

18.1.26 pm The Unfinished work of Christ

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Preacher: Reverend Thomas Davies

[0 : 00] Well, good evening to you all and a very warm welcome to our service. It's lovely to see you here. Thank you for coming as we gather in the name of our risen Saviour Jesus to worship together again.

! It's great to be with you here. My name is Thomas Davis, if I've not met any of you before. I've been here many times before, so I always enjoy the opportunity to get the opportunity to worship with you. And as always, you've given us such a warm welcome and we appreciate that very, very much indeed.

We're going to worship God together and we're beginning by singing together to God's praise in Gaelic from Psalm 84. Psalm 84, singing from the beginning. These words speak of, Psalm 84 describes the temple and of course in the Old Testament that was the physical temple building in Jerusalem, speaking of how lovely is God's dwelling place. That all foreshadows the church, the temple in the Old Testament, foreshadowing the true temple, the church of Jesus Christ, as his people indwelt by his spirit. So as we sing these words, our minds can come to us today and to the church worldwide as we gather together in the name of Jesus as the dwelling place of his spirit. Two verses from the beginning. Psalm 84 to God's praise.

Oh Oh Oh

[4 : 30] Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Let us pray

Dear God our Father we thank you so so much that we have this opportunity to come together this evening and as we've been singing we we thank you so much that we have this opportunity to come together as your church as part of the church that extends across the across the nations of the world and across the ages of history and indeed extends into heaven itself with the saints whom you have called home and we gather together all to lift up our voices in praise to you and as we do that we come to you as those who are thirsty thirsting for you and longing for more of you in our lives because we are so aware that you are the one who meets all of our needs you're the one who quenches our thirst you're the one who gives us hope and peace and life and so we pray that as we gather here this evening that we would be able to still our hearts and focus our minds upon you we pray that that that

And we pray too that we would see more clearly how that gospel applies to us in our lives. We pray, Father, that you would help us to live out our lives this week and for the rest of our lives serving you.

We pray that the light and the hope and the truth and the compassion and the courage and the grace that we see in Jesus would also be seen in us in all that we do in the week ahead.

We pray that your spirit would guide us and we pray that you would give us wisdom in our hearts and minds. Help us to have a greater sensitivity for sin.

[7 : 40] And please forgive us for the fact that very often we can be numb to sin. Very often we tolerate it in our own lives and sometimes we're even entertained by it.

Please forgive us for that. And instead we pray that we'd have a greater sensitivity in regard to sin, that we would recoil from sin. And instead that we would hunger and thirst for righteousness more and more.

We pray that our hearts would always, that with the help of your spirit, our hearts would always gravitate towards that which is right. And that we would strive to live out our lives in a way that's pleasing to you.

And may that be true of us in our most private settings. And even when we're alone or whether we're just with the people who live closest to us. And may that extend to our most public, the most public aspects of our lives as well.

So that we would be men and women of integrity. That there would be no hypocrisy in us. Instead that we would live out our lives in every way seeking to please you, directed by your spirit.

[8 : 47] And that through the strength of your spirit that we would glorify your name. And so we pray, Father, that as we come together this evening, we pray that your word would be equipping us for that. That you would be giving us all that we need this evening.

And for everybody who's come here tonight and for everybody who's watching online, we pray that you would meet us all at our point of need. As you've promised to do so. And we pray that your word would teach us. That it would comfort us.

That it would encourage us. That your word would call us back if we're drifting or moving in the wrong direction. And that your word would also drive us forward if we need to.

If there's more that we, if there's steps that we need to take for you in our lives. We pray that you'd give us that wisdom and that discernment so that we would make the best use of the time that we have. So that we would serve you in our lives.

And so that everything that we do this week and for the rest of our lives would be to your glory. Thank you for everybody who's here this evening. Thank you for everyone joining us online. And whatever our circumstances, however we're feeling, we pray for each one of us.

[9 : 48] That your word would speak to us powerfully. And that we would be drawn closer to Jesus. We thank you so much for your son. We thank you that he came and that he came to be the way, the truth and the life.

And we pray that we would all know the reality of that. That Jesus would be the way, the one that we follow. And that Jesus' word would be the truth that we believe. And that the life that we have in Jesus would be the life that we are longing for.

And the life that we are living. Turning away from sin and following you and serving you. So please bless us in our time together this evening. Prepare us and equip us for the week ahead.

Have mercy on us and do your work through us. So that your name would be honoured and glorified. We ask it in the name of your son, our saviour Jesus. Amen. We're going to sing together again.

This time we're singing the hymn, See What a Morning. And these are wonderful words. Just bringing us to the great reality of the resurrection. That great truth that the whole Christian faith stands on.

[10 : 50] That Jesus is risen. So we will stand and sing together to God's praise. See what a morning glorious and bright with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem.

