

19.11.23 am

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Date: 19 November 2023

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning. Welcome to the service this morning. I don't think I see any visitors with us this morning, but it's good for us all to come together and to worship God.

The notices have been on the screen before the service began. I'm not going to read through all of the notices. I'll just highlight a couple of them. First, to say that the evening service tonight is at 6th usual time. The difference this evening is it's a Gaelic service. Usually the Gaelic will be the end of the month.

This month it's the third Sunday because there's a Presbytery camp next week and they're going to come and join us in the evening service. Well, in the morning and the evening, so you'll see more about that in just a moment.

But evening service at 6th, Gaelic service, the Reverend Donald Dolan MacDonald, who is a good friend of the congregation now. So we look forward to ministry through him this evening.

Youth Fellowship. It's good to hear that there's quite a number going to Youth Fellowship. So that will be on tonight at half past seven. So please come along to that and pray for that if you, like I, are long past that age.

[1 : 09] In the course of the week, you see the usual things. Ladies Fellowship, Little Fishers, Road to Recovery, Prayer Meeting, Gaelic Playgroup, all usual time, usual places. You've got the details there. On Thursday night, we have a congregational Thanksgiving meal.

It starts at half past six. There's a sign-up sheet in the foyer for food contributions, team tour on duty, and everybody is most welcome to come along to that. It's always good to have a meal together.

It's very biblical to have a meal together as well. So be encouraged to come along to that. There's no jam and connect this week because of the long weekend. I've got a question mark here about Rooted. No Rooted either.

So children, you can take note of that. Service is next Sunday. I'll be taking the morning service myself, God willing. The evening service will be taken, I may lead it, but the preacher will be Phil Pickett, who's a minister in training in Carloway.

The Presbytery Camp goes from the 24th to the 27th of November. So that's Friday through till Sunday. And Phil, I think, will be doing most of the talks over the course of the camp.

[2 : 20] And so he'll take the final talk, really, within the church on Sunday evening. So it's an all-age service. Young people who don't usually come in the evening. I mean, I doubt you're in bed by quarter past seven, but please be encouraged to come along next Sunday evening for the evening service when there's a much younger, fresher minister than me going to be present.

And then they'll have a fellowship afterwards as well. So testimony will be shared at that. So that's next Sunday. The final thing to note in terms of the camp is that if you are able to make any donations of home baking cakes, whatever, they would be very gratefully received.

So you can speak to Gordon about that if you're able to help in that way. These are all the notices that I'm going to highlight. The rest you've had the chance to go through yourselves. So let's now worship God.

Let's sing to God's praise. And we sing the words on the screen, the hymn, Your Grace, that leads the sinner home from death to life forever.

So in just a moment, we'll stand to sing to God's praise. The grace of Jesus, the sinner home from death to life forever.

[4 : 01] And sings the song of righteousness by blood and blood by men.

Your grace that reaches far and wide to every tribe and nation.

The grace of Jesus, the sinner home from death to life forever.

The grace of Jesus, the sinner home from death to life forever. Through grace that I cannot explain, not by my earthly wisdom.

The Prince of life without a sting Was traded for this thing By grace I am redeemed By grace I am restored And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord When grace cries out and overflow My song reserved forever For grace will see me welcome full To walk beside my Savior By grace I am redeemed

[6 : 17] By grace I am restored And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord By grace I am redeemed By grace I am restored And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord Let's unite our hearts in prayer Let's pray Heavenly Father we thank you for this morning

We thank you for this day, your day We thank you for this hour that we have set aside At the beginning of this day To join together in worship We thank you Lord for each other For the fact that we are able to meet in freedom in this way For the way that we are able to lift up the name of Jesus And not have to fear an outburst by authorities We don't have to fear persecution We don't have to fear that this meeting will be broken up We thank you for the time that we have set aside The desire to be in this place To be in the place of worship And even for those who may not have the desire this morning Who may have come here reluctantly Or out of a sense of routine Out of a sense of duty Even for those who may have been taken here against their will We thank you that in your sovereign ordering things in our lives you have allowed us to be here you have brought us to this place and we thank you that as we've begun this service we have been reminded we have sung of the wonder of your grace that that wonderful thing that separates

