

22nd April 2018 am

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Date: 22 April 2018

Preacher: Malcolm MacLean

[0 : 00] I'd also be to have any from the Island Stunny Politics who are joining us in worship today in here, especially welcome. The service this morning will be followed by tea and coffee, which will be served from the hall.

You may have to come back through here with your tea and coffee, and all those who are able to stay, please take the opportunity to do so. The evening service tonight will be at 6, and that will be conducted by the Reverend Calumian McLeod.

One or two intimations, if you wouldn't mind sparing with us, one or two things happening within the congregation in the week. And for those who are concerned, you can take note of the different events.

There's a Deacon's Court meeting tomorrow night at 7 o'clock. That's here in the hall next door, a meeting of the Deacon's Court tomorrow at 7.

Ladies Bible study, Road to Recovery, prayer meeting, all at the usual times and in the usual places. And the service is next Sunday, 11 and 6.11 is a Gaelic service conducted by myself, God willing.

[1 : 07] And the evening service is... No, David, let's start again. Let me start again. The 11 o'clock service will be an English service, and God willing, that will be conducted by myself.

The service at 6 will be a Gaelic service, and there will be an English fellowship after that at half past 7. One or two other intimations, just to note, the holiday club that we hope to have later in the year.

A short meeting about the planning of that will be on this Wednesday, 6.45 before the prayer meeting. Anyone who's interested, able to help, please come along to that meeting.

Ladies morning, there will be an opportunity for fellowship and to hear a talk from Debbie Urquhart from Northern Ireland, about living in Inverness, on personal holiness from the second half of Jude. That's at half past 10 on Saturday, 28th April. That's this coming Saturday, and all ladies are very welcome to come along. Church cleaning with the new building, which we're thankful for.

[2 : 19] There are things that we have to do that we never had to do before. Church cleaning is one of them, and we have the rotas that we're trying to put together just now.

So if you're able to help with that, men and women, please add your name to the list on the way out, and that's one way that we can serve. These, I think, are all the intimations.

I want to just, on your behalf, welcome the Reverend Callum Ian and the Reverend Dr. Malcolm McLean. He is a doctor, but he says, if anyone gets ill, don't look in his direction.

He's not that kind of a doctor, but we have benefited from their ministry over the last few days, and we look forward to what God will say through them again this morning.

So I'm going to hand over now and sit and enjoy a service with no nervous for a change here. Amen. Well, thank you for your welcome.

[3 : 19] I look forward to God's blessing on us as we have our service, and we can begin by singing to him about that from Psalm 67.

We sing Psalms, asking him to be merciful and to bless us. God, be merciful and bless us, shine upon us with your face, that the earth may know your actions and all lands your saving grace. We can sing the whole psalm. Shall we pray? Lord, we're conscious that we're in the presence of the great God.

God, we know that in a sense that's true at every moment, that wherever we go in life, you are there.

But we also are aware there's a special kind of situation taking place when we gather together to worship you in a conscious manner, aware that you're the God of salvation.

[4 : 30] And when we think of all the amazing things that you have done, the created order, even the way you have made us beings that can think and interact.

We see so many evidences of your abilities. And yet all of them are relatively small in comparison to your amazing work of salvation.

We realize that your salvation does affect the created order. And that one day the whole cosmos will experience that. we're also aware that your salvation affects our human makeup.

And all the defaced image of God in our personal lives will be restored one day if we believe in Jesus.

that we thank you, Lord, that your salvation deals with us as sinners. And it gives to us the prospects of becoming sinless.

[5 : 51] It deals with us as individuals who are largely self-preoccupied. And changes us into people who will live for your glory.

That is true in a measure in life. As we experience your transforming power.

that one day, that one day it will be made perfect. And then, when we do find ourselves living entirely for your glory, we'll also find at the same time how best to live for one another.

and even how best to develop our own inner abilities. And we thank you, Lord, for your grace.

A grace that comes to us in the Gospel. Reminding us of what Jesus did. Of how he lived here in this world.

[6 : 59] And how he didn't live merely a good life. That he lived a good life on our behalf. Obeyed your law because we couldn't do so.

And gives that life of obedience to us when we trust in him. And it becomes our acceptance in your presence. We thank you, too, for his death.