Oh, did they make those tomb filled with light As the angels announced, Christ is risen
See God's salvation, man Wrought in love, born in pain Paid his sacrifice Fulfilled in
Christ, the man For he lives, Christ is risen from the dead See Mary weeping Where is he
laid as in sorrow She turns from the empty tomb Here's a voice weeping Calling her name
It's the master the Lord

Raised to life again The voice that spans the years Speaking life, studying hope Bringing
peace to us Will soon till he appears For he lives, Christ is risen from the dead Honour the
Father Ancient of days To the spirit Who clothes faith with certainty Honour and blessing
Glory and praise to the King Cryed with power and authority And we are raised with him
Dead that's dead

Love has won Christ has conquered And we shall raise with him For he lives Christ is
risen from the dead That was great, thank you We're going to read together from God's
word Two passages, both from the Gospels The first from John 23 And then a short
passage at the end Of Matthew's Gospel So the first reading is from John chapter 20 I
think I said John 23 there No, John 20 is what I mean We're singing from verse 11 to
verse 23 So John chapter 20 Verse 11 to verse 23 And this is what we're going to read
This is what we just sang about But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb And as she
wept She stooped to look into the tomb And she saw two angels in white Sitting where the
body of Jesus had lain

One at the head and one at the feet They said to her Woman, why are you weeping? She
said to them They've taken away my Lord And I do not know where they have laid him
Having said this She turned around and saw Jesus standing But she did not know that it
was Jesus Jesus said to her Woman, why are you weeping?

[14 : 45] Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener She said to him Sir, if you
have carried him away Tell me where you have laid him And I will take him away Jesus
said to her Mary She turned and said to him in Aramaic Rabboni Which means teacher
Jesus said to her Do not cling to me For I have not yet ascended to the Father But go to
my brothers and say to them I am ascending to my Father and your Father To my God
and your God Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples I have seen the Lord
And that he had said these things to her On the evening of that day The first day of the
week The door had been locked Where the disciples were For fear of the Jews Jesus
came and stood among them And said to them Peace be with you When he had said this
He showed them his hands And his side Then the disciples were glad When they saw the
Lord Jesus said to them again Peace be with you As the Father has sent me Even so

I am sending you And when he had said this He breathed on them And said to them
Receive the Holy Spirit If you forgive the sins of any They are forgiven them If you
withhold forgiveness from any It is withheld And then we'll turn to the end of Matthew's
Gospel And we'll just read the last Four verses Five verses there From 16 to 20 Matthew
28 Verses 16 to 20 Now the eleven disciples Went to Galilee To the mountain To which
Jesus Had directed them And when they saw him They worshipped him But some
doubted And Jesus came And said to them All authority In heaven And on earth Has been
given to me Go therefore And make disciples

Of all nations Baptising them In the name of the Father And of the Son And of the Holy Spirit Teaching them To observe All that I have commanded you And behold I am with you always To the end Of the age Amen And may God Add his blessing To these readings Of his word Let's Bow our heads again In prayer Let's pray Father we thank you That we can come before you This evening And we thank you That your word Is open before us We pray That we would be Open before you And we pray That we would be Ready and enabled By your spirit To receive your word And to apply it To our lives We pray That you would Guide and direct us According to Your word We come this evening Confessing our sin Before you And acknowledging That Recognising that We say things And we think things And we do things That are contrary To your word

And we are sorry For that And so we confess Our sin before you Asking And you for your healing And for your forgiveness And we thank you That as we do that We do so Assured and confident In the promise Of the gospel That if we confess Our sins before you You are faithful And just to forgive us Our sins That the once And for all Sacrifice Of Jesus on the cross Is sufficient For our salvation And we thank you For that We thank you And so as we confess Our sins with joy We also Remember We confess Our sins with sorrow We remember The gospel With joy And with thanksgiving We pray for the Congregation here That you would bless The work of the gospel Here in Tarbert And in the wider Community We pray for all The different things That are coming up In the life Of the congregation We pray for the Study conference At the beginning of February We pray that that Will be a time Of great blessing And encouragement For the congregation Here and for The wider church

We pray for Paul Levy And for Gerangus McLeod As they will be speaking Bless them And use them Mightily for your glory We pray for the Curry night And all the other Aspects of preparation And we pray that All of these Would be opportunities Through which you are Using your people here To reach out With the good news Of the gospel To the community We pray that they Would see more And more people Come to church And especially That they would see More and more people Come to faith Please bless the Congregation here And all the ongoing Work taking place We thank you For all the children Present this evening And this morning We pray that you Would bless them all We pray for the Children in creche And in primary school We pray that you Would look after them And we pray that In these early years Of their lives That they would Just know the joy Of the Lord And see and understand That although They've a lot to Learn about life We pray that they Would know even From this earliest Of age How much they

[19 : 48] Are loved by you How precious They are to you And that you Are the rock And that they Can build their Lives upon We pray for all Those in secondary School And we pray That you would Uphold them And look after Them Especially those With prelims Coming up Or those Just in the In the midst Of busyness With school work And other pressures We pray that you Would just look after Each one And we know That these years Can be years They can be years Where there's great joy Great fun Great laughter And friendship But they can also Be years that are Tough and hard And sometimes Really really tough And we pray that You would just Look after each one And as they move Towards adulthood We pray that you Would be their light And their guide And their strength We pray you Bless the YF This evening And all the ongoing Work that's being Done among the Young people here We pray for young Adults Those studying Those who have Just entered the Workplace Those who are Training Those who are Maybe thinking About their next Steps We pray that you Would bless them As they enter

