

24.8.25 am

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: 24 August 2025

Preacher: Scott Macleod

- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. I can barely see you over the top of Scott's lecture here. It's good to see you all this morning, good to see some visitors with us this morning as well.
- ! You're especially welcome if you're able to stay behind, please do so. There's tea in his coffee served at the end of the service. Evening service is at seven tonight, and it will be...
- It's not seven, it'll be six, sorry. Evening service is at six. The reason I said seven is it will be finished sharp for seven at the latest, because the Youth Fellowship are heading to Stormy for a meeting there.
- So six till seven for the evening service. I'll take that myself this evening. So be encouraged to come along to that. Lots of notices have been on the screen.
- You've seen them in the email as well. I won't go through them. I'll just mention a couple of things that are out of the normal order of things in the course of the week. Deacon's Court tomorrow at half past six.
- [1 : 0 6] So for the deacons, please take a note of that. Men's Breakfast Saturday. It's coming Saturday, nine till ten, everyone. All men are welcome to that.
- So take note of that also. All the rest. Prayer meeting. Bible study. Little fishes. All these kind of things.
- Road to the cubby. Same time, same place. You've got details on the screen or in the email. And as I said before, if you don't have the email and you want the email, please speak to Stuart, who is just straight ahead of me for anybody who's wondering.
- And he can put you on the list or speak to Emma or Richard. One last notice. It's really good news that I wanted to share with the congregation.
- I shared this on Wednesday evening with those at the prayer meeting. And it's probably started to come out, but maybe not everybody's heard. But Stuart, straight ahead of me there. Stuart, you can just give us a wee wave.
- [2 : 0 7] Stuart, who is a member and now an elder here, and who's very involved in the ministry and in preaching and in youth ministry.
- It comes as no great surprise that Stuart has been wrestling with a call to ministry over the last while. And he came to a point of clarity towards the end of the summer holidays.
- He spoke with the session last Monday just to share what he'd been feeling. The session, we're very much encouraged.
- I'm not surprised to hear what Stuart was saying and are very much behind Stuart and Joyce and Emily and Dana as they take the step out in faith.
- So, the question that everybody always asks, and I was the first to ask it, is, does that mean that we're going to lose them? And the likelihood is, it probably does eventually mean that we're going to lose them.
- [3 : 1 1] But my hope and prayer is that we'll retain them for probably three years. So, just so you can be praying into this, all this is to be confirmed, but it's likely having spoken to some on the board of ministry.

What would happen is, Stuart, he's spoken for the session, he speaks to the presbytery, which is like the regional meeting of ministers and elders, and then, if it's approved at these levels, he would go forward to be interviewed by the board of ministry.

They meet in March of next year, 26. But that all goes well. Stuart would be accepted as a candidate for September, August, September of that next year, and he would begin to study, have Scott studies, and he would become a minister and trainer.

The likelihood is, he would do his minister and training the first two years in his home church here. That's my hope and prayer. And so, that's probably what happened.

And then, from there, he would get sent off as Scott has been to the outer regions of the Free Church, somewhere far removed from here. So, that's the course ahead.

[4 : 26] And Stuart and all of us would very much appreciate prayer for them as a family, as they step out in response to God's call. I'm going to pray just very briefly, and then I'm going to hand over to Scott.

For visitors who are wondering who I am, I'm the minister here. Scott is the minister in training. He's just about finished his training, and he's going to take the service this morning.

But let's just pray as we begin. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day, and we thank you for the fact that we can come in response to the call of Jesus.

We come in the name of Jesus, and we come seeking the rest that Jesus alone can give for our souls. So, receive us as we come, and we pray that, not just for this hour, but in this day, that we would be in the Spirit, and that we would know the presence of God with us, and that we would know the blessing of God upon us.

And we pray that especially for Stuart, and for Joyce, and for Emily, and for Anna. We thank you for them as a family. We thank you for the many ways that you have blessed them, and the ways that you are using them in this congregation here, to lift up the name of Jesus.

[5 : 46] And we ask that, as they take this step out in faith now, and respond to the call of God, and go for interviews, and assessments, and these different things, we pray that you would lead them, and that you would guide them, and that they would know your presence with them, as they continue on this path.

We pray for Scott. Thank you for him being back with us after a couple of months, away in Cotebridge. We ask that you would bless him, and that he would know your help, as he leads us this morning in worship.

