

The Church at Philadelphia

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Well good morning and a warm welcome to the service here this morning. It's good to see everybody. It's good to be back amongst you. I want to say thank you as well to all the elders and Reverend Roddy Morrison and all those who covered when you were away for the last three weeks. I was just reading this morning in my devotional time of how the Lord doesn't need one single person to progress his work. He works to many people. The work goes on and I'm thankful for the evidence of the fact that the work continues. The work goes on probably in even greater measure when I'm not on the road. So it's good to be back with you this morning and a warm welcome especially to those who are visiting with us. There's tea and coffee at the end of the service and if you're able to stay please do so. The service this evening will be at 6 and it's a Gaelic service and it will be conducted by Mr Hamish Taylor. English praise service is at 8pm and just as a post-script to that information Anthony is going to give some updates on the trip to Nepal. We've had some news back from that and photographs and so Anthony will be giving us an update on that this evening. So that's at 8pm this evening. Road to Recovery meets Tuesday at half past 7pm here in the Community

Centre and the career meeting at half past 7pm here on Wednesday and all are welcome and encouraged to come to that. Welcome, good to have you this morning. One or two other intimations.

If you're able to volunteer to assist with the Manchester Innovations on Thursday evening of this week there's a sheet over there please put your name and your telephone number on the list at the door and the instructions will follow after that's done. Permission slips and flyers for the holiday club on the 8th to 12th of August which is a week tomorrow are available at the door and please take some if you can distribute to friends and neighbours, family members and please pray for this important outreach to the children. So we have the flyers there. Please take some. It's a great mission to the young folks and they'll only come if we invite them and so let's invite them and let's pray that God will bless and use this work next week. And the services next Lord's Day God willing will be at 11 and 6 as normal and will be taken by myself. These I think are all the intimations. I want to begin with just a couple of verses from the beginning of chapter 12 of Hebrews. This is God's word.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

[3 : 1 8] Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, before the joy before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. So we fix our eyes upon Christ and we respond to that as we sing together to God's praise. That familiar hymn, Be Thou My Vision. It is in Mission Praise and it's number 31 and the word also will be on the screen. Be Thou My Vision, O Lord of My Heart. Let's stand to sing to God's praise.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's pray together. Loving Heavenly Father, Almighty God, we thank you that we can come to you on this Lord's day, remembering that Jesus is our Savior, our Savior, remembering that he is the one who died and who rose again triumphant from the grave. And Lord, we thank you that he is the King, that he is the Lord of Lords. And we thank you that we come to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, sovereign over all things. And yet, we thank you that we are the God whom we are able to make our approach to, the God whom we are able to draw near to. We thank you that you do not hide yourself from us, but you reveal yourself to us.

And you call us to come and find all that our souls need in you. We thank you for all that we have sung, even in the words of the hymn.

We thank you for all that we have sung, even in the words of the Lord. We thank you for all that we have sung in the words of the Lord. We thank you that you are our vision. And when we fix our eyes upon Christ, we are directed, we are saved, we are content in life and for eternity.

[5 : 35] We thank you that you are the Lord of our hearts. We thank you for the assurance from Scripture that when we believe the Holy Spirit himself comes and he seals us.

He comes to live and make his home in our hearts, in our lives. And we pray that each one of us who have trusted you, Lord, that we would enthrone you in our lives.

Forgive us, because so often we allow self to creep back onto the throne. We ask, Lord, that even this morning we would again say and live out the fact that you are our Lord. You are the first in our lives.

We thank you that you are our wisdom. And in a world and in our own lives where we are so often confused and we so often don't know which way to go, we thank you that we can come to you.

And you are our wisdom and your word tells us that when we ask for wisdom from heaven, we are given that. And not frugally, but liberally. And so we come asking for that wisdom, even in this day.

[6 : 48] Lord, that we would live to please you. That we would know your presence, that we would know your blessing upon us. Thank you for your word.

Your word is truth. We thank you that we can depend upon it. That everything else may pass away, but your word stands forever. And we ask that you would make us faithful to that word.

We thank you that you are our battle shield. And we have nothing to fear. Nothing in this life and not even death itself. When we can say that the Lord is our battle shield.

The Lord is our shepherd. And so we ask that that would be our profession. That would be our experience. And Lord, we thank you that you are our inheritance.

And riches we heed not. The praise of other men and women we need not. But Lord, we thank you that you are the God who is our inheritance.