Christianity from every other religion every other mindset every other way we look around in this world and we see so many people trying to work hard to receive approval to earn a place we look around at different religions and we see people doing exactly the same thing working hard to try to win the favour of a God who is distant and yet we thank you that as we come into your presence at this time and as we gather in the name of Jesus we see the one who is full of grace and truth and we thank you Lord Jesus for telling us the truth about who we are that we are sinners we know that in our hearts although we may not have had the language to be able to express that if it were not for your love for us and your revelation to us so we Lord we confess we agree with your diagnosis on our lives we are those who are sinners we sin in thought we sin in word we sin in deed and we confess that and we thank you that even now we have the opportunity to confess our sin whether it's sin that we have become aware of in the last few minutes whether it's sin that is carried over from last night whether it's sin that we are conscious of from the last week since we met in this way before or whether it's sin that haunts us from years back we thank you that we have the opportunity Lord that we have the the command to to confess our sins and as we confess our sin we thank you that we are promised that we will be forgiven we thank you for the the line in that hymn that we've sung the prince of life without a stain was traded for the sinner and that's where our hope is that's where our confidence is not in ourselves but in Jesus the prince of life the one who is perfect the one who is perfect the one who knew no sin and yet who became sin for us the lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world and we thank you that as we confess our sin we are promised that our sin is taken away and we are accepted we are received we are blessed in him when we believe so help us we pray give us faith that we would believe stir our hearts

Lord we ask that our hearts would be touched open our eyes that we would see our need of Christ as saviour and the sufficiency and the beauty of all that he has done on our behalf so hear our prayers Lord and help us to to worship as we meditate upon your great love for us that praise would rise up from within us and overflow that we would sing with our lips and that we would praise you from our hearts help us Lord we pray to live lives that are worthy of the name that we have as Christians for those of us who are Christians and Lord we pray that you would enable us not only to be those who receive your grace but help us to be those who share that grace to speak about Jesus to profess that our faith is in him we're conscious that we're living in a community even where fewer and fewer people understand what Jesus has done for them and what they need to do in response in order to be saved and how will they know if we don't tell them so give us opportunity Lord and give us courage we pray that we would reach out with that message of grace and not only with our words but with our lives we pray that our lives would be lives which overflow with the grace and the love of Jesus so that the way that we live would not jar against the words that we speak help us we pray to walk humbly with you and to be ready always to share the hope that we have within us we pray

Father for the the presbytery camp as we've given notice of that we thank you that it's a camp that's that's full up with young people who want to go and others perhaps who want to go also and we ask that you would work in the hearts of each one we pray that you would be with Phil as he prepares and all those who will lead talks over that weekend we pray that you would speak through them and that these young people would be reached with the gospel in the early years that they would that they would repent that they would believe and that they would walk with you so we pray for that camp and we ask that it would be a weekend where there's blessing a weekend where they are safe when they enjoy being with each other and where they are open in their hearts to hear and to receive the message of the gospel we pray for that message as it goes out across the world we think of the the meeting that we were at on Tuesday of last week when we heard from OM and we pray for every nation where there is endeavours to go out with the gospel we're conscious that there are many nations where your word is not yet translated help those who translate help those who distribute bibles and we ask that the good news of the gospel would go out to all nations as your word teaches us that it will in due course we pray into your will and we ask

[14 : 45] Lord that you would be at work we pray for countries that we have a burden for that we're connected to we think of Nepal we pray for Malawi we pray for Romania we pray for the DPRK we ask Lord that in these places and others that the light of Christ would break through and that there would be many people who are drawn to Jesus we pray for places in the world where it seems so dark at present and especially we think of the Middle East where there is such suffering bring peace we pray bring an end to that war and we ask Lord that the people in that land especially that the scales would fall from their eyes and that they would see that Jesus is the Redeemer that he is the Saviour that he is the Messiah who has come and who has lived and who has died and who has risen to give eternal life to all who believe in him help us Lord we pray especially those in particular need especially those who are absent we think of those who are in hospital those who are struggling with illness we commit them to you in prayer and we ask

Lord that you would minister to them we pray for Mary Morris and Mary Latham who's had a difficult week this week we ask Father that your hand would be upon her that you would bring healing that you would sustain her and the family through this difficult period we pray on for Nurse Margaret we thank you for a small improvement and we ask that you would speed that and that soon we would be able to see her back amongst us in this place and we ask that you would be near to Kenny at this time and all of the family as they come under the pressure of that we pray for Nanny we thank you that she's got a place in Liverpool in the home there we ask that it would be a place where she knows your presence and we ask that you would help her and sustain her through this period and all others those who are at home those who are in hospital those who struggle in a place that is hidden from us with many anxieties many cares we thank you that we come to the God who calls us to cast all our cares upon him because you're the God who cares for us hear our prayers take away our sin we ask all this in Jesus name and for his sake

