

8.10.23 am

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Date: 08 October 2023

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning, a warm welcome to the service this morning and a special welcome to those who are visiting or those who are maybe here today and haven't been here for a wee while. It's good to see you. If you're able to stay behind at the end of the service, there's tea, there's coffee, there's a chance to enjoy fellowship together.

The notices have been on the screen before the service began. Just take a moment and run through them. The evening service is at six and technically that's right, it will be taken by me. I'll speak for just maybe four or five minutes on Ecclesiastes reminding us where we are in the evenings.

And then we're going to hear from Mark this evening, who's going to speak to the children this morning. Mark works in sports chaplaincy and he ministers in that field, pardon the pun. And Mark will share a bit about ministry, he'll share the word with us. And also, Dom McRae is going to share a wee bit of testimony too, just about being a Christian and being in sport at the local level.

So that's this evening. Please be encouraged to come out. Maybe those who don't often make, don't come out regularly on a Sunday evening, it would be good to see you out tonight and it would be good maybe to ask people who have an interest in sport as well to come out and hear about God's work in that area.

[1 : 27] Ladies' Fellowship at eight on Mondays as usual. Little Fish's Road to Recovery on Tuesday, usual times and places. Prayer meeting on Wednesday at half past seven in person and on Zoom for those who can't make it into the building.

I'm hoping to be on holiday from Friday, Friday the 13th for a week. People sometimes say, Friday the 13th and there's a sort of sharp intake of breath, you're going away on that day. I got married on that day. Friday the 13th of October. Mary's had bad luck ever since. So Friday, and we're away for a week.

And so if you're needing any pastoral support, then speak to one of the elders in the first instance. Ian McCritchie in Park is on standby in case there's any issues.

And for intimations in these three weeks when Emma is away, please just send intimations directly to Donna Andrew Duncan. Services next Sunday morning will be taken by Gordon.

[2 : 32] And the evening service will be taken by Angus M. So that's the cover for next Sunday. And church cleaning, you've got the details there. Shoebox appeal is ongoing.

You can see that there. And SU, a reminder, it's ongoing as well in school. So these, I think, are all the notices.

We're going to begin this time of praise and worship now as we sing to God's praise. Mission Praise 31, words on the screen. We'll sing that amazing, familiar hymn about the grace of God.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now am found. Was blind, but now I see.

[3 : 57] It was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.

How precious did that disappear, even I first believed.

Through many dangers, soils and snares, my love already come.

Tis grace that taught me, save the spark. And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining at the sun.

[5 : 19] We've no less days to sing God's praise. Than when we first began.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer together. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Our heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for that word that we have been drawn to at the beginning of this service.

That word grace. And we thank you truly that your grace is amazing. Your grace is the reason that we can come to you in prayer.

We are those who are, as the hymn puts it, wretched. We are those who are sinners. We sin in thought and word and deed.

[6 : 23] It's part of our nature. It's something that we are conscious that we practice day by day. And you are a God who is holy. And so, Lord, we know that your word tells us that there is that barrier of our sin.

And there is no way through. If we were to try and break through with our own efforts, we cannot come to a holy God.

If we are to try to negotiate and offer the things that we have, there is no way through to a holy God. There's nothing in our hands that we can bring that will make us acceptable.

But we thank you. We thank you that when we come seeking mercy and looking for grace, we are received.

As we so often quote from the hymn, Nothing in my hands I bring, but simply to thy cross I cling. We thank you for the prayer that we so often find ourselves crying out that we were taught by the tax collector, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

[7 : 41] We thank you that when we come with that prayer on our lips, when we come seeking the grace of Jesus, we thank you that we are heard and we are received and we are saved.

Thank you for the cross. We see the picture on the wall, what is grace? It's God's riches at Christ's expense. And so we thank you, Lord, that we can receive forgiveness and we can receive peace with God.

We can receive joy and satisfaction in our hearts. We can receive eternal life, that secured place in the heaven that we sang of there in the hymn.

And it's all of grace. We don't buy it. We don't earn it. We simply ask for it. And Jesus has paid for it. So we praise you for the cross. We thank you that as we look to the cross, we see our sin nailed to that tree. He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we could become righteous, so that we could be saved.

[8 : 55] We thank you that the blood that was shed is blood that cleanses us from our sin. And we thank you that in the gospel we hear that call. Come to me, says Jesus, all who are weary, all who are burdened by sin.

I will give you rest. So, Lord, we come in obedience to your call. We come as we respond to the invitation of the gospel. And we ask, Lord, that you would cleanse us, that you would have mercy on us, that you would give to us that amazing grace, and that you would fill our hearts with joy, a joy that puts a new song in our minds, a joy that spills over into our worship in this hour, and spills over into every hour of our lives, that in our homes, amongst our family and our friends, in our workplace, even in our leisure interests, that the grace of Jesus and the joy of the Lord would overflow, and that people would see something of Christ in us.