[7 : 53] And our souls know true rest until we find that perfect rest in you. So Lord, we come to you in worship and adoration.

We ask, Lord, that you would bless us as we seek to draw near. We pray that you would cleanse us from the sin that so easily entangles us. That you would wash us clean in the blood of Christ.

And that we would worship you in this hour and with our lives in spirit and in truth. We pray, Lord, for a world that is so broken. And even over the last few weeks we are staggered by all that we see in terms of man's inhumanity to man.

In terms of the fragility and the changing nature of all that we think is so permanent. Lord, we are alarmed as we see the unfolding events in our world and in our country.

But we thank you that you are the sovereign God. And you are on your throne. And nothing and no one will change that. And so we come to you.

[9 : 05] And we bring to you a world that is broken. We bring to you a country that has strayed far from you. We bring to you those who are grieving today. As we hear of yet more attacks and yet more gunfire in Texas this morning.

Lord God, we ask that you would have mercy. We pray that you would comfort those who are broken. We pray that you would arrest and that you would seek and that you would save those who are so aggressively against you and against your creation.

Because all of us, everyone who walks this earth is your creation. And Lord, we pray for those in authority over us.

We think of America. We think of Germany. We think of France. We think of Syria. We think of Iraq. We think of a world that is so much in turmoil.

And we ask, Lord, for wisdom for all those that you have allowed to be in authority. Especially the leaders in our own country. Prime Minister. The Queen.

[10 : 15] All those whom you have permitted to have influence. We ask, Lord, that he would seek you. And that you would guide them. And we pray for ourselves. You know the needs of us as a community.

And as a church. And as individuals in this place. You know the needs of those who attend here Sunday by Sunday. And the needs of those who visit with us today. We ask that you would bless them and refresh them.

And for all those who are present, Lord. Some are anxious about loved ones who are ill. Some continue to grieve for loved ones who have gone from time into eternity.

Some struggle with addictions and depression. Ailments of this time and another. And Lord, we commit ourselves to you.

You know our hearts. You know our circumstances. And we thank you that you are the God who is able to meet us at the point of our need. So hear our prayers. Bless us, we pray, from the youngest to the oldest.

[11:15] And may we know your hand upon us for you. And we pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward, please?

It's definitely true.

The boys are definitely braver than the girls. How are you all doing today? Fine. Fine? Good? That's good to hear.

That's good. Having a good summer holiday so far? Yes. Oh, that doesn't sound too commencing.

You having a good summer holiday so far? Yes. What have you been doing?

Just give us 30 seconds of news. Has anyone caught any fishes? Yes. Yes. Yes. I saw videos. Has anybody got tattoos?

[12:27] Nathan? I'm seeing your arm there. It looks good. Two tattoos there. Anyone been on holidays? Anyone been away from Harris? Where have you been? Mali.

Mali. And then? Mali. Mali. Mali. Mali. Glasgow. And then Legoland. Excellent. That's a very bunch of places.

Well, I was wanting to speak to you just for a wee minute today about what you need for your holidays. What do you need for your holidays? If you're going away on your holidays, what kind of things do you need?

Bethany? You need clothes? Yes. That's always a good idea. Katie? You need a suitcase. What do you put inside a suitcase?

Yeah? Clothes? Yeah. Anything else? Bethany? A toothbrush. A toothbrush? No toys?

[13:31] No trainers? You're very quiet. Trainers. Trainers, yes. Here's, who's, I need a volunteer. Wake you up a wee bit.

Who's going to help me? Bethany and Emma. Okay, come and help me. What's this? This is a suitcase. And when we were going on our holidays, we needed a suitcase.

Thank you, Marilyn, for letting us borrow your suitcase. Now, in the suitcase, you put things. And I thought I'd just give you a wee job to do.

Our girls love to take teddies on their holidays. So there's just three teddies that we have to take in our suitcase. So let's get them in. There goes the minion.

Now you know why we need an estate car. I think we'll get this off the table before there's a calamity. Remember, they squash you, these things.

[14:38] You can squash them. Can't you, girls? Looking horrified now. Thanks, girls. You've started. You go back there. You can go and sit down now.

This is a job for the boys. Yeah. Get these teddies in. There you go.

There's a horse there as well. Right. Right. Okay. Okay. Step back a wee second. You dropped your necklace, Jono.

Is it closed yet? Can I take that on the plane? Close it then. Ten seconds of closing efforts.