Amen boys and girls would you like to come forward please how are you all today good good good week you all have a good week good stuff good well I'm going to tell you this morning just a just a wee bit about a letter put your hand on have you ever received a letter yeah and have they been interesting letters Kyle not interesting just like letters from a girl that you've been speaking to like a pen pal girlfriend pen pal no no so you get letters from different what kind of letters do you get Henry happy birthday cards Fraser or maybe sometimes you get work letters or something what job do you have well but you get work letters don't you that's the brown letters that come isn't it that's when you see the folks the parents in the house and a letter comes through and they'll see a white one and they'll say that looks interesting then a brown one comes oh what do these letters the brown letters mean these do mean bills Callum what were you going to say your Your gift your cut Networked PG every year doesn't you yeah brown letters usually mean bells. So we get all kinds of letters, don't we? And what do we get as it's coming close to Christmas? We get, what do we get? Quiet down here. Somebody over here is trying to tell me. Begging letters. I was thinking of Christmas cards, but yeah. Okay.

I got a letter this week and it's a letter that I didn't recognise the kind of print and I was looking at it and I was trying to figure out what it was. And the letter, it came from a government department. Ooh, exactly. So I saw it and I thought, what on earth is this? I recognised it and it was a government department and that was the letterhead and I was thinking, I don't know, I don't know what on earth this is. And what the government department said is pretty much this. They said,

there are some people who are looking for you. Oh. There's a company, I think they were called Ajon or something, and they're trying to track you down because they've lost contact with you. And so this letter that you've got, it may be for you, but it may not be for you. And in order to find out whether it's for you, then you need to phone this number and you need to have a conversation. And so what should I do? What do you think? Put the letter in the bin and not listen to it. Now that's interesting. And this is taking me in a different twist to the children's thought that I wasn't going to go down. But maybe this is going to devolve in the course. Fraser?

[21 : 03] Because, because, because maybe you could have that letter, like the paper shredder thing. Put it in the paper shredder. Put it in the paper shredder. What do you think, Emily?

Call the number. It could be a scam. But it might not be a scam. Do you know what I did? I called the number. And do you know what it was about? Well, do you know what they said? They said, can you first confirm your name? So I said, my name's David MacLeod. And they said, could you please tell us your national national insurance number? Don't tell them that.

And I thought, and I thought, this is a wee bit risky, but you know, it's not a, it's not a highly confidential number. So I gave them the national insurance number. And then they said, we've got a couple of security questions. And we were wondering if you could answer them.

So I thought, hmm, it's a bit risky, but they sounded quite official. And so I answered the security questions and I got the security questions right. And do you know what they said then? They said, you were paying into a pension 20 years ago and we've lost track on you. And so in an address that I was at maybe 20 years ago, there was letters coming and the people on the address would just go in the bin. And so I was paying a wee bit of money into a pension every month. And they'd lost track of me. And what they were saying is if you ever reach 65, then it's okay. We don't need no more questions. We'll go on to a quarter to 12 otherwise. They said, if you reach 65, it won't be a lot of money, but there's, there's a wee bit of money. And because you've contacted us and because you've confirmed your details and I checked it all out, it's all fine. It's not a scam. They said, you'll get what you're due. So it was good of the company to come looking for me, wasn't it? Because they'd been looking and looking and looking and they couldn't find it. And then they wrote to the government and the government came looking for me. And then they sent this letter that sent me back to them. And what I found is that there's something that's good that's to come to me at some point in the future. So they came and they were looking for me.

What does God do with us? Well, sin makes us lost, doesn't it? We were praying in the prayer about sin. And sin takes us far away from God. But is God okay with us being far away from him? Is God okay for us being far away from him and lost? Does that make him happy?

[24 : 15] No. So what did he do? Did he send a letter? Not really. He sent the Bible through lots of different people. So that's kind of a letter. But he sent more than a letter. Who did God send to look for us? Finley? Jesus. And Jesus came all the way from heaven to this world to seek and to save sinners. And what does Jesus offer us? Does he offer us a few pounds when we're 65? Or does he offer us more than that? What does he offer us? Heaven. And our sins forgiven. And life that lasts forever. And what do we have to do together? Henry? Believe.

