Our sins, They are many, His mercy, Is more, an mustard, thirds, And Broad ■■■, Amen.

His mercy is more. It's the Lord. His mercy is more.

Stronger and darkness, new and every born. Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more.

[19 : 21] What patience would make us be constantly wrong. What fire so tender is calling us home.

He welcomes the weakest, the wildest, the poor. Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more. Praise the Lord. His mercy is more.

Stronger and darkness, new and every born. Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more.

What riches of kindness he lavished on us. His blood was the payment. His life was the cost.

[20 : 18] We stood in a death we could never afford. Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more.

Praise the Lord. His mercy is more. His mercy is more. Stronger and darkness, new and every born.

Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more. Amen. Amen. Amen. Let's pray together before we turn to God's word.

Let me pray together. Amen. Loving God, we thank you for the wonderful words of that hymn that we just sang. Father, it reminds us of your grace.

Your grace to all of us. because we are in that hymn. It's one of us, Lord, we have fallen short of not just what you would want us to be, but so often of what we want to be ourselves.

[21 : 29] But Father, it is falling short of you that is, of course, the most important. So Lord, we come before you, and as we turn to your word, we pray for your Holy Spirit to illuminate that word for us.

Lord, we need your spirit to move. We need your spirit to make this word a living word for us tonight. Father, that we can hear your voice speak to us.

Father, that you would speak to us of things eternal. Lord, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. The parable is, I think, quite easy to understand as you read it.

There's a lot of two things in it. Two men. We'll start there. Two men who came to the temple to pray. Very laudable thing to do.

So you would think, a bit like all of you here, you've come here tonight. I presume to worship. That's why we come to church.

[22 : 39] We come to worship God. And so these two men came. They came to the temple to pray. Both went to the same place. Both prayed.

Both went home believing really sincerely that they had prayed and that they had made contact with God.

Yet the extraordinary lesson in this parable that Jesus is teaching us is that while one truly did have dealings with God in his devotions, in his prayers that day, the other, in spite of his good intentions, he was actually just speaking to himself.

All the time, he was in the temple. In other words, he prayed to himself. The Bible I've got here is the NIV Bible and maybe your Bible's the same.

And it's got wee footnotes at the bottom. And in verse 11 of chapter 18, the Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself. And if you look at the footnote at the bottom, he prays to himself.

[23 : 53] He's actually not praying to God at all. He's praying to himself. I think that alone should be sufficient to worry us, shouldn't it? That Jesus is saying here that it's possible to come to church thinking that we're coming to meet with God or thinking that we've met with God, leaving believing that we've met with God, yet all the time be self-deceived.

What a disturbing challenge to the reality of our own spiritual experience. That must be. But the paradox here is even sharper than that because Jesus tells us that the man whose prayer that was heard was the tax collector, not the one you would expect.

A man that society in these days despised as a crook, as a collaborator. The tax collector was collecting taxes for the Romans and they were quite often overcharging as well, lining their own pockets.

He was a man who made himself rich by exploiting his fellow countrymen and women. And in these days in Palestine, they didn't make sarcastic jokes about tax collectors.

If they got a chance, they would lynch them. They spat on them as they passed by. Yet God hears this taxman's prayer.

[25 : 29] The very person they would never have listened to, let alone help, in a thousand years. Quite incredible. On the other hand, the man who was the pillar of society, the Pharisees that you would see sometimes standing on the street corners in public praying to make a good impression.

We read here that this person who's, who had gained the respect of, of so many in that society, yet whose credentials were insufficient when he entered into the presence of the Almighty.

To the original hearers, this parable has a real shock factor. Because the people that they looked up to, the Pharisees, is not listened to by God.

The people they despised, the people who they would want to kind of, almost kind of crush in the dust. The parable is saying, God listened to him. And he goes home justified before God.

In society's eyes, the Pharisee was, this pillar of respectability, this pillar of orthodoxy. The tax collector despised, wished, they wished that he was dead.

[26 : 59] You see, that's what's so amazing about grace, isn't it? And that's how God's kingdom works, isn't it?

This is how the gospel turns worldly values completely upside down on their head. Paul writing to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 1.26, and if you're a Christian here tonight, you should really take great heart from this.

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are so that no one may boast before him.

That's who we are. Paul is describing us here. That's the kind of person that Jesus is interested in. That's the kind of person in whose life Jesus wants to work.

[28 : 25] That's the type of person that Jesus wants to reveal himself to. Because Jesus is in the business of transformation and change. So in the parable, we're left with a question.

What was so wrong with the Pharisees' prayer and right about the taxman's prayer? That God's assessment of them should be radically different from our own expectations.