We pray for anyone here today who is still outside of Christ, who hears about grace, who sees the cross, who knows the name of Jesus, but has never yet come.

And we pray that even in these moments, that they would come, that none of us would come so close to the receiving salvation, that none of us would be almost persuaded, but on the final day, find that we are still at a distance, and shut out of heaven eternally.

May that not be the eternal state of any here, but we pray that we would receive grace, and that we would know salvation, and that we would share salvation with those that you put around us.

[10 : 48] We live in a world that is dark. We live in a world that needs to hear about Jesus, and we pray, Lord, for the world at this time. We think about the Middle East.

We think about Israel. We see warfare, the beginnings of it. We are fearful as to how it could escalate. And, Lord, we are called to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

And so we pray for that land. We pray for the surrounding nations. We pray for those who are involved, that we can see, even in the shadows, who may be pulling strings.

Lord, we cry out to you as the sovereign God, and we ask that you would intervene. We pray for peace in that land, and we pray that the people of Israel, that we read about so often in your word, whose eyes are blinded in the majority to Christ as Savior, open these eyes, Lord, we pray.

And we ask that many of them would be saved, and we know that we're praying what your word prophesies. We pray, Lord, for Afghanistan. We think of the earthquake there, and the many thousands who are dead, families that are grieving, people who are in distress.

[12 : 06] And we pray, Lord, that in that darkness and in that suffering, that you would bring peace, Lord, that you would enable your people to get into these situations.

And, Lord, that something of the light of Christ would be known, that even the land there would be open to the gospel message in the middle of this trouble.

So often, Lord, in the storm, the work of Jesus is most clearly seen, and we pray for that land. And, Lord, we pray for our own land.

We may not be in war, we may not be in acute suffering of any real kind, but we know that we have drifted far from you, and we pray that you would call us back.

Lord, that we would repent, that we would believe, that once more we would cherish the book and trust in the Savior. We pray for those who are struggling today in hospital. We ask, Lord, that you would minister to them.

[13 : 09] We pray again for Margaret. We thank you for some level of improvement over this last few weeks, this last few days. And we ask, Lord, that she would continue to know increased strength.

We pray, Lord, that you would grant healing, that you would grant recovery. We pray on for Mary Latham as she receives treatment, and as the chemotherapy is applied, we pray that it would be effective, and that you would have your hand of healing upon her, and uphold all of the family at this time.

We pray for Nanny in hospital, and Shona as well, as we've prayed for them week by week. Uphold them, we pray, and we thank you for your hand upon them, and especially Shona, the miraculous level of recovery that we see in her over these last few days.

Lord, continue to minister to her and minister through her in due course as well, we pray. Pray for those who are at home recovering from procedures. We think of Gillian, and we ask, Lord, that you would speed her recovery, and others as well, who've been in hospital in recent days, some who are at home housebound, and have been for even years now.

And although we cannot see them, we thank you that they're able to connect with us online just now. Bless them where they are. So hear our prayers. Take away our sin. Lead us and guide us as we seek to worship you.

[14 : 32] And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come out, please? Come on down, Michael.

You can get back to that in a wee minute. How are you all today?

Good, good. I'm going to ask Mark to come up. I met Mark once before, but we're going to get to know each other a bit better today when we're having dinner as well.

And we're pleased to have Mark with us. And so Mark's going to speak to you today, and I'm going to sit down. And you'll speak to him as well, because I've explained you're very good at asking and answering questions.

Good. Thanks, Mark. Thank you very much. Lovely to see you, boys and girls. Hands up, those of you that love football. Good. Good start, because that could be quite handy with this talk. Hands up who know a wee bit about football.

[15 : 32] Whoa, not so many. Right, I'm going to put up a photograph, and I want you to tell me who this player is. Here it comes. Anyone recognise this fella? Here he comes.

Who's that? Oh. Oh, look at that. Straight away. Kelly Mbappe. He is a pretty good player, isn't he? Let's get his name up. You're absolutely right. Do you know that today, he's probably the most valuable footballer in the world?

Can anyone guess how much he might be worth? 170 million. Wow, that is very, very close. Let's put it up and see. Currently, 155 million pounds, or 180 million euros.

That's quite a lot of money. He must feel quite good about himself, eh? I'm worth 155 million.

Anyone here feel that you're worth that? Yep. Good. That's good.

I like to see that. Let's have a look at another player, see if he recognises him. Who's that?

McAllister. Oh, this fella knows. Alexis McAllister. Let's have a look. Now, the thing is, you think with a name like that, he must play for Scotland?

[16:36] No. Argentina. He plays for Argentina, unfortunately. I know. And the other thing as well is, he's not even got a Scottish relative. Do you know where his relatives came from? Where?

Ireland. So his great, great, great, great, great granddad came from Ireland. I believe he had a very distant, great, great, great, great, great, great, great somebody from Kirkcaldy. But it's not really going to do us much good, because he can't play for us.