Believe. And? Hazel? Trust. Trust. And? Pray. Pray. Imagine Jesus came all the way from heaven. And he has all this amazing blessings to give you. And he's given you a letter. And he's come to this world because he so loved you. And you just ignored him. What would happen then? Would we get heaven? No. It's just be like this letter here. If I just ignored it and threw it in the bin and shredded it. I don't know what would happen to the wee bit of money and the pension. But it wouldn't come to me. Because they wouldn't know where I am. And if we ignore Jesus, then we won't get heaven. But if we trust Jesus, if we believe in Jesus, if we pray and we say to him, please forgive my sin and please come into my life and please give me everlasting life, then he'll give it to us. So let's pray and speak to him now.

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you love us. We thank you that you were not content to leave us lost in our sin. But we thank you, Jesus, that you came into this world to seek and to save sinners like us. We thank you for the Bible, which is like an amazing letter where you tell us about your love for us. And we thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came, that the word, the Bible became flesh. It was human.

You were human. And you came into this world and lived for us and died for us and rose from the dead and promised that anybody who believes will have everlasting life. So help us not to ignore you, not to not believe. But we ask that every one of us, whether we're young or whether we're

older, that we would believe, that we would pray, that we would call upon the name of the Lord and that we would be saved. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing now and we're going to sing about coming to Jesus. 396 in Mission Praise. Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come.

[27 : 37] Amen. Amen. God bless me, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. I come. Just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark love, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lord, O Sabbath, of God, I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lord, O Sabbath, with many a conflict, in many a doubt, I come. I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lord, O Lamb of God, I come. I come.

Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come. I come. Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come. I come.

has broken every fire down now to be thine yea thine alone O Lamb of God I come I come Okay boys and girls, if you head to Sunday school and remember to pray for them as they go If we could turn please to 1 John chapter 3 1 John chapter 3 we'll read from verse 28 through to the end of well chapter 2 verse 28 through to the end of chapter 3 this is God's word

[31 : 31] And now dear children, continue in him so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming If you know that he is righteous you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God and that is what we are The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known but we know that when he appears we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure Everyone who sins breaks the law In fact, sin is lawlessness But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins and in him is no sin No one who lives in him keeps on sinning No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray

He who does what is right is righteous just as he is righteous He who does what is sinful is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from the beginning The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work No one who is born of God will continue to sin because God's seed remains in him He cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God This is how we know who the children of God are and who are the children of the devil Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God nor is anyone who does not love his brother This is the message you heard from the beginning We should love one another Do not be like Cain who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother And why did he murder him?

Because his own actions were evil and his brothers were righteous Do not be surprised, my brothers if the world hates you We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers Anyone who does not love remains in death Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him This is how we know what love is Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him how can the love of God be in him?

Dear children let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth This then is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us For God is greater than our hearts and he knows everything Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask because we obey his commands and do what pleases him and this is his command to believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ and to love one another as he commanded us Those who obey his commands live in him and he in them and this is how we know that he lives in us We know it by the spirit he gave us Amen And may God bless that reading of his word to us We're going to sing again now to God's praise We'll sing from Psalm 42

Psalm 42 and we will sing verses 5 and 6 well, from verse 4 the second half of verse 4 as it's marked in the English to the end of verse 5 I'll read the verses in English With them and to God's house I went with voice of joy and praise yea with the multitude that kept the solemn holy days O why art thou cast down my soul why in me so dismayed trust God for I shall praise him yet his countenance is my need We sing in Gaelic we'll remain seated to sing to God's praise what

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CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[39 : 56] And let's ask for God's help as we go there. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.
We thank you that you've promised that your word is powerful.

Your word cuts through to our hearts. Your word will not come back to you empty, but it's powerful
when it will achieve all that you determine it will achieve in our hearts today.

And so we pray that you would be at work in the power of the Holy Spirit, that you would be
convicting us, Lord, of our sin, that you would be showing us Jesus, your son, our savior, and that
each one of us would be trusting in him.

And for those of us, Lord, who are trusting in Jesus, we pray that you would be at work through your
word to sanctify us, to make us more like Jesus, that we would live lives which are pleasing to you.
Not because we think that will save us, we know that the work of salvation is done, but because it's
an expression of our love for you and our desire to be used of you to bring glory to your name.