A death that would grieve us immensely. That that was all there was to it. With that, we thank you, Lord, that he died in order to rise again.

That he died in order to pay the penalty for sin. And therefore, we don't sorrow as those who have no hope. So while his thoughts of his death makes us sad because we know it was our sins that caused it, his death also is a trial.

And we come sing about it. And thankful that he entered into death in order to defeat it.

[8 : 19] And on the third day, he rose again in great glory. And we thank you, Lord, that Jesus, in whose name we meet here today, that he has the name of the Baptist name, that he has been highly exalted.

He can be placed no higher. That's the place he has in heaven. It's the place he has in his church. And we pray, Lord, to be the place he has in our hearts. And that we'll be glad to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And that we'll be doing that enthusiastically.

That we'll be doing it with every measure of strength we have within us. Thanking him for his achievements. Achievements that he has done and is doing and will yet do on behalf of sinners.

We come to you, Lord, in all our different needs. A wide variety of needs are represented here. And we pray, Lord, that those needs will be met according to your riches and glory.

[9 : 39] We pray, Lord, to speak to each person here. Speak to them. Speak to us appropriately and relevantly and clearly.

And we ask you, Lord, that we would be, all of us, conscious that we can put ourselves into your hands. Knowing that you are able to work all things for the benefit of those who love you.

And if we don't love you, Lord, we pray that before this service is over that we would do so. And that in this service, you yourself would win us to yourself if that has not happened already.

Remember us, Lord, whether we're children or adults. we would be conscious that you are God.

Be with us, Lord, we pray, and bless us in this service. And pardon us from our sins. For Christ's sake. Amen. I'm going to...

[10 : 59] We can read from Paul's letter to the Ephesians and chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2, and we can read the section from verse 11.

Therefore, remember that at one time, you Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down in his flesh the

dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And he came and preached peace to you who are far off, and peace to those who are near. For through him, we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

[12 : 23] So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. And may God bless that reading to us.

Ephesians 2.18 Ephesians 2.18 Ephesians 2.18 Ephesians 2.18 Ephesians 2.18 Ephesians 2.18 Ephesians 2.18 Ephesians 2.18 Ephesians 3.18 For through him, that's Jesus, we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

For through Jesus, we both have access in one spirit to the Father. Ephesians 3.18 Ephesians 3.18 Ephesians 3.18 Ephesians 3.18 Ephesians 3.18 Ephesians 3.18 Ephesians 3.18 Ephesians 3.18 Ephesians 3.18 There are many verses in the Bible that obviously challenge us and maybe also give to us a different slant than life.

I don't know if the first verse of Psalm 91 has ever spoken to us where the psalmist says, he who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

[14 : 18] He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I suppose that verse from Psalm 91 and also the verse from Ephesians 2.18 asks us where do you live?

Because the Psalm 91 talks about dwelling and abiding and these are word pictures that we link with our address.

So somebody was to ask us where do you live? Well, the answer must be from the Psalm that we live not just with God but we live in God.

And I think that perspective gives us a different way of looking at life. I mean my physical address in Inverness is I hope still there.

And wherever I go it never moves. And at the moment I am not in it.

[15 : 54] my spiritual address if I'm a Christian I never leave it.

And wherever I go my residence goes with me. I suppose we could also ask not just where do you live but with whom do you live?

In my house in Inverness. Only a handful of people who get into it at any one time. And I'm sure all of them would not want to stay in it all the time.

But who do I live with in my spiritual address? Well who else has access to God? And I think the answer to that question is given in the verse in Ephesians 2.18 where Paul says we both have access.

And when he says we both he doesn't mean two people. When he says we both he means two different groups. And the two different groups that he's got in mind are the ones he's talking about in the passage.

[17 : 42] and the two groups in the passage are Jews and Gentiles. Not every Jew and every Gentile but every Jew and every Gentile that believes in Jesus.

We both have this access in one spirit to the Father. God. So who lives with me in my spiritual address?

As far as verse 18 is concerned every Christian lives with me. And not just the Christians here on earth but in my spiritual address which is God every other believer whatever their national distinction and whatever their state whether they're alive in earthly terms or gone to heaven together we live in God's presence.