Yes. Yes. Okay. That's enough. You sit down now. You sit down now.

[15:45] Sorry, Marilyn. Did that work? No, it didn't work, did it? And when we were going to holidays a few weeks ago, we were getting on the plane.

And that's the biggest case you could take on the plane with you. And put it in the locker. And so there's lots of things that we might have wanted to take. But could we take everything? Could we take the minion and the big teddy and the horse?

No. Toothbrushes maybe. Some clothes maybe. Bits and pieces we could take. But if we wanted to take a chair with us, could we have taken a chair in the suitcase? How about a bed?

How about a bike? No. Could we have taken the piano that we like to play? No. So if we want to get on the plane, and we have all these things with us, we've got a choice to make, don't we?

If we're going to get on the plane, if we're going to get on the plane, then there's some things, actually, that we have to leave behind. And so when we were going off on holidays, some things we took.

[16 : 52] Lots of our stuff, we actually had to leave behind. Now, the Bible tells us, boys and girls, that this world, it's not a home.

Where's the home of somebody who's a believer in Jesus? Who can tell me? Anna? Heaven is the home of the people who believe in Jesus.

Jesus said to the disciples in John 14, I'm going to prepare a place for you. And he was going on to the cross, and then he was going on to heaven.

And heaven is our home, and we're Christians. And we're travelling through this world, and we're here for a while, but just a short while. And then afterwards, there's eternity.

How long is eternity? That long. How long is eternity? How long is forever?

[17 : 55] Ages. And ages, and ages, and ages. Does forever ever end? And the place, when we go from this world, if we believe in Jesus, we go to our home in heaven forever.

And so, all the stuff that we have in this world, our phones, and our cars, and our houses, and halls, and theaters, and pianos, and teddies, and suitcases, and gadgets, and clothes, and money, and boats, and...

how much of that stuff can we take with us to heaven? How much? None. What can we take with us to heaven?

Emma? Emma? You can take yourself. What else can we take with you to heaven? Pretty much just yourself.

But, in a way, you can take other people if you tell them about Jesus, and they believe. because Jesus told us, whoever believes in me will never perish, never die, but they'll live forever.

[19 : 16] They'll go to heaven to be with them forever. And if we tell other people about Jesus, and they believe in him, then they go to heaven. And we see them in heaven if we're trusting Jesus.

So the message, actually, that it's probably harder for the big ones who have more stuff to learn than for you. It's for all of us. The lesson for today is, let's not hold on too tightly to all of the stuff that we gather in this world.

As if we're going to be here forever. But let's remember that Jesus is our saviour, and heaven is our home. Will we do that?

Yeah? Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you that you are our God, and we thank you that you've told us in the Bible that when we believe in Jesus, although we die, we actually live forever.

We thank you that when we believe in Jesus, when we die, we go to be with Jesus forever in the place that's truly our home. And so we pray that you would help each one of us here this morning to trust in Jesus.

[20 : 37] We know that there's a heaven to gain and there's a hell that we have to avoid. We thank you that Jesus has made it possible for us never to go to hell because he's taken our sin away. And that's true when we trust him.

So we pray that all the boys and girls and all the mums and dads and grannies and shenners that we would all put our faith in Christ and we pray that you would help us not to hold too tight to the stuff that you give us in this world but to remember always that this is just the place that we pass to. We leave it all by that heaven is our home. So we pray that you would make us fit for heaven as we look in faith to Jesus. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to sing now Mission Praise 1116. It's a hymn that we learned just a few weeks ago and it's a hymn that points us forward to the place that's higher than this world, that higher throne in heaven.

There is a higher throne than all this world is known where faithful ones from every tongue will one day come before the sun will stand made faultless through the land believe in hearts find promised grace salvation comes and we'll stand to sing this.

[22 : 00] What do we do? We pray for them. We're going to read from God's word Revelation chapter 3 as we pick up where we left off some weeks ago the letters to the churches.

And we come now to the letter to the church in Philadelphia. Revelation chapter 3 and we read from verse 7 of the chapter the words of Jesus to the church in Philadelphia through John the Apostle.

