

15.9.23 Friday Evening Communion service

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Date: 15 September 2023

Preacher: Professor John Angus Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Good evening, a warm welcome to the service this evening. It's good to see everyone, and it's good to see a few people from different congregations as well, and you're especially welcome to the service.

It's great to have Professor Janangas with us, first time in this building as a church, and it's great to have Janangas with us over the course of this weekend.

So on your behalf, just thanks for being here, and we look forward to hearing God's word through you. Just to say that after the service tonight, there's a warm invitation to come back to the manse, majorly after, for a time of fellowship.

Tomorrow the service will be at 7, a time of prayer. Janangas again will share God's word with us, and there'll be a fellowship here in the church after the service tomorrow evening.

And on the Lord's Day, Sunday morning at 11 o'clock, evening at 7 as usual, and as has been the custom as well, we'll have a fellowship.

[1 : 0 1] And I don't know if I've told you this, Janangas, but you'll be sharing your testimony on Sunday evening, so we look forward to a time of fellowship on Sunday evening also. The session opened this morning at the end of the Gallic service, and if there are those who know the Lord, who trust the Lord, have not yet professed faith, and want to come for the first time this Lord's Day to profess faith and to take communion, please come and speak to us at the end.

The session would be delighted to meet with you. These, I think, are all the intimations, so I'll hand over now to yourself, Janangas. Thanks. And thank you for inviting me here.

It's really wonderful to be back. I'm told that you have good weather like this all the time, and I believe every word of it. I think the last time I was here was at the Harris Conference.

The last time I was in here, I don't want to think of it, but it's a long time ago. Let's begin now by worshipping our Lord, singing from Psalm 1. Psalm 1, we sing Psalms, verses 1 to 6.

Psalm 1a, verses 1 to 6. Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinners' paths or sit with those who mock.

[2 : 2 4] Instead, he finds God's holy law, his joy and great delight. He makes the praises of the Lord, his study day and night. Two groups in this psalm.

Which one do you most identify with yourself? Are you with one group or with the other? I'll leave you to think of the groups yourself, as you sing this psalm, and you make it a prayer for yourself too.

Psalm 1, the whole psalm to God's praise. Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinners' paths or sit with hopes to mock.

His study life of holy law, his joy and great delight.

He makes the precepts of the Lord, his study day and night.

- [4 : 0 7] The cross perspires ever like a tree, that's planted by the stream, And in true season yields its truth, Its leaves are always free.
- But so the wicked they are like, The chaff that's blown away, They will not stand when judgment comes, Or will the righteous stay.
- Tis the Lord who sees and knows The way the righteous go.
- And those who live and leave the light, The Lord will overthrow.
- Let's draw near the Lord in prayer. Let's pray. Lord, you gave us words to sing, And words of blessing.
- [5 : 5 6] And those who are your people, They know what it is to live under that wonderful, wonderful blessing. Under your blessing, Which comes through your word.
- It begins its work within us, And it never ever stops. And even those people who were converted on earth, And who are now in glory with you, Even these people are still fed by the word of God, By your promises.
- Promises more fulfilled for them than for us, And yet awaiting the great fulfillment of all. Lord, we would thank you for beginning a good work in your people, Oh, how thankful we are that you don't start a work and then stop, Because you look at us and say that we are not worthy.
- No, you begin a good work within us. And you are the one who will bring it to completion. You never give up.
- You never let go of your people. You are a God, Lord, who takes hold of us. And you are a God who will change us. And you are a God who will take every single person who comes to Christ.
- [7 : 1 9] And you will make that person perfect in the likeness of Christ. Lord, thank you for your patience with the likes of us. We look back at this stage over life and we see failure, We see sin, we see terrible coldness of heart.
- We wonder, Lord, how we could ever profess your name, To profess your holy name, And yet do the things we did, Thought the things we thought, And said the things we said.
- How could it possibly be that you would dwell in the hearts of people like us? Oh, Lord, we are like Paul, Not only saying the words, But so many of us feel as the chief of sinners, And we will do till our dying day.
- And yet, Lord, you don't give up. Thank you, Lord, for all that you do. Thank you for the way in which you are calling people From death to life even now.
- And for the way in which throughout the land, Throughout the world where, Yes, there may be congregations going down, And there may be places where congregations are shutting.
- [8 : 3 9] There may be places where there is very, very hard. Even as we spoke tonight of the country of Japan And how difficult it is to minister the word of God there fruitfully.
- And yet, Lord, we know that you are able to bring life where there is no life. And you are able to bring out of the hardest, most wicked heart, Faith.
- You are able to make us to be born again. Oh, Lord, thank you for being such a God. And for telling us that you are such a God.
- You don't keep who you are a secret. You reveal yourself to us. That's how we are able to respond to you in worship, as we do tonight.
- Help us, we pray tonight, to drink deeply from your word. To put down the roots into the stream. Help us, Lord, we pray every day, to feed on you and your promises, your revelation.