[41 : 08] So be at work, Lord, we pray amongst us here. We pray for Anthony as he preaches in
Leverborough this morning, that you would put the words in his mouth, that you would speak
through him, Lord, to your people.

And we pray for the young ones as well, those in the Sunday school, as they hear the simple
message of the gospel, that it would penetrate the heart and that they would believe.

And for those in the creche who don't yet have the capacity to hear and to understand, we pray that
they would feel and that they would know the love of God for them, even through those who care for
them at this time.

So hear our prayers, help us to give attention to your word, not to be distracted. And we pray for the
help of the Holy Spirit in speaking and listening and responding.

And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I think it was on Wednesday I got the phone call
from the doctor.

[42 : 14] And it was a phone call I get from time to time, as many of you will as well, asking that I
come into the surgery just for the regular blood test, just to make sure everything is okay.

And for most of you, you're braver than me and that doesn't bother you. It's just a thing. But I don't
like needles. I do not like needles. And I can think of many things that I would rather do this coming
Wednesday than go and get a blood test.

But I realize it's important. And so I'll go. Because the result of a blood test shows up through the
results of what's going on inside.

So if there's any problems that you can't see on the outside, then a blood test will give indicators
that there's problems deep within. And if a blood test comes back and it's clear, then it just gives
confidence to all concerned that everything that's hidden, everything that the heart level, everything
that's within, it's okay.

Now, John in this letter, as I was thinking through this book, in a way, it's like a call to come into
surgery.

[43 : 39] And through this letter, John, as he's inspired by the Holy Spirit, as he's led by the Holy
Spirit, he runs through a series of tests in order to check us at heart level.

Okay, John? We've got nurses and doctors galore in here, so if you needn't take a breath, then it's
fine.

Anyway, we're talking about everything. We've got okay on the inside and doctors and tests and
everything. So, John, you look like you're recovering and things are okay now.

But in this letter, we have John as God leads him, and he's running a series of tests that get to us at
the heart level.

And as we've gone through this letter, certainly as I've gone through this letter, there's verses,
there's sections in this little book that make us uncomfortable.

[44 : 58] There's a tension between the fact that as Christians we are not to sin, and yet the reality of what we know in our lives that we do sin.

So there's a continual tension in this book between the way that we should live and the way that we do live. And we're driven time and time again to Jesus as the Savior.

That's the intention. But as we go through sections, nevertheless, it's uncomfortable. Sometimes we're going through a section and we think, why can't we just turn to Matthew or Mark or Luke and focus on a parable rather than go through the discomfort of this procedure that John's putting us through.

But we have to go through it. Even though it's uncomfortable, it's important. Because this letter is a test.

And this letter is a test that enables us to know whether or not we are okay eternally. Whether we're okay at heart level.

[46 : 08] Whether or not we have eternal life. And that's the most important thing today. None of us know what's happening in the week ahead.

None of us know how long we have. But all of us know that there will come a time when we will pass from time into eternity. And there is heaven and there is hell.

We will eternally be with the Lord. And know the blessings of heaven. If we are trusting in him, we will know eternal life. If we are in Christ.

And the alternative is horrendous. If we die without Christ. We are separated from him. We are separated from all the Lord's people.

We are separated from every blessing that comes through the common grace that we receive. In and through Jesus. So this is the most crucial question that we will ever have to face.

[47 : 14] This is an important test. And John, he asks a series of questions in every one of these chapters. And we come to three questions today. And the first question is a repeat from last Sunday morning, which we didn't get past.

And I'm going to go to it again. Following Brownlow North's example. Let me begin this message today by asking the question that John implies within the first section of chapter 3.

And the tail end of chapter 2. And it's the question, are you born again? A week has passed.

And God in his patience has allowed us to be asked this question again. Are you born again?

And I know that there will be people in this room and there will be people who are watching at a distance. And your profession at this moment in time is that you're not born again. Because you're not professing to be trusting in Christ.

[48 : 18] When the large table is set, you'll sit at a distance from it. So this is a question of great relevance to people in this room. Are you born again?

John addresses the readers six times in this short section as children. He addresses the readers as those who are born of him, of Jesus.

As those who are born of God. That's a phrase he uses twice. And he uses that kind of language because he is trying to get us to face the reality and the importance of being born again.

Eternal life is a gift that only comes to children of God. Eternal life is a gift that is only received by those who are twice born.

So are you born again? It was birthdays this week past.