And we pray on for Gordon, as he leads in Carloway this morning, and ask that as he seeks to serve you, and as Julian and the family seek to serve you, and again, respond to the call to ministry.

We pray that they would know your guidance, and your blessing, and your strength, for each stage and each day. So bless us, we pray. Cleanse us from sin. Help us in this hour, and throughout this day, and throughout all our days, to fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author, the perfecter of our faith.

For we pray all these things, in his name, and for his sake. Amen. Amen. Scott. Good morning, everyone.

[7 : 05] Good to be here. Good to be back with you. Good to be together. It's good to have good news. So we'll praise God.

We'll begin our service, by singing in Mission Praise 1086. Mission Praise 1086.

Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness. Opened my eyes, let me see. Beauty that made this heart adore you.

Hope of our life spent with you. So we'll stand together and sing these words to God's praise after the introduction. Let's put in with you. That made this heart adore you.

Hope of a life spent with you. Horseship, here I am to guide you.

[8 : 32] Here I am to save you, to my call. All together lovely, all together worthy, all together wonderful to be.

In awful days, oh so highly exalted, glorious and heaven above.

Horseship, here I am to guide you.

All together lovely, all together worthy, all together wonderful to be. Horseship, here I am to guide you.

Here I am to say that you're my Lord. All together lovely, all together worthy, all together wonderful to be.

[10 : 09] Let us join together in a word of prayer as we begin.

Our Father in heaven, we pray that you'd instill within our heart an approach of worship. A heart of worship, a mind of worship.

That we draw near to you as we open up your word and sing praises to you. That we would see how wonderful you are. How amazing you are.

How unlike anything else in this, that this world can offer you are. That you stand above all the kings of this world. You are our King of kings and our Lord of lords.

You are the creator of this world. You are the sustainer of this world and every breath in this life. And Lord, we praise you for it. As we draw near to you, help us to understand who you are.

[11 : 13] Help us to understand your greatness and your beauty. Help us to understand who we are. That we have sinned against you. And that we are in need of being saved.

We are in need of being rescued. And you have provided for us these means. And a way in which we can be saved through your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And help us this morning to grasp what the coming of your Son means for us. That you sent him into this world.

To ever believe in whom would not die or perish but have everlasting life. That we can live forever with you in heaven.

If we put our trust in you. This is the gospel message. And this is the gospel that has been recorded for us. Jesus, the Son of God who came into this world.

[12 : 13] Who the world hated. Who the world turned their back against. Who the world crucified. Yet he was buried. But he did not remain in the grave.

He rose from death. And gave that promise to all who believe in him. Because I live, so also shall you live.

That is the precious gospel that we have in your word. That is the precious gospel that the Christian believes in. And that is the precious seed that is to be sown today.

Lord, we pray that you would send your laborers to sow it faithfully. And that it would land in good soil. Whatever it is preached this morning.

That your word would go with power. We know it will not return empty. And so, that it would be sown with the power of your Spirit.

[13 : 11] That it would take root in hearts of sinners. Hearts of those who are troubled. Hearts of those who are worried. Hearts of those who are anxious. Over whatever it may be this morning.

And that you would give them a hope. An assurance. And a peace in their heart. For you are the Prince of Peace. And you give your people peace.

Not like the world can offer. And so, we pray for Gordon as he preaches. We pray for others that we may think about.

Home congregations and congregations that we know. That that gospel sowing and seed. Would take root. With great effect.

Across our nation. And across our world. That we would see a great turning again. Of people to praise and bow the knee. At the cross of Jesus Christ.

[14 : 11] We give thanks for Stuart. We give thanks for all that he has done here. We pray that you'd be with him again. As he puts his faith in your calling upon his life.

Be with the family. Be with them in the questions that they have. And the uncertainties. But give them peace in your providence. That you will be with them.

That you will not leave them. But you will keep them. In all circumstances. And we pray for many who are in difficult circumstances. We remember Lydia in hospital.

We pray for her. We pray for the family. We pray you would be near to them. And that they would know your presence with them. And we pray for those who are in the Lord. And we pray for those who are in similar circumstances.

Those who have worries over their own health or other people's health. That you would be there. That you would be there. And that they would call upon you. To be their help and their aid and their anchor.

[15 : 20] In the storms of life. We pray for those who mourn. And we pray for them in their loss. That you would draw near to them. And comfort them.

And so now as we turn to your word. Give us minds that are attentive to it. Keep us from being distracted. And open up your preciousness of what we read.