Into adulthood And enter into Towards the Working place Thinking about Where they might Live And taking up More and more Responsibilities That life can bring We pray that you Would be their guide Their strength Their help We pray for those Who are just In the middle Of adult life And balancing Work and home And family Maybe balancing Parenting and Involvement in the Church and Carrying more Responsibility Where lots of Wonderful things Have happened But life is busy And life can Sometimes feel Very very stretched And so we pray That you would Just look after Each one Who have just Finished a busy Week and are Just stepping into Another busy week May they be Refreshed and Renewed and Encouraged by You We pray for Those further On in their Lives Maybe call them Middle aged We pray that They would be Encouraged and Strengthened by You Sometimes reaching Those years Maybe the plans And dreams

That we intended For our lives Have not actually Panned out the Way we thought But we pray That we would Always rest Confident that Your plans for Our lives are Actually better Than our own And that you Are able to Do wonderful Things in And through Us And so we Pray that Those at That stage Of life Those who Have been Working for Many years Those who Are maybe Just starting To be aware That they're Slowing down A little That they'd Be renewed And strengthened In their Hearts And for Those further On in Years Those who Are reaching The final Chapters Of their Journey In this Life We pray That they Would be Renewed And encouraged In their Heart And though They might See their Outward Body Be filled With strength And we Pray especially That they Would be Just the Wise Voices To support And encourage The younger Generation Behind them We thank You for Them And we Pray that They would Be encouraged And blessed By you And as This church

Family continues On together We pray for All at the Different stages That they are At and that They will be United together In deep bonds Of love And fellowship We pray for David that you Bless his Ongoing ministry Here we Thank you for Him for all That he does For you For the Gifts you've Given him We pray that He will be Encouraged By you Bless him And Mary And all the Family Bless all The elders And deacons And all the Others who Carry responsibility In the Congregation Here we Pray that You would Bless the Ongoing work Being done Through the Youth work Through road To recovery And through All the other Activities taking Place and as They think about Plans for the Future how Best to use The building How best to Use the Resources that They've been Given may You provide For them And guide Them and we Pray that This coming Year and The years Ahead would Be so Encouraging For the work Of the gospel Here In North Harris And so we Commit all That's being Done here To your Care and For me I'm so Thankful for The encouragement It is to

See the work Of the gospel Flourish here May that Continue and May you raise Up many More to love And serve you And to proclaim The unsearchable Riches of Christ Bless us And continue With us we Pray because It is all Through you It's only Through you That we can Do anything And so we Pray that you Be working in Our midst To the glory Of your Name Amen We're going To sing again Together This time We're singing From Psalm 118 And we're singing The sing Psalms version From verse 15 to Verse 22 Psalm 118 Again A psalm That points Very powerfully Towards Jesus And speaking Of the joy That comes Through his Salvation Pointing us To Jesus As our Cornerstone And focusing Our minds On him As the one On whom We are Totally Dependent So we're Going to sing These wonderful Words Of Psalm 118 As we Stand And sing Together The

[24:55] Young Church Of joy Resent In Places Where The Righteous Dwell The Lord's Right Hand Is Lift It High His Mighty Hand Does All Things Well I Shall Not Die But I Shall Live The Lord's In Words I Will Proclaim The Lord's Severely Severely Chastened Me But Rescued Me From Death's

Domain Through White The Gifts Of Righteousness I Lent Around Good Thanks To God This Is The Gate Of God Through Which The Righteous Come Before The Lord You Answered Me I Will Give Thanks Salvation Comes From You Alone The Stone The Builders Had Refused Has Now Become The

Corner Stone Well I'd Like us To turn Back To John Chapter 20 We Will Be Turning And Referring To Matthew 28 As Well But Let's Read Again Towards The End Of The Passage From Verse 21 To 23 This Is One Of The Resurrection Appearances Of Jesus To The Disciples And In Verse 21 We Read That Jesus Said To Them Again Peace Be With You As The Father Has Sent Me Even So I Am Sending You And When He Said This He Breathed On Them And Said To Them Receive The Holy Spirit If You Forgive The Sins Of Any They Are For For For!

It Is Withheld This Morning We Were Thinking About Jesus Amazing! Words On The Cross When He Said It Is Finished And Those Three Words Capture The Truth That In Many Ways Lies At The Very Heart Of The Gospel The Fact That Jesus Has Completed Everything That Is Needed For Our Salvation And We Saw This Morning That It Is Finished In The Sense That The Suffering For Jesus Was Over It Was Finished In The Sense That The Cross Fulfilled Everything That The Old Testament Was Prophecying And It Was Finished In The Sense That God's Work Of Salvation Is Complete In Jesus And The Whole Gospel Rests On The Finished Work Of Christ And That Is Why It Is So Important That We Never Ever Think Of The Gospel As Something That Involves Us Working Our Way Up To God And So Many Times And In So Many Ways People Have Made That Mistake To Think That Being A Christian Means Me Being Good Enough Me Doing Certain

Things Me Me Me Conforming To Something Because Every Time We Say That Every Time We Think That We Are Saying That What Jesus Did On The Cross Isn't Quite Enough And We Need To Add A Little Bit More And That's Not How The Gospel Works It's Never How The Gospel Works Because On The Cross Jesus Finished It All He Did Everything That Was Needed For Us To Be Saved That's Why All We Have To Do Is Receive Jesus By Faith!