Isn't that extraordinary? If somebody said to most of you where do you live? I suspect most of you would say somewhere in Harris.

But is that your best address? And one thing is sure about Harris as is sure about everywhere that it's not possible for every Christian who lives in the world today to come and live in Harris.

[19 : 31] you'd be pushed to get every Christian in the world today to live in Britain. It's not big enough. How many Christians live in the world today?

There's millions and millions of them. A lot more than the population of Britain. There's many Christians in sections of China as there are in Britain. But however many of the believers are numerically, it's impossible for them all to live in a small place like Britain. But they all live in God. Isn't that amazing? Psalm 90 talks about God being our home in ages past. Sung that for years, learned it in school, never paid any attention to what it meant. But one day I realized it was telling us where we live. [20 : 46] We live in God. So I just want us to think about that briefly while we're here. I just want us to look at three things basically.

The illustration that Paul uses, what does he have in mind when we think about this? And then how does it work out in our daily lives?

sometimes we come across a verse that we think we've understood and all of a sudden realize we haven't understood it at all.

This verse here, for through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. God. I suspect that all of us think that Paul here is talking about prayer.

And yet we can come to God in prayer and we have access to his very throne and we then leave it and go and do something else.

[22 : 05] and I no doubt myself and I've heard many others cite this verse as describing how privileged we are in being able to get close to God.

And we can see how the use of the words access and drawing near etc. how they can picture prayer.

prayer. But as we know there are truths that may not be the truth of the verse.

Does this verse remotely suggest that once having had access we leave it?

as you look at the verse does it suggest that? That once having had access to God's presence we ever leave it?

[23 : 14] I don't think it does suggest that. And for example if we were to turn to Romans chapter 5 and verse 2 we'd have another reference to access. And in Romans 5 2 we're told that through Jesus we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

We have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And the grace as it mentioned there in Romans 5 2 is the grace of justification. That we have obtained access by faith into this permanent relationship with God.

And that access we certainly never leave. so why should we think that the access that Paul is talking about here is something that somehow or other we cease to have.

The illustration that Paul is using is somebody drawing near to the court of a king or drawing near to the court of an emperor. and when somebody drew near that particular court they had to have somebody that would introduce them into the court.

Somebody with sufficient authority to ensure that they would survive getting into the presence of the monarch. We are coming into the presence of the great God of heaven.

[24 : 46] Who can possibly introduce us there? And the amazing thing is the introducer is Jesus. He takes us into God's presence.

But what do we do in God's presence? presence? I mean if I was asked into the presence of the queen it might be the first time in my life I would say nothing.

Because how do I know what to say? I would need somebody to teach me what to say. And not just at the beginning of when she perhaps mentions a couple of words to me as she goes along the line of all the guests that she is speaking to.

But I would know how to behave throughout my whole time there. Who is going to show me how to behave in the presence of God?

Who is going to enable me to function correctly at every moment that I am there? And how long am I going to be there?

[26 : 00] I am not just going to be there for ten minutes. I am not just going to be there for ten years.

Once we believe in Jesus we are there forever. How will we know what to say? How will we know what to do?

I think Paul gives us the answer in our text. We get it in one spirit. He shows us how to live in the presence of God.

God. He is doing that now for those who have already arrived in a state of perfection. As they and their spirits anyway are in the presence of God and they are being enabled to function properly in God's presence.

presence. We can see from Isaiah 6 for example how angels are to function in God's presence. And they can't just float about doing whatever they think.

[27 : 23] They need instruction and they are given it and so do we. So Jesus introduces us and the spirit enables us and we find ourselves in the presence of the Father.

That's hope. I just want to look at these three points briefly. How does Jesus introduce us?

Because we have no right to be there. We are sinners and we were at enmity with God. and we had to be reconciled to him.

Our sins have separated us from God. Who came and told us about the way of peace? Well Paul tells us in the section we read.

Paul didn't say to the Christians in Ephesus, I came and told you about peace. Although in a literal sense he had.

[28 : 38] Book of Acts tells us that. But in this section of Ephesians as he's talking about the one who announces peace, he says it was Jesus that came and did it.

Now Jesus had never physically been in Ephesus. But Paul says that Jesus came to them there in Ephesus and preached peace to them.