[49 : 24] It was Anna's birthday in Glasgow so she was out with Peggy for her dinner. It was Florane's birthday this week past and she celebrated it by selling, not selling, but by handing out snacks to the children at Jam Club and making sure they were consuming the snacks in a polite and orderly way.

Two birthdays. All of us have birthdays. And we can open up a calendar and we can point to the day that we were born. We can pinpoint that date.

But some of us have two birthdays. There's the day that we were born. We can identify that. And then there was the day or there was the month or there was the season when we were born again.

Perhaps we can't pinpoint that date for some of us. Tim Keller, the late Tim Keller, he tells a story about a mother and a son who were in a war zone.

And they realised that they were in grave danger. They realised that the likelihood of them surviving for any kind of period in this war zone was slim.

[50 : 41] And so they hatched a plan to escape from that war zone. And in these days they could escape by hot air balloons. And so they actioned the plan.

And one night, the mother and the son, under the cover of darkness, they were in the hot air balloon. It rose up and it began to travel across the airspace from a place of danger to a place of safety.

So at night, under the cover of darkness, they rose up into the air, still in airspace that was dangerous. By the morning, when they landed, they were safe.

Now at what point did they cross from danger to safety in terms of the airspace? They didn't know. They couldn't see. They couldn't tell. They just knew that they'd gone from danger to safety.

And for some of us, that's our testimony. That's our experience. We've come from being lost to being saved. We've come from death to life. We don't know exactly when.

[51 : 46] We can't explain exactly how. But we just know that once we were lost, now we are found. Once we were blind, now we can see.

We're born again. So are you born again? Have you come to Jesus?

Like Nicodemus did in John chapter 3. He looked a lot like many of us. He was religious. The church goer.

In fact, he was the guy that stood up and gave the lesson. But he wasn't born again. He knew it. So he came to Jesus. He listened to Jesus.

He believed in Jesus. And at some point over the next year or two, he believed. Because bit by bit, we see him and we hear him speaking up for Jesus.

[52 : 48] And when Jesus died on the cross, Nicodemus is the one who steps forward with Joseph of Arimathea to profess that his faith is in Christ. Maybe there's someone here.

And just as Nicodemus was being drawn to Jesus, you're being drawn to Jesus. Listen to him. Believe in him.

Come to the same cross. Confess. Confess your sin. And be born again. Be born again.

Second question. Do you love your brother? And when John talks about a brother, as it's got it in the NIV 1984, it's brother and sister.

So the question is, do you love your brother and sister in Christ? It's one of these diagnostic questions.

[53 : 53] How can you know you've got eternal life? Well, you must be born again. You need to have two birthdays. You need to be believing in Jesus. How can you know that you're born again? Well, you must have love for your brother and your sister.

Listen. I went through the 90s listening to a band called Oasis. And it was a band that was dominated by two brothers.

And in 2009, they split up the band. And yet now, 14 years later, people are still talking about a reunion.

Every year, there's another campaign. There's another series of questions. There's pressure to try to get a reunion. There's this continual interest in a reunion.

And the question is, why is it that they're asking for a reunion in this band and not other bands that have come and gone? And the answer is, because they're brothers.

[54 : 53] People want to see, not just a band reunited, they want to see two brothers brought back together because they're part of the same family. And if you scan down in chapter 3 from verses 11 to verse 18, they're a logical step on from the last point.

Think about it. If we are born again, God is now our Father. And all who are children of God, all the other people who are born again and who call God their Father, they are our brothers and they are our sisters.

So we belong to the same family and so we should love each other. Verse 11, John says, this is the message you have heard from the beginning. We should love one another.

And so John makes that very clear. This is the instruction. This is what we should be doing. We should be loving each other. And then John gives two illustrations. One positive, one negative, to demonstrate for us what it looks like to love one another.

And the summary of this argument within this point is, John says to us, do not be like Cain, point one, but do be like Christ.

[56 : 14] You want to know how to love your brother and your sister? Do not be like Cain, but do be like Christ. So first of all, don't be like Cain, verse 12. Do not be like Cain, says John, who belonged to the evil one.

He's from a different family, see? And he murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brothers were righteous. And if you want to go and read the story, you can do that in Genesis 4.

My time is not going to allow me to go there this morning. But that's the instruction that John gives here. He says, don't be like Cain. And we might read this and think, well, this seems like an over-the-top example.