Well, this Pharisee, he obviously took himself very seriously, so I think we should take him seriously as well. He took his tithing seriously. Ten percent off the top.

I don't know who the church treasurer is here, David, but I can imagine if this person walked into this church here, tithing ten percent off the top. I'd imagine that the elders would be wanting him straight in there to interview him for membership.

Actually, maybe if a word went out, you might have treasurers from other congregations, not just in Harris, but in the whole of the Western Isles, trying to get this guy into the congregation.

[29 : 33] Someone who tithes ten percent, who fasts twice a week. This guy is serious. He really is. We have two men, but we also have two attitudes.

Notice how the Pharisee begins his prayer. Lord, he says, I thank you that I'm not like other men. He's virtually saying, God, but by the grace of God, I thank you I'm not like him.

He's probably wondering in his heart, what's he actually doing here? He's a tax collector. There's no place for him in the temple. He shouldn't be beside me, a Pharisee, doing the same thing as I'm doing, praying to God.

His place is out with the temple. Out with the walls of the place of worship. You know, our attitude says a lot about us, doesn't it?

And sometimes in the church we have the attitude of the Pharisee, don't we? Oh, the church is for respectable people. Oh, I'm glad I'm not like these people out there that I see on the streets, that I hear talking, blaspheming.

[30 : 54] I'm glad I'm not like them and of course we're glad we're not like them. But they're not to be kept out with God's house, the place of worship.

You can imagine this Pharisee going to the doctor and saying, Doctor, I just want you to know that I'm in superb health. My lungs are functioning perfectly well, my muscle tone is A1, I've no infections, no ailments.

In fact, Doctor, unlike the rest of these miserable specimens out in your waiting room, I'm absolutely perfect. There's nothing at all wrong with me.

Now, if you were a doctor and someone came and presented in that way, well, you'd think they were crazy but once you got beyond that, what can you say to someone like that?

If someone is perfectly healthy, why go to a doctor in the first place? But it could be that if he allowed some examination to be done, it could be the doctor could say, well, mate, your blood pressure is actually really quite high and you're in danger of a stroke.

[32 : 07] If he only allowed the doctor to examine him but he doesn't. He feels no need. He feels he's okay and that's how he comes into the presence of God.

He's saying to God, God, I'm fine. God, there's nothing that you can offer me. You should be so glad that I'm here to worship you, to pray to you.

Notice in his prayer there's no thanksgiving to God, there's no praise to God. There's no confession of any sin or anything wrong in his life.

There's no seeking forgiveness for anything he's done in the past or even that day. complacency and pride is in his heart.

We're in the presence of the great physician this evening. The great physician not of the body but of the soul. As the psalmist reminds us in Psalm 139, our prayer should be when we come into his presence.

[33 : 17] is search me, O Lord, and know my heart today. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me to the way everlasting.

Of course, the Pharisee would have known that psalm but the Pharisee would never say these words because he was too good for God.

You see, our worship, our reading of God's word, our prayer life, it's of no use to us unless we're willing to place ourselves under the microscope of Almighty God.

Unless we allow him to search our heart and know if there is anything wrong with us. To reveal to us the depth of our sinfulness and then to allow the great physician to heal us.

And that will only happen when we allow him to probe the dark corners of our lives. You see, the instruments of healing are available to all who recognise their need.

[34 : 22] Whoever you are here tonight, whatever situation you find yourself in, the instrument of healing for you is right here, right beside you.

As God is here by his Holy Spirit, as Jesus is here moving around you, Jesus knows your heart and he wants to cleanse your heart.

He wants you to acknowledge that you've fallen short and he wants you to allow him to come into your life and to bring that cleansing that only he can give.

the Lord Jesus who can make the foulest clean, the blood that can make a leprous heart pure, the blood freely shed for the sins of a sick humanity and a sick world.

Jesus is saying that's the way into the kingdom. This is the new covenant which is going to be sealed by my blood. And when you leave this place tonight you will leave one of two ways.

[35 : 34] You will leave having benefited and being on a recovery curve because you've recognised your need and you've cried out to Jesus to help you.

Or you will leave totally unchanged like the Pharisee did with your pride and your complacency and your sin intact. Jesus says here that everyone, everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

The Pharisee came to the temple not to pray, not to worship but to congratulate himself on his own perceived spiritual and moral health. Not though the tax collector.

There's no self-congratulation expression or mock gratitude from his lips. He comes representing what Jesus speaks about on the Sermon on the Mount.

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Poor in spirit meaning admitting that we have nothing to offer God apart from our sin and we come to him because he is the only one who can do something about it.