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write these are the words of him who is holy and true who holds the key of David what he opens no one can shut and what he shuts no one can open I know your deeds see I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut I know that you have little strength yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan who claim to be Jews though they are not but are liars I will make them

come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you since you have kept my command to endure patiently I will also keep you from the ire of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth I am coming soon hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown him who overcomes

I will make a pillar in the temple of my God never again will he leave it I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God the new Jerusalem which is coming down out of heaven from my God and I will also write on him my union he who has an ear let them hear what the spirit says to the churches Amen and may God bless that reading of his word to us Neil Cameron is going to come now and lead us in prayer in Galilee please to the church go- Shake go- FX For my father he's gone leaving and they are they from the building are more relevant than his inferences then I even saw from the we need the difference between us and herramienta that, with the importance of using our energy and lessons and giving us 100% the Pa■stwa Friends For a spirit Fred For a people His because of this day...

[25 : 41] But when I look at the face... I will see the other hand. I'll focus on the first Ef■ and last night.

Stand wide with glory of your chimney. Ten great Hafiddah.

What modeling eso hace word? This is Showsaison as it touched her way.

When I eat breeding hässlich and with effective Jeep. When I eat these Hof cavs, it's good to fly.

When everything was shaped up, bulge mano apart to move. HegehYouSao 234

traceableemployment prototyping Thanks When proprietors in ■■■■ a good place, the accepts the motivation that they have quê decide what good times laughter in the world At an other stone in t parakel

[27 : 30] To make a 60th to 40th lump ■■■■■■ putting our wish to get baptized We bola, EMMA, the blood boat Thank you.

Thank you.

We created our land to raise our wings, and we trived this territories. We financed our commitment to the Start- revived families.

We created our An eligrown businesses, sin From ■ pierwszy foreign yeah

You were asked what was necessary, where you would come, you're not allowed, you're not allowed to do anything to do.

[30 : 02] You were allowed me to work. which the beginning Irichtq■■■■

Amen. We sing again to God's praise this time in Javad from Psalms and Psalm 117.

Psalm 117.

Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117.

Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117.

[32 : 45] Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117.

Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117.

Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Psalm 117. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[34 : 47] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Amen.

[37 : 49] Check around and see where the cats have got to.

And one of the things that I always grudge doing the second you come in the door is just sorting through that mail. It's this pile of mail that sits there. And many of the letters that came through the letterboxes.

And many of the letters that came through the letterboxes over the last few weeks, thank you, James, I haven't yet attended to. But there's some letters. But there's some letters.

And when you pick them up and you flick through, they just grab your attention immediately. You waste no time. You get straight to them. And this is one of the letter. And this is one such letter as it would have come into the hands of the church in Philadelphia.

This letter was not part of a mass mail drop. This was a letter that was addressed personally to the Christians, the church in Philadelphia. And the sender of this letter was none other than the king and head of the church, Jesus himself.

[39 : 19] So this is a letter that would have arrested them from the moment they saw it and the moment they heard it. And we read of this letter in verses 7 to verse 14 of Revelation 3.

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the keys of David. What he opens, no one can shut.

And what he shuts, no one can open. And on the letter goes. So I want to spend a few minutes this morning looking at this letter from Jesus to the church in Philadelphia.

And I'd like to gather our thoughts, hopefully if time permits, under the following three headings.

First of all, we look at a solid church. Secondly, we look at a surprise opportunity that's afforded to that church.

And thirdly, we look at the sure hope that is given by Christ to that church. So first of all, we look at this solid church. Now in this box set of letters, as I've put it in weeks past, we have seven letters that are addressed to seven different churches in different locations.

[40 : 35] But of these seven, we could only actually say that two of the seven churches could be described as solid. The other churches, as they're addressed, they have their good points.

And Jesus encourages them. He commends them for the good points that he notes. But in these churches, there are also serious problems noted.

Ranging from Ephesus. You're busy, you're active, you look good. But your love has grown cold. To Thyatira. Where Jesus says, you're dead.

But Philadelphia, just like Smyrna, they receive no criticism. There's no section of this letter that deals with a petition of complaints against the church.

This is a church that receives no complaints, no criticism. It's a solid church that's built on a sure foundation. So let's have a look at this church to see what we can learn from what a solid church should look like.

[41 : 45] I wonder if I was to stop just now and ask for a few responses. I would do this on Wednesday evening. I won't do this just now. What would we expect a solid church to look like?

In our mind's eye, as we envisage a big, solid church, what do we envisage it to be?

My expectation is we'd probably have it in our mind's eye, a big church. Many members. A long row. And as we take out the budget sheets, and as we take out the accounts, we would see a healthy set of accounts.

We might envisage a church that's solid to have some kind of power and clout within the community, within the land, and to have a range of influence.