This is a bit like, you know, opening a page in a newspaper, showing us a story of a gruesome murder and saying, turn away from that, don't be like that. We might want to say to John, why are you saying this to me?

I would never murder a brother or a sister. I'd never be like Cain. But remember, if we go from Genesis 4 through to Matthew chapter 6, Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches you and I that murder may not mean holding the knife with a physical act, but murder can be done at the tongue level.

[57 : 40] Murder is something that can happen at the heart level because when you and I allow anger to burn against a brother or a sister, then the first stage is anger starts to burn.

If we don't deal with it, bitterness starts to build. Love is then stifled and murder is in the heart. You can destroy somebody with your words.

in gossip, in critical judgment of somebody else. Just as quickly as you can take a knife or a gun. I've seen reputations and lives being destroyed because of untrue, harsh, critical words being spoken.

words that have gone out and can't be taken back. John says in verse 13, don't be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.

[58 : 51] And in verse 13, John is showing us that hate, that emotion that drove Cain, hate is of this world. and to give hate a space to abide in our hearts, it's destructive.

It's destructive. You know, if we became aware that there was a ship that was looking to harbor in Tarbert and it was full, packed full of drugs and the intention was that these drugs would be sold to our young people here for their consumption.

if we became aware of that, of this ship that was trying to harbor with that kind of destructive plan, we wouldn't let it harbor. We'd drive it away using as much force as we could possibly muster because we see the destructive nature of it.

And you know, hate is like a ship that looks to harbor in our hearts. and if it finds space to harbor in our hearts, it will do damage in our hearts.

And then it will do damage between brothers and sisters in a fellowship. And so, when we become aware of that kind of hate towards a brother or a sister, we're to drive it away in God's strength.

[60 : 29] when we think about a person, when we see a face, when we're aware of a situation and people and we feel that sense of hate, that knot in the stomach, don't let it reside.

It's what John is saying. Drive it away. Verse 14, we know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters.

Anyone who does not love remains in death. You hang on to hate. You choose to remain in death. It's against the nature of a child of God. Anyone who hates his brother, verse 15, is a murderer.

And you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. So don't be like Cain, says John. That's the dark backdrop to all this.

[61 : 35] And then the light breaks through as John continues the conversation, the argument. And he says, don't be like Cain. Do be like Jesus. Be like Christ. Love your brothers and sisters like Jesus did, says John.

Verse 16. This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. Now if you think back to last week, remember we gathered early, we observed the silence to remember those who laid down their lives, those who were willing to lay down their lives for their brothers and their sisters.

It's a day that's set aside year by year where we remember the sacrifice that so many made for us in generations past. And John is saying to us, we are called to live, as children of God, we are called to live sacrificially.

We are called, you and I are called to lay down our lives for our brothers and our sisters because that's what Jesus did.

He's the direct contrast. He is the polar opposite to Cain. Cain took a life because of hate.

[63 : 05] Jesus gave his life because of love. Jesus laid down his life so that we could be brought into the family of God and he says, you too are to lay down your lives for your brothers and your sisters.

So what does that mean? Well, in some countries it means that in some countries this is literal. You were touring around the world on Tuesday night with OM and there's countries where if you're a Christian they're laying down their lives.

this is a literal thing and to many of those that John wrote to this was literal. This was life and death. And we might reflect on that and say, well, you know, if I was called to serve in that way I think, I hope, I pray that I would be able to do that. Some of us might be inclined to say, well, if I lived in a place where persecution was rife, and if I had to die for my faith, if I had to die for a brother or a sister, I like to think I would.

[64 : 29] I like to think I'd be first up there to do that. That's easy to say in times of peace. That's easy to say in a country where there's no real persecution.

It's easy to make grand declarations about what we may do in the future. future. But John doesn't allow us to do that.

This is if John can see us in this congregation here. He can see beyond the fierce persecution that his brothers and his sisters were enduring in that place at that time.

He can see right into our building here. And John doesn't allow us to pontificate about the future. He calls us to lay down our lives in the present and the ordinary things and the day-to-day things.

Verse 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him how can the love of God be in him?

[65 : 37] Says John. Dear children says John an old man John known as the apostle of love.

Dear children he says let us love with words let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

So the question that God is asking us through John today is what can you do? What can you and I do to help a brother or a sister?

There are people in need here this morning. There are people in need in this community. You don't need me to tell you that but I know it.

So what can you and I do to help a brother or a sister? We're not all individuals sitting in chairs.