[29 : 22] work of Christ. And so our title this evening is The Unfinished Work of Christ. And that's maybe going to sound like an immediate contradiction, but I hope it's going to make perfect sense as we work through this. Because although the salvation that Jesus gives us rests on his finished work, at the same time there's a crucial sense in which the New Testament reveals an unfinished work of Christ. And what we mean by that is the fact that the New Testament teaches that at the heart of the church's mission and purpose is to continue the work that Jesus began.

Our mission and purpose lies in the fact that the church continues what Jesus himself did in his ministry on earth. And you see that captured in the words that we read in verse 21, as the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. In other words, there's more to be done.

And there's a work that Jesus delegates to us in order that God's purposes might be fulfilled. That's not a work of atonement. Jesus has done that work. It's different work. And it's that work that I want us to think about tonight. And so this is the kind of key truth that we want to unpack in a little bit more detail. The fact that the church continues the works that Jesus began. The church shares the message that Jesus announced. And the church is to behave in a way that Jesus exemplified.

And so what we do each week, collectively as a church together and individually as followers of Jesus, that is to be a continuation of everything that Jesus started. But as we do that, and as that happens, it's so important to recognize that Jesus is not a spectator in heaven. It's not like Jesus ascended into heaven and said, right, continue. Off you go. I'm watching you and make sure it's good enough. No. Jesus has not just left us to get on with it. Instead, he is actively helping us and he is empowering us to do that work. And the way in which he does that is by sending his spirit.

And that's exactly what he teaches about in these verses. He says, as the Father sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he said this, he breathed on them and he said, receive the Holy Spirit. And so with the Holy Spirit's help, the church is empowered to continue the work that Jesus began. And what we're seeing in these verses is the fulfillment of the promise that Jesus gave in chapters 14 and chapter 16 in John's gospel, where he said, look, I am going to return to my Father, but I'm not going to leave you on your own. I'm going to send you another helper, even the Spirit of truth. He will be with you and he will help you. And in fact, Jesus even says that through the work of the Spirit in God's people, even greater things will be done. John 14, 12, Jesus said, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.

[32:58] And greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. And that principle of the church continuing the work that Jesus came to do is seen in maybe the slightly hard to understand words of verse 23. It says, if you forgive the sins of any, they're forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. And what that verse is referring to is the fact that it's the church that continues on with the message of forgiveness that Jesus announced and that Jesus accomplished. And as we proclaim that message, that message is the key that opens up the kingdom of God to people. And so we can say, come to Jesus, put your trust in Jesus and follow him. And if someone does that, we can say, your sins are forgiven. And Jesus is saying, yes, their sins are forgiven.

You're saying they're forgiven on earth and they are forgiven in heaven. And equally, we can say to people who are saying, no, I don't need Jesus, or who are saying, actually, I want to go my own way, or actually, I think it works like this. You need to keep the law. You need to do this, that, and the next thing, or whatever. The church can say, your sins are not forgiven, because they're not following Jesus' message. And Jesus says, that's absolutely right. As long as they are not responding to the gospel, forgiveness is withheld on earth and in heaven. And of course, the church keeps proclaiming that message of forgiveness so that these people will turn. So we're starting off with that big principle.

The church is continuing the work that Jesus started. And what I want us to do is just unpack that by looking at five examples of things that Jesus did that we continue to do as the church.

So number one is that Jesus would go to people. And you see that in verse 21. Jesus said to them again, peace be with you, as the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And the whole mission of Jesus and accomplishing salvation is a mission whereby he was sent, and he was sent to people. He came into the world to come alongside us and to accomplish his work. And even in Jesus' life, you see that again and again and again. Jesus went to people. He went to different places, different contexts, and to a whole ton of different people. And that's one of the fascinating things. When you look through the gospels, you see Jesus going to urban places. He's right in the middle of Jerusalem.

And then he's out in the back of beyond in rural settings. You see Jesus dealing with those who are at the bottom of the social ladder, living in poverty. And at the same time, he's interacting with some of the most powerful and influential. You see Jesus speaking to some of the most religiously committed people in the community. And other times you see him speaking to people who seem to be living lifestyles that are a million miles away from what a religious life is supposed to look like.

[35:55] So urban, rural, poor, affluent, religious, secular, Jesus went to them all. And when it came to reaching people, Jesus frequently took the initiative to do that. So he would go and talk to people. He'd start conversations. He would say, I've got to get to the next town. Let's go. Jesus frequently took risks speaking to people that would raise a few eyebrows and that might bring confrontation and that maybe would damage his reputation. He experienced mixed results. Sometimes he would speak to people and they were like, you have got the words of eternal life. This is everything that we long for. And sometimes he would speak to people and they wanted to kill him or at the very least they wanted to ignore him.