[9 : 49] We know that Satan, he lurks, he roars, he's ready to devour. And yet, Lord, we know that he, though he is so able at getting in, And able even to distress your people, He is not able, Lord, to finally take them away.

No, you are the Almighty. However mighty he is, you alone are the Almighty. Lord, thank you for this congregation.

Thank you for David. Thank you for all the fellow elders and deacons here. Thank you, Lord, for every praying person, man and woman, boy and girl.

Thank you, Lord, that you yourself are here in the midst to bless. And we would pray, Lord, that you would draw near to us now. Draw near to those who cannot be with us in person.

Those who are unwell, those who are ill. Those of our own loved ones who can't be here, but would long to be here. Oh, Lord, how wonderful. You are able, every part of you, to be with them.

[11 : 09] Just as you are able, every part of you, to be with us here. Lord, thank you for being such a God. Draw near to us now, we would pray.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's sing again now from Psalm 18. In the Singed Psalms version, Psalm 18, verses 1 to 6.

I love you, Lord. How raw the Psalms are. How direct. I love you, Lord. Why? You are my strength.

A fortress is the Lord to me. My rock and my deliverer. For refuge to my God, I flee. Let's sing verses 1, 18, verses 1 to 6, as the confession of our faith.

And if we're not yet Christians, maybe it would be a prayer that this would be the God you would believe in. Let's sing verses 1 to 6 to God's praise.

[12 : 16] Let's sing verses 1 to 6, verse 1 to 6. Let's sing verses 1 to 6. Let's sing verses 1 to 6. Let's sing verses 1 to 6. Let's sing verses 1 to 6, verse 1 to 6. I love you, Lord.

You are my strength. The fortress is the Lord to me.

My rock and my deliverer. For refuge to my God, I flee.

He is my stronghold and my shield. The Lord who saves me by His might.

I'll call on Him and give Him praise. I've saved me blue, my foes to flight.

[13 : 40] Quartz of death, entangled me. Destruction led me like a wave.

And circumcised the stairs of death, I faced the terrors of the grave.

In my distress, I bought on God, I cried to the Lord for it.

He from his temple heard my voice, he listened to the prayer I made.

Let's read the word of God now from the Gospel of Luke and chapter 15. Very well known chapter, Luke and chapter 15, reading from the ESV.

[15 : 20] Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.

So he told them this parable. So what man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.

Just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it?

[16 : 28] And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.

Just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. And he said, There was a man who had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.

And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country.

And there he squandered his property and reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.

So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

[17 : 47] But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger?

I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

[18 : 47] But the father said to his servants, Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.

For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found, and they began to celebrate.

Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

And he said to him, Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.

But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him.

[19 : 51] But he answered his father, Look, these many years I have served you. I nigh never disobeyed your command. Yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends.

But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.

And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead and is alive.

He was lost and is found. May the Lord bless to us that reading of his own holy inspired word.

Let's sing again from Psalm 40, the Scottish Psalter version of Psalm 40, and verses 1 to 4.