And yet this church in Philadelphia, they have none of these things. What does a solid church look like? Well, the first thing that we can know about this church that's described here by Jesus in such terms is it's unpopular.

[43 : 00] Surprising list we're going to come to here. The first thing we see about this solid church is that it was unpopular. Who was it unpopular with? Well, in summary, it was unpopular with everyone.

Why were they unpopular? Because of Jesus. And their faithfulness to the word and the name of Jesus.

Verse 9. That made them unpopular with the established church as they had known it. And it made them unpopular with the world. The church, verse 9, the Jews of the synagogue of Satan, as Jesus calls them, they objected to these Christians because of their insistence that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Jesus was the one that all the promises of the Old Testament were building up to. Jesus was the one they held firm to the fact that he was the only one, verse 7, who was perfectly holy and true, which means that he is God.

Because that goes back to Isaiah. It's a reference in Isaiah 22, I think it is. This church affirmed that Jesus was the authoritative one.

[44 : 17] Verse 7. He held the keys of David, which meant that he was the only one who opened the way into God's presence. And as the Christians in Philadelphia asserted, this is Jesus and this is the one that we hold faithful to, they hated them for all that they said about Christ.

And in the world, in terms of Philadelphia, Philadelphia was nicknamed as Little Athletes. It was a culture that was absolutely saturated with idols of every shape and form and kind.

And all those who were so multi-faith in the right way, they objected to the insistence of the Christians that Jesus was the only way to salvation.

Jesus was the only one, the only God who could open the door to eternal life. So this church of Christ in Philadelphia, they had no friends.

Ever known the reality of having no friends because of your faith? Well, these people did. They were cast out, literally, they were thrown out and locked out and debarred from the temple, the synagogue.

[45 : 42] And they were frozen out of business life and social life in the city. They were deeply unpopular.

And yet, through that unpopularity, they remained faithful. So what does a solid church look like? Well, it's not getting awards for its popularity. It's not getting its picture very much in the paper.

It's unpopular in Philadelphia. And yet, secondly, we see that this is a church that remains faithful. I think as we think back over the last two or three months in our lives and in the news reports that we've watched, none of us could have predicted the turbulence that we've witnessed.

And it's been staggering to see the rise and the fall of political leaders, especially, and the changing tide of public opinion on various issues.

One minute we see a leader and they're up there on a pedestal and they're being celebrated and they're being supported and then public opinion changes unpredictably. And those who were so publicly with them are in a second against them.

[47 : 00] those who were supporting their campaign very instantaneously seemed to deny their name. And the temptation for the church in Philadelphia must have been as they realised how violently against Christ public opinion was, the temptation must have been not to endure persecution, but to try and compromise to secure some more kind of an easy life.

And to do that one would have to deny the name of Christ and deny the word of Christ. Remember Peter did that.

Remember as the crucifixion approached and Peter who had asserted that he would be with Jesus till the very end as he's in the crowd and the crowd becomes menacing and he feels the atmosphere change and he realised it's the risk to himself and then as the little girl approaches Peter and says you are one of them, you are with them, Peter in that moment he denies Christ. But the church in Philadelphia Philadelphia they didn't. Even though the tide of public opinion was very much against them in the church and out of it.

Jesus commends them for their faithfulness. Verse 8 he says yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

[48 : 47] Verse 10 Jesus notices that they have kept my command to endure patiently. And so this solid church remained faithful even though they were unpopular.

They held to the name and the word of Christ. Now let's just pause for a moment and go from there to here and think this through.

As we apply this as a church and as individual Christians I think one of the things we have to face is the fact that if we hold firm to the word and the name of Christ we shouldn't expect anything less than what the church in Philadelphia had to face.

We shouldn't expect our experience to be any more easy than the experience that they had. Today when you think about it if you speak about Jesus and if you speak about Jesus in terms of him being a great teacher and a miracle worker and a philosopher then that's acceptable.