That we shine a new light into our hearts. And that we may place our trust in Jesus Christ. Who has come to save us and rescue us.

So be with us in all things. We ask in Jesus name. Amen. We'll just ask the younger ones to come down to the front.

Primary kids. We'll move this out of the way. Slide it back. So you can take a seat there. Give you some space. Have you had a good week?

[16 : 29] Yeah? No? Good weather this week? Apart from yesterday. It's nice. It's quite good weather. David left this. He was talking about the good weather.

And he needed the fan to cool down last week. There was something this week that I noticed. It was a lovely morning. When you'd go out.

Maybe for the bus in the morning. It's nice and calm. Not a breath of wind. It's nice to look out. But it maybe wasn't so nice for a particular reason.

Even at night time. Maybe you came home from school. T-shirts. Shorts. Whatever you had on. Nice and calm. Nice day. You went outside.

And then something maybe spoiled it for you. There was no wind. Maybe you were outside. And you thought. You scratch there. My knees are itchy.

[17 : 32] What do you think? I'm taking midges. Midges. When we get beautiful weather. The thing is we get midges with it normally.

They spoil. They spoil what is good. And how big are midges? How big? Can you see? You can see them, can't you? You can just see their tiny, tiny little things.

They spoil the good day. They spoil us having fun. And we can't stay outside and go, ah. And I'm going inside again.

And you go inside and play on what they tell you or something. Just too itchy. These small things spoil what is good. And you maybe get something like this.

Do you know what this is? A midges. Midges. Yeah. What do you do with it? Yeah.

[18 : 32] So there's loads of little holes. And if I put this on my head, everything's a wee bit green. But all the midges can't get. I can maybe see swarms of midges.

They can't get to me. They can't get in. And they can't spoil. But do they keep all the midges out? Probably not, no.

There's probably always going to be one that's going to get in somewhere and cause you to ditch. But they keep most of the midges out. Now, if midges were like your sin. All the sinful things that you do.

The sinful things that happen to us. Maybe we play in the school. Maybe we say something bad. I think, oh, I shouldn't have done that.

Maybe you were playing together really nicely. And then someone's caused an argument. And it's like, oh, that shouldn't have happened. And it spoils what was good. Maybe you fight with your brother and sister.

[19 : 36] And you have a bat. And you shout at each other. And it spoils the fun that you had. These little sins. Maybe you say something to your mum or dad that you shouldn't have. And they get angry.

And you feel sad. These little sins. Come into your life. And they spoil what God has created.

And they spoil what can be good. And we should pray. As the Bible tells us. To protect us from sinning.

So that we don't sin. Just like the midges in it. We pray and ask God. Protect us. From these sins getting into my mind. These bad words. These times when I feel like I don't.

I should. When I see someone playing on their own. And I don't go and play with them. It's not a nice thing. We should go and play with everyone. But we think. I'm not going to play them.

[20 : 33] We think bad words. And we say bad things to our mum or dad. It's like all these little bad midges. Coming in. To us. And making what God has created.

Not so good. But we need to ask God. To protect us. From sin. Keep us from sin. From entering in. The Bible speaks about little foxes.

That come into the field. And eat the grapes. And these little foxes come in. And spoil what is good. And like sin comes into our lives.

And spoils what has been good. And maybe. What I want you to remember is. To pray to God.

And ask every morning. Maybe when you go out to the bus. Or go to school. And you feel the midges in the morning. And you say. God protect me. From my sin.

[21 : 34] Protect from sin. From getting it into my mind. Saying bad words. Coming out of me. But you know what. A midge will get in somewhere.

And a bit of sin will come in somewhere in your life. And even Paul. That wrote all the letters in the Bible. He said. That he was doing things that he didn't want to do.

Because of sin. Sin was coming into his life. And spoiling what was good. And he didn't want it. He didn't want to do bad things. And we don't. We don't really want to do bad things.

I don't think. In the morning. We ask God. When you feel the midges. Protect me. From saying bad things. To bad people. Or to my mom and dad.

And also. When you go to bed at night. Ask God. Forgive me. For the bad things that I've done. Because I didn't want to do that today. I wanted to be nice to everyone.

[22 : 31] And I wanted to be good. And I wanted to live a good life. For God. Okay. So we ask God. To forgive us. Our sins. And protect us. From our sins. And one day.