And as Jesus went to people, he kept going. He kept on going to people, speaking to people, reaching people. That's the ministry that Jesus started. We need to keep it going.

We continue that work. The church must do the same and the church must expect the same. So we want to go to all sorts of people and that might mean taking risks and that might bring very mixed results, but we want to keep on going. And sometimes the spirit of Jesus who is with us as we do that, sometimes he will open doors for us and sometimes he will close doors. That's okay. It was exactly the same for Jesus. But the key point in verse 21 is that the church is sent. Jesus said, I'm sending you.

And that means that we are both commanded and commissioned. Jesus said, I'm commanding you to do this, but also this is my job for you. You're commissioned and I am empowering you to do this.

I love football and I love looking at football managers because it's really fascinating seeing the different things that football managers say in order to help their team go, press forward. And one of my favourite managers in recent years has been Jurgen Klopp. He's kind of half retired now, I think. I don't know if he'll come back or not. But Jurgen Klopp, as you may know, was manager of Liverpool for several years, hugely successful during that time. And one of the things that Jurgen Klopp used to say again and again was that Liverpool were very successful and often after a match, he would be getting interviewed and they would be saying, you know, oh, great result, da, da, da, da, you know. And the reporters in many ways wanted to bring the attention to the fact that they had just done this great game, scored, won, everything was great. And very often Jurgen Klopp would say the same thing. He'd be like, yeah, that game's great, but we go again. We go again. We go again.

[38 : 39] And he was always pointing forward to that next game. Next game, we go again. Next game, we go again. And I love that. And I think that that is, I think that that is such an important lesson for us to remember in the church because we meet together on the first day of every week because Jesus is saying, we go again. We go again. And he is placing you and has placed you in all sorts of different places in this community to reach people with the good news of the gospel. All around us, there are people who need to be reached. And one of the reasons why Jesus brings his church together at the start of the week is to say, we go again. We go to reach people. We go to share our lives with them and to share the good news with them. I guess all of this is teaching us a massive lesson. It's reminding us that we are not going to be Christ-like if we sit still and wait. As we continue the work of the gospel, we can't sit still. We need to keep pressing on. Now, that doesn't mean we're not patient.

Sometimes we have to be patient. And maybe you have got a friend at work and you've asked him to church loads of times and you're maybe at the point where you're like, I don't feel like I'm asking them again. Maybe there'll be another way or maybe someone else will be able to ask them.

Sometimes you have to be very, very patient for results to come. But being patient is not the same as sitting still doing nothing. And instead, we want to keep going, keep reaching people with patience and with confidence. Jesus went to people. That work isn't finished. So we continue what he started.

The second thing we see in Jesus is that he taught people. The Great Commission that we read in Matthew 28 makes a crucial link between going and teaching. He says, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, under the Son, under the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold them with you always, even to the end of the age.

Now, again, a crucial link here is made between the sending of the Holy Spirit and God's people being taught. Jesus said to the disciples in John 16, I've still got loads of things to teach you.

[41:05] You can't bear them just now. But when the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He'll not speak in his own authority, but whatever he hears, he'll speak. He will declare to you the things that are to come. He'll glorify me, for he'll take what is mine and he'll declare it to you.

And here in John 20, we see this promise being fulfilled. Jesus tells his disciples to receive the Holy Spirit. And that, again, is pointing them towards the great culmination of that in Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Now, at one level, the apostles had a unique role because they were used by God to commit the teaching of the New Testament to writing in what we have in the apostolic witness of the pages of the New Testament. But the principle extends beyond the apostles to the whole of the church.

It's the church's job to go and teach and instruct people in the truths of the gospel that have been set out for us in the New Testament. And that's what the Holy Spirit wants to do. He wants to teach us to open our eyes so that we understand what God is revealing to us. That's why a minister's job is to be a pastor-teacher. You look at Ephesians 4, that's how a minister is described. A pastor-teacher. A pastor who shepherds the flock and cares for the flock, and a teacher who helps you to learn more about the truth that God has revealed in Scripture. That's why we make such a big deal about preaching. Because coming together and listening to a preacher is an opportunity to learn, and every sermon should help you learn more about the gospel, about the doctrinal truth that's contained in God's Word, and about the practical application of how we can live it out in our lives. And that's exactly what Jesus did, isn't it?

He taught people so much, and he applied God's truth to their lives. He went around preaching and teaching. Mary, in this chapter, calls him Rabboni, teacher. And Jesus did that in so many different ways. He preached to people, he chatted to people, he answered their questions, he guided them about how to live, and the church continues that work. And this teaches us a really important lesson. It's reminding us that following Jesus never ever means leaving your brain behind. And that's so, so important to recognize. Because sometimes the impression is given that, you know, the life of faith is a kind of life where you just sort of abandon any kind of coherent, rational thinking, and instead you just kind of take sort of this blind step of faith, and you follow something that you can never really know is true or not. And in contrast to that, you can maybe, you know, follow a non-religious approach to life that, you know, is maybe much more rational, much more coherent, and, you know, much more persuasive.