So here's Planet Brighton. At that time, let's see what value he had. He was worth, what does that say? I can't see. Six. Six million. That's quite good. I mean, if you're worth six million, you feel good. But see when Argentina won the World Cup? He works well. Let's see what happens next. Let's look at this. And how much is he worth now? Sixty. He's £35 million, which is still an awful lot of money.

That's amazing, isn't it? In football, your value can change from five million, or six million, to 35 million, just because your team wins the World Cup. It's amazing, isn't it?

[17:34] So that's how much your value can change. And it can change week by week. Let's have a look at another player. I know you'll recognise him as well. Who's this? Roberto Firmino. Roberto Firmino.

Absolutely. He's not from Argentina. Where is he from? Brazil. Brazil, exactly. And so when he was playing for Liverpool, he was doing really well when Liverpool won the league. And let's see what value he had.

He was worth €72 million in 2021. Wow. That's a lot, isn't it? Does anyone know what happened at the end of last season? Yeah. Let's have a look and see what happened.

He was given a free transfer. It's a retirement home. Well, not a retirement home. It's not quite that bad, to be fair. But it's as good as a retirement home.

Aye. Saudi Arabia. And he was given a free transfer. And how sad is that? His value goes from €72 million to nothing. Yeah, but he gets paid like €2 million a week.

[18:30] It's very true. Don't wreck my children's talk, but you're absolutely correct. He's weighed in, as we say. He's given plenty of money, so he's doing all right. But here's the thing about Roberto Firmino.

He doesn't look too unhappy there, does he? Let me tell you the main reason why Roberto Firmino doesn't look too happy. Because he knows that his value doesn't depend on football.

Let's have a look at the next photograph. And you can see what's happening here. His best pal is the goalkeeper of Liverpool. Does anyone know who that is? Alisson. Alison, that's right.

And here we can see here, Roberto Firmino became a Christian. He accepted Jesus as his Lord and Saviour, and he was baptised by his friend Becker. And I think that's his home swimming pool. He's quite well off. He's got a wee swimming pool in his house, which must be very nice. And there's a lovely scripture that I put up with this that I just want to explain. Something really important to you from.

[19:24] It says, For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value.

It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. And you see, the thing about Roberto Firmino is this. He knows that he's worth way more than millions of euros he was worth dying for.

He knows that the value that he has before God is so great that God sent his son Jesus to die on the cross for him. So when Jesus came to die on the cross, he took the punishment for all the wrong things that we do so that we could be forgiven and acceptable by God as Father and become our Father as well.

Isn't that incredible? And the amazing thing about the value that we have before God is it doesn't change. You know, in football, 90 minutes is a long time and your value can just drop because of a bad performance, a poor result.

But as Christians, when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, our value never ever changes before God because it's based on God's grace, which the minister was talking about in his prayer.

[20:41] And grace means that it's God's undeserved favour. And that means that every single day of life, if I have Jesus in my life, I'm 100% acceptable to God. And even if my performance and results aren't really quite up to scratch as I would like them to be, that doesn't change my value before God because I'm valued according to his grace through Jesus.

And I just want you to remember that because as you grow up and go into life, people will value you and you'll get paid in a job and sometimes you'll get a good salary, sometimes you'll not have such a good salary and sometimes you can feel, what worth am I?

What value do I have? But I want you to remember the most important thing in life is knowing your value to God. Knowing how much he paid for you. He sent his son Jesus to die for you.

And that value will never ever change. You accept Jesus, God accepts you for all eternity. And you're really worth something special then. Okay? God bless you.

Well done, lads. Thank you. Okay. Yes, certainly. Father God, I want to thank you for every boy and girl here in this church. And Lord, as they go through life and as their value is often determined by other people, by how they're treated, by how they're paid or what they do, Lord, I pray they would always recognise that what is really important in life is to know that we are valued by you and that we're worth the death of your son.

[22 : 06] We're worth dying for. And that that value that is placed in our lives, the blood of your son Jesus, that value cannot diminish in all eternity. That every day of life we get 10 out of 10 in Christ as we stand before you.

Because we don't stand before you with our own righteousness, but we stand before you clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. And when you look upon us, you see Jesus' righteousness and that makes us acceptable and worthy before you to be your children and your servants.

So I pray, Lord, these truths will be firmly embedded in the hearts of all of these boys and girls and they'll grow up knowing their love and their value before you is a constant through Jesus.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you very much. Mark, do you work, just for the boys and girls, because you're going to be here tonight, you work with a few football teams in Scotland?

Yeah. We've got 140 football club chaplains. So yeah, you could say I work with a few, yes. Good, good. And you know guys in the Premier, well, the Scottish Premier? Yes, aye.

[23 : 11] I've been working within professional football for the last 25 years. 25 years. So, boys and girls, would they be welcomed out tonight? Oh, very much so. You'd enjoy it.