He preached what he himself had accomplished on the cross. He did that through his witnesses, we know that. But he came and announced peace had been made. Not just peace between God and man.

But also peace between men and men. Because the biggest barrier there was between peace between men and men was the gap between Jews and Gentiles.

And Jesus came to them and said, these days are gone. I'm announcing a new way. And he welcomed us into God's presence.

[29 : 51] He brings us to God. The church, whether we believe it or not, is a divine answer to human problems. And we may find that rather surprising, but that's the way it is.

The church is the wisdom of God. I don't mean by that denomination. The worldwide church, the global church, wherever we want to look at it.

The church is the answer that God has provided for this problem of separation that exists between us and one another and between us and God.

And Jesus came and says to us, in the gospel he says to us, come in, but come in to where?

and the answer is we come in to God's presence. So it doesn't matter if you happen to be in Ephesus, or if you happen to be in Jerusalem, or if you happen to be in London, it doesn't matter if you happen to be living in the first century or the 21st century, it's the same destination.

[31 : 10] you come into God's presence, and we just find ourselves there. And if somebody says to us, who said you could come in?

The answer is, Jesus said it. He's our introducer. We can imagine somebody being brought to the Queen, and beside them there's this important official.

And as long as that important official is standing beside the individual, the Queen knows that that individual has got the right to be there. An analogy.

But in God's presence, and Jesus is beside us, who's going to question our right to be there? behavior. They may know all about our behavior, but if Jesus brings us in, we're in.

And that's what he does when we're converted. what an incredible change. Homeless, and then find ourselves in God, and there forever.

[32 : 41] there. But then, how do we live there? Well, the Holy Spirit's got to do something with us.

How do we function in the presence of God? God, I mean, this kingdom that we're growing into is a growing community.

I mean, even if you came into it five minutes ago, you're not the most recent person in it. This kingdom is growing all the time, and every person that comes into it, has got to be trained how to function in it, has got to be enabled how to live in the presence of God.

Rather strangely, although God is perfect, those he invites through his son into his kingdom, sinned, they don't become perfect.

In a certain sense, all they do is change the place where they were sinning. I mean, isn't that solemn?

[34 : 21] Before we're into God's family, we sinned outside the family. sinned, the minute we come into God's family, from then on, when we sin, we sin in the family.

What's God going to do with that? God, he's not going to turn a blind eye to it, but he has to do something about it.

The Holy Spirit, he's given to us. the third person of the Trinity, we might say, takes over from the second person.

The second person brings us in and says, welcome to my father's family.

And then the spirit of the father and the son works in us to make us fit for this presence. What does the spirit do?

[35 : 51] Well, he makes us alive. He does that when we're born. And then we believe in Jesus and then we live.

life. Life. There's only one family in the universe where there's nothing but life.

Everywhere. Life. The members of it have eternal life. They're not going to get eternal life when they die, life.

Although they will live eternally, they are given eternal life when they're born again. They might get, well, they certainly will get more of eternal life when they die.

But the eternal life they're going to get, then, they've had already. I mean, if we're in Christ today, we've got eternal life.

[37 : 03] Who keeps us alive? In our earthly life, we need to breathe to be alive.

In the spiritual life, the Holy Spirit does it. I look in the mirror, and I say to myself, well, the Holy Spirit's got a really difficult task for you.

And then I say, He's got the same difficult task for millions of others. And He's got that same difficult task every moment of the earthly journey.

life, life, life, life, life. He keeps us living in the presence of God.

In the family, there's no spiritually dead people. He reminds us of the clothes we have on.

[38 : 21] Because our introducer, when He brings us in, He gives us the appropriate garment. And the garments that Jesus gives us to wear, we never take off.

His garments are His own righteousness. But we know we're very prone to forget that we're wearing them.

And we let us, we sin, and we're ashamed of all that, we know that. We sin, and we forget we're wearing the righteousness of Christ.

that. But at the family gatherings, and this gathering's been on all the time, the Holy Spirit says to us, look at what you're wearing.

This suit I've got on, one day nobody will want to see it. that will never be said about the righteousness of Christ.