And people make this, they think that there's this choice between, you know, no faith that involves thinking, or faith that involves no thinking. And that is nonsense. It's totally untrue.

[44:13] Following Jesus never ever means leaving your brain behind. And the church's role is to, is never to stop people from thinking. Our role is to help you think more clearly than you ever have before.

And as we understand the gospel, it should always be the case that everything, everything makes more sense. Whether that's the truths that are revealed in scripture, or the big questions of our origins and our destiny, or the issues of morality that we face day by day, or the decisions that we have to take in terms of the paths that we have in life, or the priorities that we should set, everything in the Bible should help us to think more clearly than we've ever thought before. And it's just reminding us that we cannot be Christ-like if people aren't learning. Jesus taught people that work isn't finished.

We continue what he started. Number three is welcoming people. You see this everywhere in the gospels. Jesus welcomed people, and so often the people that Jesus welcomed were those who had been rejected by others. You go through John's gospel, you see him in chapter four with a woman at the well. In John 8, you see him speaking tenderly to a woman who's been caught in adultery. In Mark Luke, you see Jesus getting criticized for eating with tax collectors and sinners. I heard a wonderful quote from a theologian called Leslie Newbigin. He was a theologian and a missionary last century, and I probably wouldn't agree with everything that he taught, but he had a wonderful quote that I've never forgotten, where he said, it's that the church's job is to continue the ministry of Jesus whereby he receives sinners, and eats with them. I thought that was a brilliant description of what church should be all about.

Jesus received sinners, and he ate with them, and those were the people that the rest of society, especially the religious elite, they just wanted to avoid them. They were the people that had been judged, that were being looked down on, the people who'd made loads of mistakes, the people who's lives had never had turned out totally different from what they had wanted, and Jesus received them and ate with them. And as his church, we continue that ministry that Jesus began. That's why we love to invite people to come. That's why we love welcoming people to our services. That's why we need to eat with people. That means welcoming them into our homes. It means having that generous heart that says, there's always room for you at our table. One of the reasons I love coming to North Harris every few months is because every time I come, I see new faces that I've not seen before, and it's amazing to see that, to see that there are people who are being welcomed in to this congregation. That's the ministry that Jesus began, and you are continuing it here. And it's reminding us that we cannot be Christ-like if we don't make people feel welcome. Now that also doesn't necessarily mean agreeing with people all the time, and we need to be ready for that today more than ever because we're surrounded by a nation and a society that in so many areas doesn't agree with us. And so we want it to be the case that people will walk through these doors who think very, very differently from us. We want them to know that they are welcome, and we want God's Word and God's Spirit to speak to their hearts and lead them to Christ.

And Jesus is such an amazing example for us in this. It's reminding us that the church should never be a closed shop, never an exclusive club, and never something that's just kept just the way we like it.

[48 : 20] Instead, we look at Jesus. He welcomed people. That work isn't finished. So we continue what he started. Fourthly, we see Jesus helping people. Again, he did this constantly. Again and again and again, Jesus provided help for people who are in need. So he healed the sick. He cured the blind and deaf.

He delivered the disciples in a storm. He fed the hungry. He liberated those who were oppressed by evil spirits. He comforted those who were grieving. When you look at Jesus, you see that he is so beautifully kind and generous and merciful and compassionate.

One of my favourite examples of that is in Mark 1, when a man with leprosy came to Jesus. You'll, I'm sure, know that at that time, leprosy was a contagious disease. It was a ceremonially unclean disease. And if you were a leper, you were absolutely shunned for religious reasons and for medical reasons. Nobody would go near you. You had to live outside the city. Mark 1 40, a leper came to Jesus, imploring him and kneeling, said to him, if you will, you can make me clean. Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him.

I will be clean. Be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean. Jesus was willing to help people. And giving that help was costly.

It cost Jesus time. It cost him energy. Sometimes it cost him his reputation. Jesus did not care about the cost. And what Jesus started, we are to continue.

[50:06] And that's why the church should always be a place where people can find help. And that can happen in so many ways, from providing for those who are poor, supporting those who are ill, visiting those who are housebound, advocating for those who are mistreated, listening to those who are struggling, encouraging those who are in the midst of difficult times.

Here is an interesting question to ask. Did anybody's life get spoiled by meeting Jesus? As you read the Gospels, did Jesus make anyone's life worse?

And the answer, of course, is no. Everyone's lives were improved, enriched and enhanced by meeting Jesus. Now, for some people, it changed everything in an incredible way.

Like that leper, everything changed when he met Jesus. Sometimes Jesus actually majorly disrupted people's lives. And that was especially true for the religious elite whom Jesus challenged.

And sometimes the confrontation was really quite sharp. But as Jesus challenged them, he was exposing the fact that their attitudes and their mindset was wrong. And in giving that warning, just like the prophets of the Old Testament, that warning brings a calling to turn from their ways and turn back to the Lord and to listen.