God will take us. To a place. Where there is no sin. If we believe in it. He'll take us to heaven. Maybe there'll be no midges there. What do you think? I don't know.

We can't be sure. Hope they don't bite us. So. So remember. When you see the midges. Pray to God. Help me. Not to sin.

And forgive me. All of my sin. Okay. So let us pray together. Close our eyes. And put our hands together. Father in heaven.

We thank you. For everything you have done for us. And everything you have given us. And all that you have made me to be. Help me Lord. And protect me from sinning. Help me Lord.

[23 : 29] Every day. To be good. And to live a good life. For your glory. But help me Lord. To remember. All the bad things that I've done.

At the end of the day. And to tell you. That I am sorry that I have done them. Because you are a God that forgives us. For our sins. And you are a God. That will wash away every sin.

And take us to be with you. If we believe in Jesus Christ. Amen. Thank you very much. For listening. And I hope the nudges don't spoil.

The rest of the week for you. So we are going to sing. Mission Praise 1164. O fount of every blessing.

Tune my heart to sing your grace. Streams of mercy. Never ceasing call for songs. Of loudest praise. So we will stand in a moment. And sing these words.

[24 : 32] O fount of every blessing. Tune my heart to sing your grace.

Streams of mercy. Never ceasing. All for songs of loudest praise. Songs for God.

O fount of treasure. Some by angels. Songs of love. Songs I tell. The boundless measure.

Of my Lord. Such a changing love. I remember God's great mercy.

By his help I safely come. And I know he will not fail me. But will surely make me whole.

[25 : 37] Jesus told me when a stranger. Wandering far away from God. And to rescue me from danger.

Shed for me his precious blood. Shed for me. Shed for me. Shed for me. Through God's grace.

I am this debtor. Daily eye this Lord renew. Let that grace, Lord, I have pleasure.

Find my wandering heart to you. Won't you wander, Lord, I feel it. Won't you leave the Lord, I love.

Take my heart. Don't take and steal it. Steal it from your cross above. Okay.

[26 : 45] Pray for the children as they go to Sunday school. And we'll turn to reading the book of Ezra. Chapter 1. We'll have two readings. Book of Ezra. We'll find that after 2 Chronicles.

And then we'll turn to the book of Psalms. Psalm 126 after. So first of all, we begin in Ezra. Chapter 1.

I'm going to read that chapter together. Now, this chapter tells us about the children of Israel who had been exiled to Babylon.

And this is them getting told that they can return back to Jerusalem, which is what we look at in our passage this morning. So let us hear God's word. In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing.

Thus says King Cyrus of Persia, He is the God. The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

[28 : 05] Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel.

He is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods, with beasts, besides freewill offerings, for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

Then rose up the heads of the fathers, houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.

And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wear, besides all that was freely offered.

Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the Lord that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem, and placed in the house of his gods.

[29 : 24] King Cyrus of Persia brought these things out to the charge of Mithridah, the treasurer, who counted them out to Shesh-bazar, the prince of Judah.

And this was the number of them, 30 basins of gold, 1,000 basins of silver, 29 censers, 30 bowls of gold, 410 bowls of silver, and 1,000 other vessels.

All the vessels of gold and silver were 5,400. All these did Shesh-bazar bring up when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

We'll also turn to the book of Psalms, Psalm 126. The psalm which we'll look at in our time together.

And we'll read there at the beginning. A Song of Ascents. When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

[30 : 31] Then our mouth was filled with laughter, our tongue with shouts of joy. Then they said among the nations, the Lord has done great things for them.

The Lord has done great things for us. We are glad. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy.

He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him. We'll look at that psalm together.

But before we do that, we'll sing once more. This time we'll sing in Gaelic, so we'll remain seated for the singing. I will sing in Psalm 137.

I'll read it in English. By Babel's streams we sat and wept. When Zion we thought on, In midst thereof we hanged at harps the willow trees upon.

[31 : 38] For there a song required they, Who did us captive bring. Our spoilers called for mirth and said, A song of Zion sing.