[39 : 37] And the Spirit just tells us again, again, again, think of Jesus. The Spirit creates within us an awareness that we're the Father's children, and in the strangest of places all of a sudden we can find good into, out of our hearts, Abba.

You can be sitting on a bus just watching buildings go past your eyes and all of a sudden, Abba. Where does that come from?

I sometimes wonder if it's because there's somebody else on the bus saying Abba as well. and physically we haven't met.

But the Father knows. Anyway, we find this cry, it's a strong cry, Abba, loud cry.

The Spirit creates within us as we are mingling with the family of God. He's in this Father's presence.

[41 : 03] He creates within us this ongoing sense of adoration. say it with all respect to earthly rulers, but I'm sure eventually we'll get fed up.

But that would never be the case in the heavenly ruler. and as we go around the space of the Father's kingdom, everything we see creates adoration.

And all the time, there's anticipations of something better to come. And the Spirit is saying to us in the Father's presence.

Having been introduced there by Jesus, the Spirit is saying to us, yeah, this is good, but it's only the first fruits. What's yet to come is far greater.

Are you at home? At home in the presence of God. the place where both the Son and the Spirit are active in order to bring us to.

[42 : 37] How many people all over the world today has Jesus introduced into this kingdom for the first time? How many people all over the world today has the Holy Spirit started to sanctify?

And brought them into this incredible relationship. And what does the Father think about? Well, we know what earthly fathers think when their children come home?

The heavenly Father. This is what he desired. This is what he planned. This is what's been on his heart.

He has been anticipating this. It is quite a thought, isn't it? That the heavenly Father has not yet had all his children in his presence.

And that is some thought, isn't it? For all we know, and hopefully it is the case, there are people walking around Tarbot today, who will yet one day be in the family.

[44 : 17] But at the moment, they're not the Father's children. And therefore, the heavenly Father has not yet had the fulfillment of his desire that they be there.

And when we amplify that by all the millions who are yet to be converted, is God looking forward to the end gathering?

Of course he is. No wonder there's joy in the presence of the angels. I mean, the word presence there should have a capital P.

I mean, the presence of the angels is God himself. And there's joy there when sinners come into the family. And we can almost picture the heavenly courtroom as in comes the introducer with more sinners that he has welcomed in and made peace between them and God.

And he hands them to the Holy Spirit and says to the Spirit, as it were, enable them to live here and the Spirit brings that about and we sit, as it were, around the Father's feet.

[46 : 02] And we discover that we're actually at home. And as we look at the heavenly Father, we discover he's got lots of books. And then his books are all his plans for us that he's going to fulfill in the future.

this is where we're made to be, in the presence of God. But not just in the presence of any God. We're made to be in the presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And each one of them does their own particular activities in order for all of their people to feel at home and to feel at home forever.

So where do you live? With whom do you live? has somebody great done anything for you?

Who's looking after you today to ensure you behave properly in the Father's presence? God does.

[47 : 30] God so may we experience what Paul describes there. That through Christ we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

And it's very important to realize that in this verse Paul is not talking about prayer. He's talking about our position a position that doesn't change.

Permanency is forever. That's who we are. If we belong to God. And if you're not in the family the answer is or the question is why not?

I mean the introducer is waiting to introduce and every single one that comes to him he is delighted to introduce.

I sometimes think what it must have been like when Jesus after he had died and gone to heaven introduced the penitent criminal into heaven.

[49 : 00] What must that have been like? Whatever it was like that's what he does for everyone who trusts in him.

So may God bless these thoughts to us. We'll pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord, we confess that often we don't really understand grace.

We have our insights and each time we get one we find your intentions to be amazing.

But when sometimes we read the illustrations the Bible uses to describe the blessings connected to salvation our minds are over well.

And we ask why should God be so good to us? God and if we look within ourselves we'll never find a reason. But we thank you Lord that you have revealed your own heart and in your heart there's place for sinners.

[50 : 27] sinners. And we pray Lord that all of us would experience the guidance of the introducer as he takes us from the outside into the inside.

And we would experience the guidance of the Holy Spirit as he teaches us to live in the presence of God. And we would sense the Father's smile as we find ourselves at home and at home forever.

So Lord bless us we pray. Remember us all for good for your own name's sake. Amen. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.
Amen.