- [21 : 02] If this prodigal son, and those of us like him who have come to Christ, know the experience of the psalmist here, then this is a confession again of our faith.
- I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear. At length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear.
- He took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay, and on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way.
- It's God that does it all. We can't do anything but look to him. God is the one we trust.
- Psalm 40, verses 1 to 4. I waited for the Lord my God, and patiently did bear.
- [22 : 15] At length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear.
- He took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay, and on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way.
- He put the news song in my mouth, our God to magnify.
- Many shall see it and shall fear, and on the Lord rely.
- O blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies, respecting not the proud nor such, as to earn a side to lies.
- [24 : 13] Let's bow our heads in a moment of prayer. Our sovereign Lord, we pray that as we open your word, having read it as we seek to hear it, we ask, Lord, that you would give us faith.
- Faith comes by hearing. May it be, Lord, that as the word is heard tonight, that you yourself would be in the midst to bless, to lift people out of the miry pit, to bring people, Lord, who are encircled by enemies, to cry out to you.
- May you, Lord, lift them up. May we be aware of your arms below our arms. May we be aware of your strength where we have weakness.
- And may we be aware of your power, Lord, all being amidst, we pray. Glorify yourself, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.
- Amen. Let's turn together now to Luke and chapter 15. You'll know this section of scripture, I know very, very well.
- [25 : 30] Luke is a very positive gospel. He writes the gospel of Luke and he writes the book of Acts. The gospel of Luke is incredibly positive.
- And the book of Acts is meant to be read after the gospel of Luke and is wonderfully positive. When I was writing to three students who finished their time at ETS, although I left ETS a year ago, and they were beginning ministries in Aberdeen and Campbellton and in Aberdeen, I was trying to remind them all to go out because the fields are white to harvest.
- That's the way Jesus, that's the way God in Jesus sees the world in which you and I live. The fields are white to harvest.
- That's the Lord Jesus who's on the throne tonight. And that's the one that these three young men are going out to serve. And I was asking them, under Christ, under God, to be as positive as he is.
- Because that's the only way we can bring the gospel to this sad, disillusioned, and lost world. Jesus, God, is very positive.
- [26 : 59] The book of Luke, the gospel of Luke is so clear. You find people, in this section at least, flocking to Jesus. And Jesus himself says that he wants to gather them.
- He wants to gather them like a hen gathers her chickens. That's the picture that he has of himself. What a beautiful picture. Jesus sees himself as somebody with arms open wide, wanting to gather people to himself.

It wouldn't all come. And what does Jesus do about that? He doesn't just shrug his shoulders. He weeps. Even though he, along with his father, predestines everything.

There is weeping. But he still doesn't stop. And he goes on to the next village, and the next town, and the next city, preaching this wonderful gospel, and people keep coming to him.

They have to come with humility. You can't come to Jesus with your head held up high. If there's anyone here who hasn't yet come to Christ, don't imagine for a moment that you can remain standing proudly and come to him for salvation, it's just impossible.

[28 : 21] It's just impossible. You come as one in need, with your hands open towards him, and you come bowing, begging, asking him.

And he gives, and he'll bring you in. Remember there was that great banqueting feast that is mentioned in Luke 14? People were invited to the banquet.

All sorts of people made excuses. So what does Jesus do? What does the man in the parable do? Does he give up? No, he says. You go out, he says.

Go quickly to the streets and lanes of the city. Bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. Sir, what you have commanded has been done and still there is room.

Well, he said, go out to the highways and hedges. Compel people to come in that my house may be filled. That's what the Lord wants.

[29 : 22] So I don't want anyone here tonight who's in this gathering for one moment to believe what Satan says, that the Lord does not want you in among his people.

Compel them to come in. Go out and invite them. You have been invited to come. You have come. You've been coming maybe for generations.

You've been coming for decades. You've been coming for years or weeks or days. You're here. The question is, are you not in Christ?