Good stuff. You like football, you'll love this tonight. Good stuff. So, thank you Mark and boys and girls, come out tonight and we'll hear more of what Mark's doing, what God's doing through Mark. Oh, Henry's got a question before you go. You're going to have a new year. No, not personally. I know this jacket looks like a work with Rangers, but can I just make it really clear, because David did have a wee go this morning.

I only support one team in Glasgow and they don't play in blue. Nor do they play in green. Right, you can sit down now. Sorry. I thought that was going to have a happy ending.

Okay. We're going to sing now to God's praise and we're going to sing and ask God to speak to us. The God who loves us, the God who values us, the God who saves us.

[24 : 13] He wants to speak to us through the Bible and so we're going to ask for God's help as we sing that he'll speak to us in church and in Sunday school and each day as we open the Bible. So speak, O Lord, as we come to you.

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you to receive the truth of your holy word.

Take your truth and redeem in us Shape and fashion us in your high grace that the light of Christ might be seen to you in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.

Speak, O Lord, Lord, and fulfill in us all your purposes Lord, your glory Teach us, Lord, full obedience Holy rest to the living Test the thoughts and our light issues In the radiance of your purity Lord, your faith to rise Lord, your eyes to see Give majestic love God and authority And our glory Words of power God can never fail Let their truth be lit Oh, what unbelief

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds That was Christ Christ the eyes Of your plans for us To the sun change From the dawn of time That will echo down Through eternity And our grace We'll stand on your promises And our faith will walk As you walk with us Speak, O Lord, till your church is built And the earth is built With your glory Amen Okay, boys and girls, if you head through to Sunday school and remember to be praying for them as they go

[27 : 20] Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen And if we turn Now in our Bibles Please to 1 Peter chapter 5 1 Peter chapter 5 And we're coming to the last The last couple of verses In the letter As we conclude our studies This morning In this book 1 Peter chapter 5 And we're reading at Verse 12 Through to Verse Verse 14 It's a final greetings Some would say It's Peter's Postscript As As PS At the end Of the letter And as

The Holy Spirit guides him Peter says In verse 12

With the help of Silas Who my regard As a faithful brother I have written to you briefly Encouraging you And testifying That this Is the true grace Of God Stand fast In it She who is in Babylon Chosen together With you Sends you her greetings And so does my son Mark Greet One another With A kiss of love Peace To all Of you Who are In Christ Amen And may God Bless that reading Of his word To us We're going to sing Again To God's praise Psalm 119 And we'll sing Verses 105 To 107 Two stanzas Thy word Is to my feet The lamp And to my path The light I sworn have And I will perform To keep thy judgments right I am with sore affliction Even overwhelmed O Lord In mercy Raise and quicken me

According to Thy word These two verses We sing In Gaelic And we remain seated To sing In Gaelic To God's praise To God's praise To God's praise To God's praise To God's praise To God's praise To God's praise To God's praise O Lord

[33 : 01] If you could turn back please Now with me to the section That we read in 1 Peter Chapter 5 Just as we go there We'll pray Heavenly Father We thank you for Your word We thank you for The wonder The wonder of the fact That we have That we have a book That we have a book That we have a book That we can read That we can sing And what we are What we are able to read And study and study and study It's the word of the word Forgive Father Man's..?

we have no sense of expecting that you will speak into our lives. We thank you that you've promised that you will. And as we pray, we ask, Lord, that you would open our hearts, that you would illuminate our minds, that you would cause the scales to fall from our eyes, that you would declutter our minds from all that would distract us, and that you would create in us that sense of expectation that the God of heaven and earth, the God who loves us, the God who cares for us, the God who is concerned with every part of our lives, wants to speak to us.

So open our ears, Lord, that we would hear. We pray for the children. We thank you for them, for how well they listen, for how quick they are to respond. We thank you for the grasp that they have of the fact that they and we are sinners, and Jesus is the Savior.

And that his blood was shed to pay the price for our sin. We pray that these truths would not just be something that our minds and their minds are able to take hold of, but we pray for faith, that these gospel truths would transform our hearts, and that we would be saved as we take hold of them by faith.

We pray for the children. We pray for ourselves. We pray for the congregations around us and this community and across the island, that whatever the gospel is preached, Lord, that you would be speaking.

[35 : 42] We pray for Duncan, as he preaches over in U.S. today, that you would speak through him, that you would minister in that place. And we pray for those who are visiting with us, who perhaps come from different congregations and fellowships, and we pray for them as well, Lord, that the fellowships that they are from, I would know your hand upon them today, that you would speak, Lord, that you would be working in the power of the Holy Spirit to save those who are lost, and to sanctify us, those who are your people, that we would be made more like Jesus.

So hear us, help us, we pray, as we look to you. In Jesus' name, Amen. A few months ago now, maybe about two or three months ago, we had a girl who was staying with us, one of the girl's friends, who'd come over from, I think it was from Inverness for the weekend.