We'll sing the two stanzas of Psalm 137 to God's praise. And we remain seated. We won't cry. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[33 : 59] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

stadium up on top of a hill and you can imagine all these people coming from all over the country to watch what is going on and to be part of what's going on in that stadium. They would all come together from all the different places, all their different homes, they would gather together and you can imagine them almost singing their anthem going up to the stadium expecting hopefully for victory. And these Psalms of Ascent in many ways they're like the anthems for ourselves in our journey, in our life. You may know some of these Psalms very well, Psalm 121, Psalm 122, Psalm 126, like here, 130, 133. They may be familiar to you to sing together, to think about or to go back to in your own experience because they help you on your way. And there's Psalms worth knowing, there's Psalms definitely worth memorising, to be as it were your anthem that you can go back to in your journey as you climb and face different challenges and difficulties in all different circumstances. And I think stopping to look at them and going over the imagery that's in them helps us to understand exactly what the Psalms was meaning when he wrote them. And if we understand them, they'll be a blessing to us all the more, I believe. Now this Psalm is one that looks back and looks forward. The Psalm is looking back to all that God had done in their lives together as a church, but he's also looking forward, praying to God to be the same God, to work in the same way as he has previously done. That they would know the blessing of that hand at work in their experience once more.

So he's looking back and he's looking forward. Looking back is verse 1 to 3 and looking forward is verse 4 to 6. And that'll be our two points this morning, two simple points, looking back, looking forward. So what does he say when he looks back? When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy. Then they said among the nations, the Lord has done great things for them. When he's looking back, he's looking back to that time that we read about when they're coming back from Babylon. They were taken away by Nebuchadnezzar, taken captive to Babylon. Seventy years they stayed there. And then all of a sudden, King Cyrus faced them all. You can return home. You can go back home. And they didn't just go back home on their own and with the things that they had. You remember what we read of in Esra, I said, they came home, they came with silver, gold.

[39 : 28] The people were told to give them silver and gold and beasts, animals to go with them. And Cyrus also gave to them the treasures of the temple that had been taken. So they could go home with these riches, with these blessings, with the temple treasures, 5,400 vessels, silver, gold and the like. They didn't just go alone.

That's why he's saying the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion. The Lord restored to us. The Lord took us from captivity, freed us from captivity, is what the King James Version will say, turned us again from captivity.

They've been set free from Babylon. They're going to go home with all these riches and all the things they probably never, ever expected to have. Now, when it says here, it restores the fortunes of Zion. Zion often means Jerusalem. But it also means, I think, here the people as well. Because people are often associated with that place. You imagine, Tarbert, the Ljusos came down and took everyone captive from Tarbert. Tarbert wouldn't be the same. You'd be walking around Tarbert, well, it's not the same anymore. It's empty. It's a dead place. The people make a place. Zion, Jerusalem, and the life ripped out of it by the people being taken from. And now the people get to go home. The people get to go back.

And it's described as a dream. Remember that time. God did that for us. We were captive. We were trapped in this place in this place. A foreign land. And now he returned us home with all these blessings to restore this place, Zion, Jerusalem. In this place, all these people together once more.

It was like a dream. We couldn't believe it. We couldn't believe God had done this work in such a way for us. And it tells us about how the people responded. It tells us, they themselves, their mouths were filled with laughter, their tongues with shouts of joy. And really, they had been set free. Captivity was over.

[42 : 07] Slavery was over. Back to their homeland. You may be familiar with war films. And you may remember certain scenes where they're declared the war is over. They're set free. And the people rejoice. The people are glad. It's over. We've got to go home. And they're laughing. And they're filled with joy together.

That's what the people responded. But it also tells us how the world responded. The other nations.

The other nations said there at the end of verse 2, said that they themselves said, the Lord has done great things for them. They couldn't deny it. They watched it unfold and they said, how is that possible? God has done great things for them. They're getting to go home. They're returning with all these blessings. But it's as if the wording of it, it's as if they're keeping themselves separate from this people, separate from these blessings. They're watching on and going, you know, the Lord's done great things for them. God has been good to them. But I'll keep living the life that I'm living. Their blessing is not for me. God is with them. And God will bless them. And maybe you've heard people talk like that. Because they're a Christian or because you think someone's a Christian,

God's going to bless them. They're okay. God is with them. It's not always like that. A Christian can always face the most difficult circumstances. And they were in difficult circumstances here. They'd been in captivity for 70 years. The blessing comes to them in God's timing.

God is with these people. And the onlooker can't deny the joy that is in their heart and the blessing that they receive when they look at the Lord's people. And maybe there's someone in here like that this morning. Maybe you're not a Christian, but you cannot deny how the Lord has worked in someone's life.

[44 : 36] Maybe someone close to you. You can rightly acknowledge God has done great things for them and their heart. And I see the joy and the smile on their face even when they are in difficult circumstances. And I see them trusting and calling and praising God even after difficult circumstances.