Are you still outside of Christ? He says, compel them to come in. The trouble is, not everybody was happy with how many people were flocking around Jesus.

You'd have thought they would have been so thrilled. But we read in chapter 15, the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

[30 : 28] All of them. See that little word all. All the tax collectors and sinners all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled saying, this man receives sinners and eats with them.

They're grumbling. They've never seen such congregations. They've never seen people like this having an interest in spiritual things. They've never seen the kind of sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes, gathering around Jesus in such numbers.

And how hard their hearts are that instead of rejoicing like the elder brother, they're grumbling.

And they're grumbling not so much about the people who are coming, but about the saviour who's welcoming them. This man, he's the problem.

This man receives sinners and eats with them. This man is celebrating that these folks are in his company.

[31 : 45] And he's not just eating at the same table. They're not eating together and Jesus just happens to be there. No, they say, he eats with them.

As if he was making them feel so welcome. They made that complaint very clear.

And in response to that, as you well know the context, Jesus tells three parables. When he's challenged, he's challenged about his character.

And he gives an answer. He doesn't back off. It's as if these Pharisees and scribes are wanting to redefine God, to redefine Jesus.

God and Jesus will have none of it. So he tells three parables. He tells the story, first of all, of one sheep in a hundred who's lost.

[32 : 55] Lost sheep. What does the shepherd do? He leaves the 99. He goes to look for this lost sheep. And then when he finds it, puts it on his shoulders and carries it all the way home.

And it doesn't stop there. He then says, now it's celebration time. And he gathers his friends to celebrate.

Why? Because he has a hundred sheep? No. It's because he had one sheep that was lost. And it's now found. And it's now home.

And it's celebration time. And Jesus says, just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 sinners who need no repentance.

99 righteous who need no repentance. Joy in heaven. See, these people are looking at Jesus with all the prostitutes and the tax collectors and the nobodies, the sinful people around them.

[34 : 08] And they're saying, tut, tut, what's he doing? Jesus is saying, you don't see it all. It's not only that I am celebrating with these people around me because they have been found.

There's celebration going on in heaven over, not the whole group, there's celebration in heaven over every single prostitute, tax collector and sinner that has come to Jesus.

There's rejoicing in heaven when one in a hundred is rescued. Then he tells a second parable. This time it's one in ten.

What woman having ten silver coins loses one? What does she do? Well, does she say I've got nine? No. She lights a lamp, sweeps the house, seeks diligence till she finds it.

And then when she finds it, story ended? No. Celebration time. The coin that was lost is found. She calls together her friends and neighbours rejoice with me for I have found the coin that I had lost.

[35 : 36] My sheep that was lost I found it. The coin that I had lost I found it. Celebration.

Just so I tell you there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. joy in heaven this time joy before the angels of God who is in the presence of the angels of God.

It is of course other angels but supremely God himself. The angels look at a rejoicing joyful happy delighted thrilled God every time a sinner is found.

One in a hundred one in ten then one in two there was a man who had two sons.

notice what is happening here the sheep got lost the coin was lost the son however there's a lot more going on here this son is somebody who chooses to leave he goes away you could never say that the sheep was unworthy you would never say that the coin was unworthy to be found but this son whom we call the prodigal son he is the one who says I am not worthy.