[36 : 57] We come to God as empty, impoverished, despised, bankrupt, pitiable, desperate beggars.

That's a spirit that Jesus wants us or wants offers when we come to him. The tax collector comes only with a baggage that would keep him out of heaven.

That's all he brings. And that's how we come. We come tonight before God and all we can bring is the baggage that can keep us out of heaven. However, the tax collector recognises that there is one who can deal with that baggage, who can deal with that sin, who can provide forgiveness.

Someone who is just and perfect. He knows that of himself he deserves judgment. That's what he would deserve from a just and a perfect God, isn't it?

To be assigned to an eternity in hell with the devil and his angels. Nothing in his hands he brings. That's the spirit that Jesus wants.

[38 : 14] That's the life that Jesus can work in. He doesn't fast. He doesn't give his tithe. He doesn't go through ritualistic worship.

He brings himself and he brings his sin and he lays it on the altar before God. And with three gasps of inner torture, he's even ashamed.

You almost feel as he's ashamed to say anything. He bursts out, God, be merciful to me as sinner. The shortest and the most effective prayer prayer in the Bible.

And at that moment, I'm sure he feels as if he's the only sinner in the universe. Yes, says Jesus here.

That's the kind of prayer God hears. no fancy words, no pious platitudes. God hears and he responds to such prayers.

[39 : 19] Two men, two attitudes, two responses. God doesn't compare their deeds.

He compares their hearts. Jesus in verse 14 says, I tell you that this man, that's the tax collector, rather than the other, went home justified before God.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted. This man comes before God as a sick man comes to the doctor.

God listens. The other person comes as if the world is his and the world will always be his and he will wake up every morning and he'll have the adulation of the people.

He can't get beyond religious entertainment. He can't get to that point of theft need that he realises I need this God. He will never reach that place where he will pray a prayer that will get answered.

[40 : 31] Jesus is highlighting here the two kinds of guilt. The ironic thing is that in this story we have a tax man who feels his guilt yet goes home acquitted put right with God and there's the Pharisee feeling innocent and Jesus implies he went home condemned.

The Pharisee caught up in his complacency feels okay but yet in ultimate spiritual terms such a complacent conscience is dreadfully perilous before almighty God he is pronounced guilty.

You see it doesn't matter what we think of ourselves it doesn't matter actually what other people think about us. what really matters is what God thinks about us.

That's ultimately all that really matters. Comparing ourselves to others is going to make no difference to us. It led this Pharisee to a real complacency a real spiritual death a spiritual blindness.

You know if you get caught doing something like if I was in front of a judge and I said yes judge I was driving at 100 miles an hour going towards Balaban on my way to Stornoway but judge I'm not like these people who park on double yellow lines.

[42 : 03] I would never do that. You see how we judge ourselves this is what the Pharisee tried to do God I thank you I'm not like him I'm thank you I'm just as I am I have no need so there's nothing that God can do with that person.

I wonder if you're here tonight and you're suffering from that very same delusion on the way to eternity oblivious to your standing for God I wonder if we're here tonight and we know that in our community there are lots and lots of people and that's how they are and we're mandated with the gospel to go out to them and to say to them that's not good enough that's not going to get you to heaven you need your eyes to be opened you need your heart to be opened you need to come clean with God you need to receive his grace and his mercy that's our mandate the Pharisee wanted to do it his way and maybe the epitaph on his tombstone was

I did it my way but I never made it there but the taxman did the taxman he's in heaven when he dies how do we know that well remember where he is he's in the temple his eyes are beholding the altar where the temple priest would have slain the sacrifice during the hour of prayer the blood would still be there he would see the blood and on the just offering of that sacrifice this man turns to God and says to God I see the blood stains I know what it means God accept the sacrifice on my behalf and make me right with you by your great mercy that in effect what he is saying

God be merciful for me to me a sinner the word used there for mercy is really important it means propitiate and propitiate means to redirect the holy and the righteous wrath of God against sin this man understood it he understood what mercy was he stood condemned before God and he knew it and he points to the altar and he says God I can't atone for my own sins but your great sacrifice can avert God your righteous wrath away from my sin on the basis of the sacrifice your great mercy you see he's beginning to understand not just the old covenant he's beginning to understand the new covenant that

Jesus has been speaking about the kingdom that Jesus has been speaking about he understood that for him to get to heaven for him to be forgiven and have that wrath of God against sin averted turned away from him then someone else had to stand in his place someone else had to take that wrath upon himself the altar was a poor comparison to what was going to come where Jesus was going to die on a cross he was going to take God's punishment for our sins upon himself on the cross and on the basis of that great sacrifice on the basis of that great mercy and that atoning sacrifice human beings can be forgiven because someone else has paid the penalty and someone else has taken their place and on