And so she stayed for a couple of days, and she took a bit of time with the girls. And then she was heading off on Saturday afternoon from Stornoway. So we, I wrote down we, I headed through, because it's me that looks bad in this story, not we.

I headed through to Stornoway, with her and with the girls, and the ferry was going, was it at two o'clock, around about that. So I'm sure I got there at least 20 minutes early.

And about 20 to two, I got to the terminal, she had her tickets, and I said, you just go through there, and you just go through that door, and you'll get onto the boat.

[37 : 26] But the door seemed to be closed. And the door seemed to be firmly closed. So we went through to the desk, and I explained that she had her tickets, could see the ferry, and it was 20 minutes still, before the boat was going to go, but I was told there was a new system, computers had been put in place, and if you check the tickets, you'll see that, actually it's 30 minutes, that you need to be here, if you're going to get on that boat.

So we could see the ferry, it was right in front of us, because she couldn't get onto the ferry. She couldn't get into the ferry. She couldn't board it.

And she was so close. She missed getting on that ferry by such a slim margin, but she and we may as well have missed her by two hours.

Because when the ferry sailed away, she was still on land, and she wasn't in it.

And I tell that story just to, I tell that story just to make the point that there's a huge difference between being in and being out.

[38 : 48] And as Peter concludes this letter, a letter that's addressed to Christians, a letter that's designed to strengthen the brothers and the sisters, as we thought about last week.

Peter, he highlights five areas of spiritual life that we must be careful to be in and not out of. And so I'll just give you the headings, and then we'll work through them in the time that we have.

The first thing that we're to be careful to be in as Christians is, we have to be in Christian fellowship. We have to be in fellowship with other believers, not out on a limb on our own somewhere.

Isolated. It's important to be in fellowship. It's important to be in God's written word, to be in the Bible. No point in us having it on the shelf or having it on an app on our phones that we never open. We have to be in it. The third thing is, we have to be in church. We're told in Hebrews 10, is it, that we're not to get out of the habit of meeting together.

[40 : 00] The means of grace. Church is part of the means of grace. The means through which grace come to us, and it's important that we're in church. Church. The fourth thing is, it's important that we're in the world.

Not to be locked in church as we're Christians. Only spending time with Christians, we need to actually be in the world. We thought about that on Wednesday evening, for those who were there.

And the final thing, the most important thing, is we must be sure that we are in Christ. We are in Christ. So let's just work through these different points in the time that we have.

The first thing Peter highlights here is that we're to be, to be in Christian fellowship. And we get a clear sense in this letter as he comes to the conclusion that Peter, he wasn't on his own.

He wasn't a loner in ministry. He wasn't some maverick just doing his own thing. He's got people around him. He's in Christian fellowship with various people.

[41 : 06] And he highlights two names, and then he kind of opens our eyes to see that there's more people as well. He talks about Silas. He talks about Mark.

And then he talks about the one and others that were to greet with the kiss of love. So first of all, he talks about Silas. He says in verse 12, with the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly.

So who was Silas? Well, Silas, as we can see in this verse, he was a brother to Peter. He wasn't a brother in terms of blood and flesh and family lives.

But he was a brother in the faith. Because Silas was a believer, because Silas had trusted Christ, Silas now had the same father as Peter.

They both prayed, our father. They both looked to the same God. They were bound together as Christian brothers. They had been saved by the blood of Christ.

[42 : 17] They were part of the same spiritual family. So Peter, he talks about Silas and he recognizes him as a brother. And he adds to that that he was a faithful brother.

And Peter said that and if we opened the Bible a bit more widely, we could search around and we could see that Paul also was very quick to recognize that Silas was a faithful brother.

And Timothy, he also speaks about Silas. He spent time with Silas as a faithful brother. Silas had been on missionary journeys with Paul and Timothy and he's here with Peter.

Silas was present at the first General Assembly of the church in Acts 15 when things were starting to become difficult and pressured. Somebody had to go in a mature, steady head who will work for the peace and unity of the church and Silas went.

Acts 15 Fast forward to Acts 16 and we see that Silas takes a beating. He almost loses his life because of the beating that he took for Jesus' sake because he spoke about Jesus and wouldn't be quiet.

[43 : 48] And so Silas and Paul they're thrown into prison with firm instructions and sure keep your heads down and your mouths shut and yet Paul and Silas in the prison they're singing praises they're praying to God they're witnessing they're used to bring about the salvation of the jailer who's about to take his life when the prison doors fly open as God opens them.

And so Silas he's at the cutting edge of a whole lot of things in the gospel narratives and in the book of Acts as Jesus works through these apostles and now towards the end of Peter's life Silas is still there and he's still serving the Lord and he's still helping Peter.

So Peter says I'm thankful for Silas he's a brother he's walked faithfully through the years with his Lord serving his Lord and as Peter talks about Silas as being a help to him at this stage and Silas likely was a scribe Peter would have spoken out the words and Silas has the pen and he's recording this letter that Peter speaks out and when it came to be delivered to these various churches Silas the commentators think would have been the man who went with the letter and greeted the churches.