[37 : 35] Let's look at this story which you know so well and I'm aware of that but I want to look at it tonight under that heading as a pose unworthy not worthy is there anybody here who possibly would love to come to Christ but you feel that your bridges are all burned that there's no way back no way for you to be found is that possibly your story well let's look at this unworthy son first of all his choice to leave the son's choice to leave see the senseless sheep drifted away the inanimate coin others lost it but this person chooses to leave he makes a very deliberate choice to disown his father publicly personally in the most loveless way possible here's somebody that was so self absorbed all he could think about was getting away from home getting away from the father having the money to make it exciting he couldn't think beyond himself he was self obsessed self absorbed and his father was just the means to an end and he publicly basically in the most ungrateful way dishonoured his father it's as if he signed his father's death certificate before his father died i want what would come to me on your death and i want it now i want it now how ungrateful how presumptuous and he got what he wanted see one of the things that i find striking in most of Jesus's parables is the shocking element and the shocking element here is he asks the father give me this and the father did it he just did it father give me the share of the property and he divided his property between them no mention of arguments no mention of going through let's think this through son this is the wisest thing you can do do you really want to show how ungrateful you are do you want to dishonor me so publicly because everyone will know what you're doing let's have a talk about this shockingly he gives the son what the son wants and off goes the son and he lives life in his mind to the fool he was sick of home and off he went away from home and he lived the most sensual life immoral life gave himself to everything exciting as he thought it and he squandered everything that his father had given to

him clearly he wasn't working his father probably had some wealth so he had a lot of money but that money soon was burnt in the way that he was living as we're told here recklessly does that son deserve anything if that was your son if that was your daughter would you think that such a son or daughter that acted in such a way was worthy deserving the idea behind this word worth it actually comes from commerce what's in the scale that would give them worth is there anything that would give them worth that would make them merit some favour what would you do if this were your child unworthy surely you look you weigh you analyse you evaluate and you say well to be honest if any of my children did that you might say they're finished bridges are all burnt they're all gone there's no way back and that may well be the way you think about your relationship with

God you may well think that you're that far away that you've messed up big time that you've been the most ungrateful person despite everything the family the friends the minister the elders the praying people the good health despite all the things that the Lord has given you you decided to leave it all and reject him in the most public personal loveless self-obsessed way is that the way you think of yourself you're beyond it beyond the pale as they say you've gone across the line there's just no way back the son's choice to leave it's beautiful this parable been studying it for decades now look at the second part the son's choice to return the son's choice to leave and then the son's choice to return

God brings a famine into the land and this famine makes things worse he goes he hires himself out to somebody else he can't get enough to eat from the pods of the pigs even no one gave him anything things were getting worse and worse but in reality this is part of God's providence so often that he actually brings us when we're far away from him when we're distant from him he brings us into a place where we feel that things are getting worse rather than better emptier rather than more full maybe trouble comes into your life maybe illness maybe loss of a job maybe family troubles maybe something inner something in the mind

I don't know what it is but the Lord uses that and he brings you to that point where like the prodigal son you say what have I lost what have I lost he's lost his friends so called he's lost his money he's lost his dignity but I think most of all what troubles him is he's lost his father he actually thinks he's lost his father is there anybody like that here you feel you've lost God himself you would want him more than anything but you feel you can't have him your bridges are all burned

[46 : 46] I know somebody who did that and hurt his parents terribly and lived like that squandered his life and then a point came when he says even if I wanted to go back the bridges are all burnt I can't go back I'll never ever be accepted that's the way this prodigal son was but he came to the point where he says what have I lost but then he also came to the point to what do I need what do I need strange he thinks about material things he thinks about food my father's hired servants they have food and more but here am I and I have nothing so he thinks about these things he's yearning for home he's got a regret that he had ever left he's got sorrow he's got tears you probably know the story for yourself the sickening emptiness deep within the sense of loss the idea that a door is shut and you can't open it it's a terrible terrible place to be in and you know there is someone that wants to whisper in your ear before that shut door and to say to you it'll never open again plunge even deeper into despair indeed end it all there's no hope no hope it's hopeless but this prodigal son he can't stop thinking about his need and he thinks

I could get food if I went back to the house that I grew up in fair enough it won't be home it won't be home but I could go back there just to get food why would he want to do that well I think it's the third question what have I lost what do I need how can I ask to get this food and the one person that fills the prodigal son's mind who is it who is it that fills his waking moments it's not his elder brother no mention of a mother it's the father that fills fills his mind and he thinks of the father's loveliness he thinks of his father's kindness he remembers he just remembers what his father is like and that fills his heart and he knows he deserves nothing he deserves nothing at all so he plans this speech when he goes home or to the house father