[66 : 52] This is a fellowship. We should know each other and we should be aware of the pressures and the needs and the strains and the struggles that we have.

Not that we're to be gushing about everything all the time but we have needs. There are pressures, there are struggles and we need each other.

So John says help each other. Lift each other up. Don't push each other down. time. There might be material things.

Meals being made for people through difficult phases. It can be time. I could give you a list of people who would really know the blessing of a visit more so than I can give.

It can be a listening ear. So this is very practical, searching. As John asks us, what can we do that expresses our love for our brothers and our sisters?

[68 : 05] And these are important questions and John keeps on repeating them. We'll come back to them again next week because he's got it in the next chapter. They're important questions because it's love for the family of God that indicates that we belong to the family of God.

It's love for our brothers and our sisters that shows that we have eternal life. If you have no love for a brother or sister, if you have no desire to be with them, if you have no sense of empathy and desire to help them, there's a problem.

Because that's one of the signs, the assurances, the assuring marks that we have eternal life. love for a love for a love for a family of God that causes the world to notice that there's something different about this family.

love for a life for a tender.

and says there's something there that I want. And it's that love that is seen and felt that gives us the opportunity to speak to people about Jesus.

[69 : 34] So do your love, your brother and your sister, says John, this is important. It's a sign that you have eternal life. It's an attractive quality that causes the world to notice and wants them to know who is it that's binding us together.

And conversely, when we quarrel and when we allow tension and conflict and hate to break in, the world can't see Jesus.

They just see Cain and they walk on. So are you and I aware just now, even as we conclude and think this through, are you aware of any person, any family, any situation where there's tension between you and them?

Is there something between you and a brother or sister just now that is holding you at a distance? That's causing a breakdown. It causes you to want to walk past them and not spend time with them. Deal with it, says John.

[71 : 09] Take the step. Swallow your pride. Deal with it. Because it's love for our brothers that shows the world Christ.

Serious questions with eternal consequences for us and for others. Are you born again? Do you love your brother?

And how's your heart? We'll deal with that on Wednesday evening. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.

We acknowledge that it is uncomfortable. It's challenging. It grips us. It convicts us. The Holy Spirit himself, he takes the words and convicts us.

He brings faces. He brings names to our minds of people that we may struggle with, of grievances that may have been going on for too long, of tensions that we leave unresolved.

[72 : 28] And we ask that you would give us the courage, the desire, the determination that as far as it's possible for us, enable us, we pray, to be peacemakers and to lay down our lives, to humble ourselves and to seek to love each other.

we pray for any this morning that you may be drawing to Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray for any Nicodemuses in here who are coming to realize that although they may have a form of religion, there is no life, there is no saving power.

and if there are any in that situation this morning, we pray, Lord, that they would come to Jesus, that each one of us would come to Jesus, that we would listen to Jesus as Nicodemus did and that we would be given the faith to believe, that we would not harden our hearts but that we would receive the grace that is offered to us so freely in Christ.

Christ, we thank you for the offer of eternal life. We thank you for the offer of heaven. The price is paid, the work is done but as we said with the children, we know that we have to respond, that we have to believe, we have to reach out and call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and we ask that all of us would be doing that even this morning and we pray this in Jesus' name.

[74 : 09] Amen. We will sing to conclude the words of Mission Praise 33 which would have fitted brilliantly with the last point but we will sing the hymn to God's praise and can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood.

I'm in the Saviour's blood.

Tidy for me who caused this pain for me who came to death pursued amazing love of God in thee that love my Lord should die for me amazing love how God in me above my Lord should die for me His history all immortal dies who can expor this strange design in the world from seven tribes to sound the depths of love divine

Tis mercy all that turned the door and angels hide to choir no more Tis mercy all that turn the door that angels rise in choir no more he let his father strong upon so free so in thy light is praised and himself of all but love a breath for others helpless grace dispatched me all in and free for oh my god it found and free dispatched me on in and free for oh my god it found and free oh my presence spirit live was found in sin and nature's night thy light diffused and winking rain

I walked the dark to flimmed with light my shapes fell off my heart was free my ghost went forth and followed thee my chains fell off my heart was free my ghost went forth and followed thee god to grant determination thou my strength jesus on oro in him mine alive in him my living land ami o thy The eternal throne

[78 : 43] And take the crown Through Christ my own O thy approach The eternal throne And take the crown Through Christ my own Now 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 forevermore Amen