So Peter he's in fellowship with Silas he's thankful for this faithful brother Silas and then Peter he speaks about Mark some of us know Mark his full name was John Mark and Peter says in verse 13 my son Mark sends greetings so who was Mark well if Silas was notable for his faithfulness and his steadiness Mark is notable for his failure and for a season in his life when he wasn't steady and just as Peter had failed in ministry at one point and he denied Jesus Mark also had failed in ministry and at one stage Mark he deserted

Paul and Barnabas mid mission that's Acts 15 and there was a bit of a fallout between Paul and Barnabas and Mark and for a while Mark was kind of struck off and Paul didn't want anything to do with him but later in life Paul and Mark were reconciled and now is Peter's writing this letter and this is just at the very end of Peter's life maybe two years before he's crucified and where's Mark well the encouraging thing is that Mark Mark who had been notable for his failure and his fall he's with Peter he's active and he's involved in ministry he's walking with the Lord he's serving the Lord and God the Holy Spirit says to

[47 : 33] Peter make sure you mention Mark by name put his name in the letter and so Peter says my son Mark he sends greetings it's a picture of God's grace it's a picture of the the holding power the sustaining grace of Jesus Mark's there so there's Silas and there's Mark that Peter is in Christian fellowship with and then he talks about the one and others verse 14 and he says in verse 14 greet one another with a kiss of love so it's not just Mark and Silas but there's there's a series of one and others we don't know their names and Peter says greet one another with a kiss of love now I get nervous here because I'm not a hugger don't try it at the door and I'm definitely not a kisser a firm handshake is as far as we'll go and so are we being challenged here and instructed to adopt a new thing at the door where we greet one another with a kiss of love well I think we can say dogmatically absolutely certainly not we're not being told to do that that may have been their custom that may have been their culture it's not ours so what are we being taught well I think we're being taught just to be thankful for each other not to take each other for granted and to greet one another in love and to enjoy fellowship in Christ there are some places

Christian fellowship it can't be done they can't meet together they're hiding away in small numbers underground they'd love to be together but they can't be it was a couple of years where all we wanted was to be together and we weren't allowed to be together we're standing in empty rooms with cameras wishing for the day that we could enjoy Christian fellowship and have more than half an hour to walk up a hill well that day's come and we are being encouraged here to enjoy fellowship in Christ share life with one another and so we have this picture here of Christian fellowship and it's a picture that we see across the breadth of Christian fellowships wherever we go in every Christian fellowship there are the Silas's there are those who have walked steady through life faithful brothers and sisters we've got

Silas's in our lives just these rock steady characters never change always bright and then in every Christian fellowship there are Marks there are Peters people who are loved people who have great enthusiasm people who may have made huge mistakes who may have gone off the radar for a period but by God's grace are drawn back in and I find in Christian fellowship and service and we need the Silas's and we need the Marks and God often uses the Marks God often uses the Marks more than he uses the Silas's so let's always be eager to bring the Marks back in as Peter did in this letter he doesn't go silent he puts his name in there because God makes sure that he does so let's always be eager to welcome the

Marks back in and to any Marks you might be watching at a distance or standing at the edge staying back on the periphery of things be willing to come in don't hide away don't separate yourself from Christian fellowship be willing to come in be willing for the Lord to use you you and I need Christian fellowship because we can't do this on our own think about the the old illustration I don't

know who who came up with it originally but it's gone through generations and gone from pulpit to pulpit but think of the the bit of coal that's in the fire and in the fire amongst the other bits of coal it's glowing it's burning hot take that hot bit of coal place it in the hearth 20 seconds later it's grey half a minute later you can pick it up it's cold put it back into the fire it's alive again the picture of Christian fellowship we need

Christian fellowship and Peter here he talks about being in Christian fellowship and by application we need to be in Christian fellowship the second thing is we need to be in God's written word and Peter there says I have written to you briefly encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God stand fast in it that's verse 12 and we have the teaching here that we're to be in God's written word Peter writes this letter and it's a precious letter it's a letter that has encouraged and edified many people in many places over the years when you think about it isn't it good that Peter never got to go to all these places isn't it good that

[54 : 25] Peter wasn't given a private jet he didn't get to go to Pontius Galatia Cappadocia Asia and Bithynia I mean if he'd gone I'm sure he'd have had a nice visit I'm sure there'd have been a time of great blessing but once he'd left all he would have is happy memories instead Peter writes why does he write because God the Holy Spirit moved him to write and so these congregations they received the written word of God through Peter the apostle that Jesus was using and speaking through and they had this letter this physical letter and they had it in their hands somebody stood up at a lector and they read it and I'm sure they read it week after week after week after week and this letter it was passed around and it travelled from Pontius to the