[46 : 50] Sunday morning when we sit at the Lord's table here that is what we're saying nothing in my hands I bring simply to your cross I cling we come as sinners saved by grace on the basis of the great mercy of God who averted the penalty for our sins and took it away from us and directed it towards his own son as he died on the cross he becomes our substitute he dies in our place God hasn't said to us oh well boys will be boys you see God's righteous anger has to be averted God's righteous punishment has to be mitted out and on the cross Jesus takes our penalty takes our sins away and that's what we remember in

Christ alone my hope is found nowhere else that's what the tax man begins to understand here irrespective of what you think of yourself whether you think yourself as being too holy or whether you think of yourself being too much of a sinner that's where we meet we meet at the cross bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood hallelujah what a saviour and this majestic amazing truth has dawned on the heart and the mind of this tax collector and he experiences a forgiveness like he's never experienced before made clean before God and finally the last heading could be two destinies have you stood and prayed yet where this tax collector stood and prayed have you yet come to the cross where grace and mercy meets the only place of full complete and inexhaustible forgiveness have you come there yet have you understood the shed blood have you understood the sacrifice made for you by Jesus on the altar of the cross where he endured

God's wrath not just for the tax collector's sin but for your sin and where he bled and died for you and if not why not when we have such amazing grace you'll have heard this preached very often from this pulpit but yet maybe you haven't done anything about it the great truth of the gospel shared with you week after week after week and maybe you said well maybe next week maybe in a few years time or maybe you're like the Pharisee maybe I'll do it when I sort myself out Jesus wants you as you are this is the kind of salvation Jesus offers the defective temple sacrifice that system had to be engaged with again and again and again however it is now decreed as being obsolete because the perfect has come and the perfect is

Jesus the perfect is the lamb of god who is telling this parable who came into the world to take away the sin of the world the most heinous of sins even those of a hated tax collector the lamb of god jesus christ who becomes a perfect atoning sacrifice the once and for all sacrifice that is that is what god offers to each one of us this evening as we sit in his holy presence as he directs our thoughts and our minds to the cross and to Jesus nothing more can be done for the pharisee the pharisee is history but this parable is here for you and is here for you tonight it might not be here for you tomorrow or next week it is here for you tonight this evening you must come to a similar place we must look to where the tax collector looked to a sacrifice but a sacrifice far more noble far more costly than what that was slain on an altar in the temple we look to a cross on a hillside we look to where the son of

God bled and died for our sins to make atonement for them and we need to pray as the taxman prayed God have mercy on me God ask for no cheap forgiveness to do to have to be to do the sin of your justice and your mercy I know that the penalty of it is of sin is death and then judgment but please God be satisfied that a worthy substitute has paid the price has stood in my place and be merciful to me as sinner how are you going to leave church in a few moments are you going to be leaving with a complacent attitude of the

[53 : 29] Pharisee with something very very wrong with you and you've done nothing about it unwilling to bow before the great physician of your soul and willing to allow the great physician who has done it all for you to forgive you and to cleanse you or will you leave like the taxman springing your step what love what grace what mercy what a future what gratitude because one came and died for me and through that death my sins are forgiven my name is now in that book in heaven the lamb who was slain for me is my passage and he will welcome me and for that my heart is filled with gratitude for what he has done for me let's pray loving

God we thank you for your word we thank you for all that you have done for us in Christ and father we just pray that your word indeed might dwell in our hearts tonight that we might fully grasp that length and depth and width and height of your love revealed in Jesus Christ that he was willing to do that for us and that does deserve Lord all that we are and all that we have that love so amazing so divine demands us all Lord we praise you in his precious name Amen we are going to close by singing that lovely hymn and really as you sing it just think about the words that you are singing that it is because of Christ alone that we can stand before

God and we can know forgiveness Christ our Lord my hope is found he is my light my strength my song this corner store this solid ground firm through the precious drought and storm what depth of love what depth of peace when fears are still my striding seas my comfort my all in all in the love of Christ I stand in

Christ alone who took on flesh fullness of God to help bless faith this gift of love and righteousness scorned by the ones he came to save the cross as Jesus died the wrath of God was satisfied for every sin on him was laid here in the death of Christ I live tid to after He lifted forth in glorious day up from the grave

He rose again, and as he stands in victory, the sin's cross has lost its grip on me.

[58 : 14] For I am his, and he is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me. From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.

No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from his hand. Till he returns, or calls me home, in the power of Christ, I stand.

Go in peace, and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest and abide with us all, and with all those who we love, now and forevermore. Amen.