I have sinned against heaven and before you I have sinned against God I have sinned against you this I now know to be the truth about me I am no longer worthy to be called your son there is absolutely nothing in the scales that would make me worthy in your eyes father nothing whatsoever he plans his speech and he expects if you had asked the prodigal son what do you expect from your father would you say that his expectations of his father were massive or minimal his expectations were minimal he thought if

I go back he won't accept me as a son but he will maybe accept me as a hired servant a day labourer somebody who can be fed along with others that's all he expects doesn't expect any smile any joy any welcome he has such minimal expectations of his father and he makes up this speech I am no longer worthy to be called your son what expectations do you have of God in Christ what expectations do you have of God in Christ are they minimal or are they massive do you expect so little and you ask therefore for so little or do you expect so much and you ask for salvation this man he was so unworthy and he knew it and you know what he was right he was unworthy and what about you if you're not a

Christian unworthy that's exactly what you are too and you're right there's nothing in the scale at all the son's choice to leave the son's choice to return amazing third most amazing of all at least to my mind the father's choice to love the father's choice to love he arose and came to his father but while he was still a long way off his father saw him felt compassion ran and embraced him and kissed him the speech starts then father I have sinned against heaven and before you I am no longer worthy to be called your son it's as if the father's not listening the father said to his servants the hired servants bring quickly the best robe put it on him put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it let us eat and celebrate for this my son was dead and is alive again he was lost and is found and they began to celebrate look at the father and remember remember two things please see the people who are hearing this parable for the first time not just the Pharisees and the scribes it's the prostitutes the tax collectors and the sinners they're hearing this parable and say we were like the prodigal sons we were so far away and we came to this person called

[55 : 26] Jesus and we found in him the most amazing welcome but now Jesus when he tells his parable it's as if these these new converts are being discipled and they've been taught this is how God has welcomed you in Jesus look at it first of all while he was still a long way off his father saw him when I was up in the manse up on that hill looking down beautiful view and if I was looking for somebody to come home I'd be there every day looking out waiting to see waiting for the arrival waiting for the person to come because I love the person who was lost I love the son who's been far away and this father saw him while he was a long way off why likely he looked for him every day what a

God what a God he looked for him why he felt compassion for him and he ran to him no father no father would run in the first century in public and certainly not to meet a son but this father nothing's going to stop him running he sees him he sees him afar off and he runs to meet them he doesn't sit on his throne waiting for him to come no he sends his own son Jesus he goes to meet them he sends them into the world he goes to mix with the prostitutes and the tax collectors and sinners like you and me that's what he does he looked for him he welcomed him just think of it the man's got his story already he's got it already father I have sinned against heaven and before you no longer worthy to be called your son how true absolutely true but Jesus

God doesn't respond in this way what does the father do he welcomes him he embraces him and he kisses him he kisses him felt compassion ran embraced him him that's the hug and then the kiss what a God I mean this is God we're talking about and he embraces and he hugs and he kisses as he welcomes he looked for him he welcomed him he loved him he loved him do you know this father loved the son the prodigal son before he left and he loved him after he left after all the vilest sins that he committed he loved him he doesn't love him less and he assured him in his love he gives him a robe a ring sandals and a calf he gives him a robe because he's now the guest to be honoured he gives him a ring to show he has the authority to be son he gives him sandals because now he has freedom to come and go in the house and he gives him a calf so that they can celebrate if the son expected to be disowned because he was unworthy he was actually loved and assured of God's love despite his unworthiness honoured called sons and daughters the living God given freedom he shall go in and out and find pasture and celebration there is joy in the presence of the angels and then he speaks of him