Glacier Cappadocia Asia Bithynia and then it went much further than that this letter went further than Peter could ever have imagined because it went from Rome in AD 65 when he wrote it it's still travelling because we're sitting here this morning and we have this letter from Peter in AD 2023 in North Harris and we might ask the question how is it possible that this letter could have survived so long how could this letter in fact how could this book the Bible have survived for so long when there's been so many campaigns to destroy it and when there's so many people who hate this book so much how could it have survived all these years and travelled so far and the answer is it's God's written word and just as this letter was used to bring encouragement to believers all these years ago it's still been used to bring encouragement to us today and just as the true grace of God was received in Turkey all these years ago through

Peter's written testimony we still receive grace in daily packages morning by morning as we open as we read as we meditate upon God's written word you know if you're feeling low spiritually today if you're feeling weak if you're feeling far away from God if you're feeling spiritually sick almost certainly it's because we either haven't been or we haven't much been in God's written word 99% of the pastoral issues that I deal with and 99% of the issues in my life that I wrestle with are dying to neglect God's written word and these

Christians that Peter was writing to they were about to hit hard times already they were in hard times but they were about to hit really hard times a storm of persecution was coming under this new emperor called Nero and if they were to stand fast and not be blown over they needed to be in the written word of God and for you and I we're not in persecution so let's not feel sorry for ourselves we're not in that place but the culture is becoming increasingly hostile and if we are to stand fast if we are to be healthy strong Christians we need to be in the written word of God Sunday morning for 30 minutes will not sustain you won't keep you steady we need to be in

God's written word Sunday morning Sunday night Wednesday night and all the days in between the children often sing through the wall in the Sunday school read your Bible pray every day and you'll grow grow grow people and I think Peter would have loved singing that song I'll swear you it just now we need to be in Christian fellowship we need to be in God's written word the third thing we need to be in church verse 13 says she who is in Babylon chosen together with you sends you her greetings and so Paul not Paul Peter sorry he's writing this letter and he refers to she who is in Babylon chosen together with you sends you her greetings the obvious question for us is who on earth is he talking about who is she because it's a bit of a mysterious thing that

[60 : 24] Peter says here who is she that he refers to and some of the scholars spend a lot of pages saying that she is probably his wife and Peter had a wife we know he had a wife because Jesus healed his mother in law you don't have a wife and he must be talking about she his wife but anybody who has a wife knows that if you call her she you do it at your own risk you don't refer to her as she she has a name and she will remind you of that very quickly if you refer to her as she

and so I think it's highly unlikely that Peter is referring to his wife the most likely explanation is the church in a particular place and if you're not convinced of that you could cross over to 2nd John and 2nd

John when John writes his letter the second letter he talks about the chosen lady and her children whom I love and the truth and he's speaking about the church and Peter is just using the same coding here he's writing to the church in all these wee places and he sends greetings from Babylon and we'll talk more about that in just a second but Peter is reminding these Christians that they are in the church yes they're a small congregation as they receive this letter as they're scattered throughout this area that we now know as Turkey and likely these small groups of Christians they would have felt vulnerable they would have felt fearful and very weak and fragile but Peter says to them don't forget that you're part of something much bigger you are in the church of Christ and it's growing so be encouraged and it's important for us to remember that if we are Christians we are in the church and the church is not defined by a denominational badge the church is not defined by a local area the church is not limited to North Harris free church that's one tiny little trace of the church in this particular place we are part of something much bigger and the church is not defined by our style of worship whether we use a piano or not or whether we sing psalms or psalms and hymns or whatever our worship style is that's not what defines the church the church doesn't belong to us the church belongs to Jesus we are his church and he has chosen us if you're a

Christian this morning you might feel like a failure as I often do God has chosen you if you're not a Christian this morning you're sitting here not because you decided after having your rice krispies to come and sit in this building you're sitting here because God has chosen to put you here to invite you to trust Christ and become part of his church the church is Christ's church he's chosen us we are his bride he loves us and he has promised to come back to this world and claim us as his own and take us to be with him eternally so if we're Christians we're in the church and remember the church of

Christ it will never die the gates of hell may rage against the church and she may be persecuted and she may be driven underground for a period as she is in many countries but no matter how hellish the attacks become the church will survive so today although we see decline in Scotland and although we can come here especially in the evening and be discouraged by a whole load of empty seats the church is growing may not be in Scotland the church is growing and the church will continue to grow a message from Angus and Kirsty yesterday they went to church for the first time in the poll five people came forward in the first service to become

[65 : 39] Christians that's normal church is growing across the world we're seeing the church growing there's more Christians in the world just now than there ever has been and the church will continue to grow and if we fast forward to the end of time we're given a picture in Revelation as John sees it in Revelation and we see every tribe and tongue and nation a number that can't be counted it's the church of Christ and if you're a Christian you're in it you're part of it and so Peter he reminds us and he encourages us that we are in the church you're not on your own so don't sit alone on your own in some wee room come and be in the church we're in Christian fellowship we are to be in