[51:30] And that meant that any disruption that Jesus brought was actually doing them good. Did anyone's life get spoiled by meeting Jesus? Did Jesus make anyone's life worse?

The answer is no. So, here's a harder question. Has the church ever made someone's life worse? And tragically, the answer is yes.

Because often we've judged people. We've pushed people to one side. We've neglected people. We've forgotten people. We've rejected people.

Sometimes unintentionally. And sometimes maybe deliberately. And in a way that shouldn't surprise us. We always have to remember that the church is made up of people. And people are always a mixture of good and bad.

Of strengths and weaknesses. Of successes and of stupid mistakes. But it's just, it's so important for us to recognize this. Because the church is a powerful instrument.

[52:33] We've always got to remember that the church is a powerful instrument. And if something is powerful. Then it can be incredibly powerful at doing good. And it can also be powerful at hurting.

And so we've got to always be careful. And the answer for us is to continue what Jesus started. To think the way Jesus thought. To react the way Jesus reacted.

And if we do that. If we continue what Jesus started. It means that as a church. And I mean that for my church. For your congregation. For us as a church family together.

It means that we can always be helping people. It means we can always be a beacon of encouragement. A place of support. An atmosphere of positivity. A source of generosity.

And a fountain of warmth and kindness. And what that means is that we want it to be the case. That whether it's here in Tarbert. Or whether it's in Carloway. We want people to be able to look at the church and say.

[53:32] They are for me. That's a place for me. I can go there. And I will find help. Now all of this raises a very important theological point.

That's often been misunderstood. And it's often been argued about. But very often you'll find in the life and the history of the church. When it comes to applying theological truths. We tend to kind of go either too far one way.

Or too far the other way. And you see that in loads of different ways. And this is raising one of these examples. Of the kind of too far that way. Too far the other way problem. What can happen. Is that when it comes to.

How we respond to the gospel. On this side. It's easy. And very often. You can have churches that are almost completely focused on eternity.

And of course that's a good thing. Because eternity is so so important. But the focus is so much on eternity. It's almost as though the mindset is that.

[54 : 34] More than anything else. You have to get your ticket to heaven. You have to make sure that you escape a lost eternity. And that's the thing that matters more than anything else.

And the focus is entirely on that. To the point where we don't think too much. About what we do day to day. And then other times the church has gone to the opposite extreme. Where kind of eternity is not really thought about.

Or spoken about much. And instead all the focus is on helping people. And on working. And providing. And supporting. And many churches have gone so far down that road.

That they're almost. Well they're denying the existence of hell. And they're barely ever mentioning the reality of heaven. And both of these are getting it wrong.

The mission of the church is defined by the great commission. To make disciples of all nations. As we read in Matthew.

[55 : 30] And we need to proclaim the good news that Jesus is risen. The good news that Mary and Peter and Thomas and John. All discovered in the chapter that we read from. And we need to call people to believe in Jesus.

Just as John sought to do so in writing this gospel. And as we follow Jesus. We live lives of obedience to his command. To love God. To love our neighbor.

And to show the same compassion. And grace. And generosity. That we see in Jesus himself. And so the church is not helping people.

If we don't call people to faith and repentance. And to follow Jesus. But equally. We're not really repentant. And we're not really following Jesus.

If we do not follow his command. To show love and compassion. To those who are in need around us. We cannot be Christ-like. If we close our eyes.

[56 : 25] To the needs of the people. That God has placed around us. Jesus helped them. That work isn't finished. We continue what he started. So we see Jesus going to people.

We see Jesus teaching people. We see Jesus welcoming people. We see Jesus helping people. Last of all. We see Jesus offending people. Now the first examples are all positive and appealing.

Going to people. Teaching people. Welcoming people. Helping people. These are all attractive things to be involved in. But the last example is a bit different. But it's also very very important.

In his ministry. Jesus frequently offended people. And we have to be willing to do the same. Now I'm very nervous saying that. Because I could be very easily misunderstood.

I am not saying that we are to go out. And to be deliberately offensive. So please don't go to school or to work tomorrow. And be a complete nightmare. And say oh Thomas Davis told me to just be horrible.

[57 : 22] And offend everyone. That's not what I'm saying at all. What I mean is the fact that the teaching of the gospel. And the lifestyle of Christianity.

Is inevitably going to offend some people. And often that will lead to hostility. Sometimes it will lead to persecution.

Now on a national scale. We live in the amazingly privileged position. Where the church has freedom. The church is protected. And our experience. Kind of at a national level of persecution.

Is very very minor. I mean we're maybe ignored. But we're not harassed or hounded. Compared to many other people in the world. Or to people.

To Christians at other times in history. But maybe at an individual level for you. Whether it's at school. Or at work. Maybe among your family. Maybe you have experienced the pain.

- [58 : 21] Of being rejected. Or mocked. Or just shunned a little bit. Because of your faith. When that happens.