I love this part this is he told people to do things for the son but then in verse 24 he says why are we doing all this for this my son was dead and is alive again he was lost and is found and they began to celebrate imagine what the son felt like I'm not worthy to be called your son you were dead now you're alive you were lost now you're found and you're my son but I'm not worthy to be called your son you're my son you were dead now you're alive you were lost now you're found you are my son you are my son imagine the audience the tax collector the sinners the disciples who had come to Jesus and they're saying that must be how God sees us in Christ we were lost and we're found we were dead but we're alive and we're not just eating at the table with Jesus he thinks of us as children of God but we're not worthy no but he said it our unworthiness does not stop us inheriting the greatest of these blessings

I have no doubt in the parable the prodigal son would literally be lost for words I can't believe it I can't believe it's true but it's true it's true when you first became a Christian it's not the way you felt I can't believe it I can call God father I can't believe it I don't deserve it my life was awful can I say this there may be Christians here tonight and they're afar off see the unworthiness that sense of unworthiness the son had in the parable didn't stop him coming to the father and he got more than he ever expected do you think that that sense of unworthiness left him on day two day three week four never till the end of his days he would say unworthy but so loved so blessed what a father what a God and I'm sure like me there are Christians here and even as Christians you live like the prodigal son you profess the name of God and yet you squander your life you watch the wrong things say the wrong things devote yourself to the wrong things your heart is not so with the Lord

[65 : 28] I know that situation and I know pretty much everyone who professed the name of God in this congregation knows what it's like you look at the prodigal and you say yes that's the way it was for me at the beginning but sadly it's been the way for me for so many years of my life is our heart always in the home of the father enjoying the embrace of the father or are there times when we couldn't be distinguished from those who are afar off see in that situation what does Satan want you to do finish it don't you dare come to the Lord's table don't you dare come to the prayer meeting don't you dare try to pick up the pieces you're unworthy and it's in that situation you remember the parable of the prodigal son and you say yeah

I was unworthy when I began and I'm unworthy today even Paul said the good that I would I do not do I am the chief of sinners yeah but where do you go when you're like that Satan say Satan say don't go to church don't open your Bible don't go to the prayer meeting and the Lord says I'm looking I'm looking out for you I feel compassion for you I'm longing for you I'm ready to hug you ready to kiss you ready to kiss you and that's the way it is I am my beloved and he is mine his banner over me is love see my friends

I don't know where you are today if you're not a Christian you have no right to say from this point on you're too unworthy no right no that's not your call that comes from a satanic source you are asked to come as you are and you'll find the most wonderful wonderful welcome you may have messed up you may have disgraced yourself dishonoured yourself destroyed all the bridges blowing them up one by one you may have used God abused God and yet his hands are open wide and he still says come and if you come for every single one of you there will be rejoicing in heaven rejoicing before the angels of heaven over one sinner who repents are you that one let's pray our heavenly father we ask that you would speak to us through your word in our own hearts we know this story we know it because it's in scripture but we know it because it's our own testimony about how we first came to Christ and it's the story of our Christian life in so many ways oh what a God you are what a wonderful

God in Christ you are you couldn't possibly be more loving to people who deserve nothing we are unworthy to be your son Lord we pray that you would speak to someone and assure them Lord in your own powerful way that yes they are indeed unworthy but they shall welcome in the home we ask it in Jesus name Amen let's close now by singing from Psalm 103 from verse 8 to 14 let's sing Psalm's version Psalm 103 verses 8 to 14 singing about the character of God and the way he deals with us the Lord he's merciful and kind to anger slow and full of grace he will not constantly reprove or in his anger hide his face he does not punish our misdeeds or give our sins their just reward how great is love as high as heaven towards all those who fear the

Lord 8 to 14 to God's praise for his mercy full and kind to anger slow and full of grace he will not constantly reprove all in his anger hide his face he does not punish our misdeeds or give our sins their just reward our greatest love as high as he towards all those who fear the Lord towards all those who fear the Lord as as east is from the west so far his blood has borne away our many sins and trespasses and all the guilt that on us lay just as the

[73 : 05] Father loves his child so come as those who fear his name for he remembers we are does and well he knows our feeble frame and well he knows our feeble frame now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all Amen