It's plain to see. God has been good to them. Whether it's a man, woman, boy or girl.

You acknowledge that they've been set free from something. There's no weight on their shoulders anymore. That's exactly what's happened.

A Christian isn't captive to sin. They're not trapped by sin anymore. They've been released. They've been set free. There's a new song in their heart.

Why? Because of the work that God has done when he looks back. They've been set free by God through Jesus Christ.

[45 : 53] And maybe you're watching this in someone's life. Maybe you've seen it. And maybe you desire it. Maybe you long for it.

Maybe you long to be part of the people here that receives God's blessing. But I tell you to look back. Look back to the source of their freedom.

The freedom that they find in the man that released them from their weight of sin and the captivity of the sin. Jesus Christ that has set them free.

We look back to Jesus. We look back to what he has done for us on the cross. In his death he has set us free. He has paid the price. We are no longer captive to sin.

We all have the burden on our back. A Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, he had his burden on his back. He was trapped. He couldn't shake it off. He was captive to it.

[46 : 57] Wouldn't let him go. Until he came to the cross. And we should look back to the cross. Because if we cannot shake off this weight, captivity of sin, we will face a greater captivity in hell.

That is the truth of the matter. But if we come to the cross, that captivity will be taken from us.

He has shown it to us in his death, in his resurrection. In his great love for you, by dying for you. There is where you will find your freedom.

And your joy. When we look back to the cross. And if you put your trust in him. And confess your sin to him.

He will give you the song that they sing in this psalm. The song that they sing. Acknowledging that the Lord has done great things for us.

[48 : 15] If you come to the cross. If you look back to the cross. And go to the cross. And confess all your sins. This song will be your song. The Lord has done great things for us.

And for me. It is a personal expression of the heart. But it is also as the church look back together. As a collective community.

They look back over the way the Lord has worked. They look back with awe. At the people that have come into this church. The people they never thought would have come in.

God has done great works. But maybe you are looking back this morning. Like the psalmist here. And you are recalling great works. Maybe you have seen God at work in revival.

And restoring his people to himself. And you saw them one by one. Being called out of captivity. Out of sin. And coming to join with the Lord's people.

[49 : 25] To laugh and sing with them. And as you look back over these days of blessing. It brings joy to your heart.

It reminds you of the way that God has worked. But now, today. It might just seem like a dream. It seems like a distant memory.

I haven't seen God work like this in a while. I haven't seen God work in such a way.

Since he has done. In my experience. And you are glad to know the blessing of it. But as you look forward. You are calling upon God prayerfully.

So he is looking back. At the great works of God. Acknowledging. He has done great works. In his own life. And for the people. But now he looks forward.

[50 : 26] From verse 4. He says there. Restore our fortunes. O Lord. And he is using the same language. As he recalled.

In verse 1. Restore our fortunes. Again. He is praying to God now. As he looks forward. Where he is. He looks back.

Knowing who God is. And he is saying. You are the same God. And you can do the same works. Today. And he is.

Petitioning and pleading with God. To be that God. And to work in that way. And that restore. It is not.

Recalling that. Restoration. It is a command. It is an imperative. Restore. Calling and pleading with God. Do it Lord. Restore again.

[51 : 24] That blessing that we knew. Do that work that you have done. Because you are the same. Yesterday. Today. And forever. Forever. And he describes.

This calling. Of this blessing again. As streams in the Negev. That is an image that he uses. And it does not mean really much to us.

On the outset. But when you look at the place. The Negev. I was a dry place. It was famous for being dry. If you go to somewhere like Judges 1.15.

Where they are giving the land to the people. The Negev was given to a tribe. I can't remember who. Exactly. But they also asked for it. You have given us the Negev. Can we not have somewhere.

Where there is a source of water. As well. Because this is a dry place. And the psalmist here. Is saying. Restore to us.

[52 : 24] Like streams in the Negev. Bring water. But also. What would happen in the Negev. Is they would have these.

Instant downpours. At certain times of the year. That would just flood the land out. The rain would come torrentially. And flood the land. And because it was so dry and fertile.

It would just. Sprout up life straight away. And so. He is pleading with God. To pour down that rain.

Of his spirit. And blessing. In the land. And on the people. That he would bring. Life to what is dry. That he would bring this.