You have to remember. That that is a continuation. Of what happened to Jesus. He spoke about it earlier in John's gospel. He says if the world hates you.

Know that it hated me before it hated you. If you're of the world. The world would love you as its own. But because you're not of the world. But I chose you out of this world. Therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you.

A servant's not greater than his master. If they persecuted me. They will also persecute you. If they kept my word. They will also keep yours. Now this shouldn't surprise us.

Because the core claims of the gospel. Are challenging for people. So do we accept that God really is God. And that we are all ultimately accountable to him. Do we accept that sin is sin.

- [59 : 20] That actually there are certain things. That forever and always are wrong. And we are actually all guilty. Do we accept that Jesus is saviour. That there is no other way of being saved.

Except through him. And do we accept that grace is totally free. That we actually can't offer things ourselves. That we can't come relying on ourselves. And we have to just shatter any sense of pride in ourselves.

And come to God with empty hands. And do we accept that everything that the gospel is revealing. Is unbelievably serious. And nothing matters more than this. And for so many people.

Thinking about things that are that intense. And thinking about these questions that challenge our deepest understandings of ourselves.

And of the world around us. Questions that are impossible to ignore or dismiss. These questions are not easy. And for many people these questions are not welcome.

- [60 : 24] Instead they are offensive. Now it's absolutely crucial. That the church is not offensive for the wrong reasons. So we must not offend people by gossiping about them.

Or judging them. Or criticising them. Or looking down on them. Or making out that we're better. That's just sinning. That's just sinning. But we have to remember that continuing what Jesus started.

Means that we will not keep everybody happy. And that might land very close to you. In your life. So you might risk friends or colleagues talking about you.

If you take the next step in your faith. Now I don't know what stage many of you are at in your faith. But maybe some of you know that there is a next step that you need to take. Whether that is professing faith and becoming a member.

Or telling somebody else that you actually are a believer. Or maybe taking that next step to become more involved in the life of the church. Whatever that step might be. That might feel like a big big risk.

- [61 : 27] Because of how people around you are going to react. You might end up being mocked or shunned. Or kind of looked at funny. If you decide that you're not going to drink the way that everybody else at work drinks.

If you go out for a meal together. Or you're not going to speak in the way that everybody else does. Or you're not going to approach relationships in the way that everybody else does. And that's what Jesus experienced.

And as we follow him. We must be ready for the same. Sometimes Jesus and the truths of the gospel were offensive to people.

Sometimes it provoked opposition. And being Christ-like means that we are going to experience that ourselves. And so in all of these ways we are seeing the unfinished work of Christ.

And as I said that's a funny title. And it's a potentially heretical title if you think of it. If you misunderstand it. As we said at the start. In terms of our salvation.

[62 : 28] In terms of our theology. In so many ways we emphasize the finished work of Christ. As he cried out on the cross he said. It is finished. And there's nothing unfinished about the cross.

There's nothing unfinished about the atonement. Jesus paid it all. We add nothing. We simply rest on his amazing grace. Accomplished through the cross.

But at the same time. There is unfinished work. For us still to do. Now the church has a mission. To go and make disciples of all nations.

And as we do that. We're continuing what Jesus started. And this is where I hope you can all be incredibly excited about the week ahead.

Because our theology is telling us that Jesus is risen. It's telling us that Jesus is Lord. And it's actually telling us that he is in control of everything. And it's telling us that he has a mission for his church.

[63 : 34] Because there's people that he wants to reach. And there are people in North Harris that he wants to reach. And the instrument that he is going to use to reach those people is you.

And that's what you're doing this week. As you step out to work into the community. To school or whatever you're doing.

You're stepping out as a follower of Jesus. And as we do that. We are continuing the work that he started. But the crucial thing that you've got to remember.

Is that never, ever, ever for one second. Are you doing that work on your own. Because as Jesus said at the Great Commission.

He said I'm with you always. Even to the end of the age. And so please let's go. Let's go and proclaim the wonders of the finished work of Christ.

[64 : 36] As we do that. We're taking forward the unfinished work of Christ. All to his glory. Amen. Let's pray. Lord Jesus we thank you for the amazing reality of the gospel.

That it's finished. That the work of salvation is complete. But we thank you so much also. That the mission of the church is not finished. And you have not yet returned.

Because there are still those of your people. Who are to come in. And who are to come to faith. And they are around us. And we pray that we would be the instrument used by you to reach them.

And so we pray Lord Jesus. That for all of us. Even though we feel so weak. And so incapable. And in many ways. So far from what we should be. We pray that we would be the instruments in your hands.

Through which your unfinished work of reaching the nations. Continues this week. And we pray that you'd help us. In every situation. To live lives that show that we love you.

[65 : 42] And that we love one another. And if there are opportunities that come up. For us to show compassion. Or to invite someone to church. Or to ask a question. Or to share our faith.

Please give us the strength and the courage that we need. To take these opportunities. And may you use us. In every part of our lives. For your glory. We pray that the ongoing unfinished work of the gospel.

Here in North Harris. Would absolutely thrive. This week. This year. And until the day that you return. All to your glory. Amen.