God's written word the fourth thing is we're to be in the world and we're almost done she verse 13 who's in Babylon chosen together with you sends you her greetings the question now is where is Babylon and at the time of writing Babylon was a ghost town it had been destroyed and been destroyed long since so Peter's not writing and putting the geographical coordinates on the back of his letter he's speaking spiritually Babylon was the symbol of the world it was the symbol of a place that was opposed to God and Peter he's writing from a place that was known for being opposed to God scholars think he was in Rome and so he's in the darkest place and yet in the darkest place there's a church and Peter says this wee church in

Babylon she sends you her greetings she's praying for you we can imagine these Christians receiving this in the places that they were in that weren't as persecuted as Rome we can imagine them saying isn't it hard to be a church in Rome and the answer was yes very hard wasn't it dangerous it was massively dangerous and yet that church in Rome she's thinking of us she is she's praying for us she is and so that church in Rome was an encouragement and it was also an example it was actually an answer to prayer because remember in John 17 Jesus prays for his disciples and he prays that they would not be taken out of the world but that they would be kept

protected in it so his disciples Jesus wanted his disciples to be in the world but not of it distinct bright salty and so this church that Peter writes from they're they're in the heart of the world they're in the darkest place but they are they are light in it that's our calling people you know if you if you follow any kind of mission literature from the global church you can read now about Scotland being one of the darkest places in the whole world we are I think now classified as an unreached people but we're here and our calling is to be light in the darkness our calling is to be in the world but not of it so there needs to be a church in Scotland there needs to be bright salty Christians brave Christians in Scotland and that's our calling and so we come together in this church building to worship so we can be encouraged so that we can be strengthened and then we go out there into the world to tell people about Jesus to show people Jesus and we'll touch on this tonight

Mark will speak about this tonight as will all I'm sure we need to be in the workplace we need to be Christians on sports fields in schools in colleges in universities in factories in shops in hospitals there needs to be people who know Jesus and have the determination and courage and humility to want to make him known Alstro Begg talks about the us for no more close the door problem that the church so often has you know we like to come into a room three or four of us all the same we think the same that we dress the same we're comfortable with each other us for no more close the door it's not what we're called to do we're called to open the door and go out we're to be in the world finally we're to be in Christ greet one another verse 14 with a kiss of love peace to all of you who are in

[71 : 40] Christ and these last two words are the most important words in the whole letter in Christ Peter speaks about grace in verse 12 and peace how can we know grace and how can we know peace how can we experience God's favour and his blessing how can we receive grace well we need to be in Christ because he's the sole supplier of grace and how can we experience peace with God how can we receive peace in this world that's full of trouble how can we have peace with brothers and sisters in the Lord how can we be sure that when we go from this world we're going to a place of peace and not a place of torment we need to be in

Christ so are you in Christ it's great that you're in church but the church chairs will not save you are you in Christ are you believing in him it's not enough to know about him we need to believe in him it's not enough to know that there is grace that there is this cross where a saviour hung and died for those who will believe in him it's not enough to know about that we have to go to the cross we have to confess our sins we have to come to the saviour we have to ask for grace we need to be in Christ and Peter as he finishes is asking us this question he is extending this invitation will you not come to

Jesus will you not be in Christ let's pray heavenly father we thank you for this letter we thank you for the power of it we thank you for the challenge of it we thank you for the relevance of it we thank you for the gospel richness of it and we pray as we finish that we would all be in Christ we pray that none of us would come so close to Jesus and yet step back from him we pray that none of us would see a cross but think it's to do with someone else we pray that none of us would hear about the invitation to have grace and forgiveness and peace and yet not open our hands and not open our hearts may we all today we pray be found in Christ we pray this in

Jesus name amen we'll sing to conclude the hymn what gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer there is no more for heaven to give he is my joy my righteousness and freedom my steadfast love my deep and boundless peace to this I hope my hope is only Jesus for my life is only what he is oh how strange and divine

I can sing all is mine yet not I but who Christ in me night is dark but I am not forsaken for by my side the saviour he will stay I labor on in weakness and rejoice too for in my need his power is displayed to this I hope my shepherd will defend me through the deepest valley he will lead all the night has been worn and I shall overcome yet not I but who Christ in me all which I dread

[77 : 18] I know I am forgiven the future the future sure the price it has been made for Jesus bled and suffered for my time and he was raised to overthrow the pain to this thy home my sin has been defeated Jesus no and ever is my free all the chains are released I can sing I am free yet not I but who Christ in me in breath I long to follow Jesus for he has said that he will bring me home and day by day

I know he will renew me until I stand with joy before the throne till it's my own my own wish every Jesus all the glory ever more to live when the race is complete till my earth shall repeat yet not I but

who Christ in me yet not I but through my earth shall repeat yet not I but through Christ in me and I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more Amen