Revival of life. Amongst the nation. And amongst the people. Pleading with God. For it. And it must come from heaven. It's not coming from his own hands.

[53 : 22] God. You must send it. He's pleading. Flood us with your blessing. He is asking. And I think he's only asking it.

Because. Because. Because. He's acknowledging. In his time. He is in a dry place. He's saying. We're in need of rain.

And we're in need of your blessing. We're in need of your spirit. To do our work once more in the land. take these dry bones and give them life is what he is asking you can imagine this rain falling and giving life to the land but he follows it with another image as he pleads with God he says he gives this image of those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy and he who goes out weeping bearing the seed for sowing shall come home with shouts of joy bringing his sheaves with him because of the dryness of the ground and the unspiritual life of the people it has him in tears as he goes out with the gospel in a sin that's what's happened I'll come to that he has a concern for the people that's really what he's saying he goes out to the people sowing this seed of tears because he knows if they don't hear it they'll be lost to an eternity in hell they'll be captive forever and there'll be no escape and he goes out for that concern for the people that they would receive his God and that they would come to sing with him do you have a weighty concern for your people for your community for your family who have you been praying for as a Christian who have you been praying for who is it that comes to your mind who have you been asking to come to church if you were to mark it on your calendar how many days back do you have to go when you were praying for someone specifically how many days back do you have to go when you at last asked someone to come to church when was the last time you shared the seed of the gospel with someone if you're an unbeliever calling upon God to bring life into your heart calling upon God's spirit to come down and restore the people and restore you the word of God will not return empty every believer is in a sense the sower in this image more so the minister of the gospel but every believer is a sower the King James Version says that it is a precious seed he goes out with because it's a gospel seed he goes out with and it's a precious seed in this image because he is planting his own food his grain he is planting it again he is using what we provide for him in the future and what he is doing is he is giving everything to God that he has he's putting it in the ground and he's waiting for it to grow and he's calling upon God to bless it but at the moment

it's a dry ground and it seems like it's only his tears that will water the ground in this seed but we pray that even if it is our tears that the Lord would bless it and the Lord would bring forth life from it not for our glory but for the glory of God he is the one that brings life when the sower the Christian goes out with this seed in his pocket to be willing to give all that he has for the glory of God to be faithful in all circumstances when the well is terrible when the person on the other side of the fence is mocking you to be faithfully going out in all circumstances with this gospel sowing the seed sowing the seed sowing the seed and we pray for life we desire to see great life but we've been told to sow the seed faithfully and so as a believer we should go out in that manner faithfully sowing the seed in all circumstances with a deep concern for the people but asking that the Lord would bring and pour down and flood it with his blessing and it says the one who does this shall reap with shouts of joy and he shall come home with shouts of joy it's repeated the image is repeated

I believe to emphasize the difficulty of the sowing and the sure promise of the reaping to hammer it home is a great cost but a great blessing a great joy will be the sower who goes out faithfully sowing the seed with tears and prayerfully calling upon God but waiting's hard isn't it we wish we could see it grow but in God's timing we place our faith in him to bless it and to grow it when it is best it is a doubtless thing a sure thing that the harvest will be there that the sower will come with joy bringing his sheaves with him is that not an encouragement for everyone to share the gospel an encouragement for each of us to pray for someone to invite someone to church to be doing the work of the sower in sowing seeds and we pray it lands in good soil and we pray the Lord pour down his blessing on it as we look forward to this blessing that is promised here we also look forward to a greater blessing when the man of sorrows will come

[61 : 28] Jesus Christ he will reap his harvest he will come again as we look forward and we look forward with great anticipation the Christian does with great assurance as a doubtless thing that he will come and take us from captivity and restore our fortunes and give us great blessings beyond what we could imagine then we sure will have a song to sing it will be certainly a new song is that your hope this morning are you part of the harvest are you part of the Lord's people are you sowing the seed of the gospel don't suffocate the seed in your heart if you feel it planted don't let your heart be so hard that it cannot take root

Jesus will come it's a doubtless and sure thing and he will gather his harvest for his glory so we look back to all that has been done for us we look back to Jesus Christ our saviour we look back from the captivity that he has set us free from taking that burden of sin from our lives we have a song to sing even as we look forward in great uncertainties and great difficulties when the ground looks so dry we can look forward to the coming of our saviour to the restoring of our fortunes when Christ comes for his harvest

I pray that these thoughts will be blessed to us we'll continue we'll continue