That's a message that will be tolerated. If you put Jesus along on a shelf with lots of other spiritual gurus on the same level that too is acceptable in our culture but if we speak about Jesus in the terms that he reveals himself to us here as the singularly holy one verse 7 who has a right to and who claims our worship if we speak about Jesus as the singular truth the one who knows the truth and who is the truth and who tells us the truth about ourselves and about God and about our eternal destiny heaven and hell if we speak about Jesus as the one verse 7 who holds the key of our lives and our destiny and who towers in authority over us as Lord and judge and king that's a presentation of

[51 : 05] Christ that can make us very much unpopular and yet that's the truth and a solid church is presented to us here as a church that will be faithful to the word and the name of Christ as he reveals himself not as we craft his image so this solid church unpopular and yet faithful thirdly they

were active just going to say a word in passing about this verse 8 Jesus says to them I know your deeds there were no spectators in this church this was an industrious church they were active and Jesus says I haven't overlooked that I know your deeds and that seems to be enough for the church in Philadelphia and that should be enough for us Jesus is the God who sees all things and so if we're serving him and we're doing things for him as he calls us we don't ever need to blow our own trumpet because he sees it all every act of kindness every good endeavour every visit every cup of cold water says Jesus in my name he sees it

I know your deeds Jesus says for the encouragement of the church in Philadelphia and for the encouragement of every believer we're still here today so a solid church is a church that will be up and doing not down lying for Jesus sake fourth point about this solid church is that they were weak Jesus says in verse 8 to them I know that you have little strength now this is a contrast I think to what we expect a solid church to look like we see super churches sometimes on TV we hear about churches that are doing so well and are so booming and they're kind of presented to us as the churches that we should aspire to be but Philadelphia wasn't one of them they didn't have a large staff they didn't have a big budget they didn't have a plush building they didn't have any kind of political plight within their community they were a church that had verse 8 little strength lots of people would have looked at them and said they're a bit sad they're a bit fragile and pathetic that bunch if the church in Philadelphia had a quinquennial visit a respiratory health check I'm not sure they would get a thumbs up I doubt they would be reported as a church that looks to be in good shape and yet Jesus sees them so differently Jesus sees them as a solid church Jesus sees them as a church that illustrates well for us the truth of 2 Corinthians 12 9 the verses that we know so well my strength is made perfect in weakness says the Lord and so we have to remember as we apply this before we move on Jesus sees things differently to us and part of being a Christian is asking that Christ will enable us to see things through his eyes things like this world because how quick are we to accumulate stuff

I'm first to admit much rubbish did I bring back from holidays and how reluctant are we to let go of any of our stuff how quickly do we see this world as a much more permanent place than it is we need the help of Christ to see things from the eternal perspective Jesus sees this world differently to the way that we see it Jesus sees the church differently to the way that we see it sometimes when the church looks at its best Ephesus remember that's the other worst sometimes when the church looks to be at its worst Smyrna Philadelphia that's the other best Jesus sees things Jesus sees people like us differently I don't know what's going on in the hearts and minds of everybody or anybody here but perhaps there's somebody and you're sitting here this morning and you're thinking what am I even doing here maybe there's folks who are sitting here struggling with any kind of sense of worth you look at yourself and you see no value you think you've got nothing to give and you listen to what the people around you in the world say about you and it seems that they affirm every bad thing that you think about yourself that's how you see yourself well how does Jesus see you that's the crucial question because he is the judge he is the

Lord he is the king well he sees you as a soul worth dying for he sees you as one that he loves enough to seek and draw in order that he will save and keep he sees you as one that he was willing to go from heaven to earth and from earth down and down and down until he hung on a cross so that you could be saved that's the value that he places on your life Jesus sees things differently he sees the church differently he sees the world differently he sees us differently and he sees the community that we're part of differently also takes us to our second point points two and three are brief the second point is we note the surprise opportunity now it's always important that we put ourselves into the shoes of those who first would have experienced the context that we read them and so try and put yourself for a moment in the shoes of the first recipients of this letter try and imagine being part of that small gathering of Christians in Philadelphia you're sitting in a room perhaps with half a dozen people people who have not been well received people who have not been affirmed people who are struggling people who have been perhaps battered who have been abused because of their faithfulness to Christ people who know the reality of persecution so imagine the struggle of that we read something of persecution in other countries more than we experience it here but imagine you were one like the

[58 : 52] Philadelphian people who had suffered for Christ now in that environment verse 10 enduring patiently would be something that's hard enough but imagine the elder comes along and says I think we're going to ramp things up a little for the next wee while I know we're battered I know

we're bruised I know we're running for our lives half the time but let's think about a summer mission let's try and do a youth work thing let's try and speak to the children about Jesus let's get some community evangelistic services we'll hire some particular area we'll have some lectures some sermons about Jesus and the need to be saved let's do Christianity Explored in Philadelphia what do you think well my expectation if I was sitting in the congregation

I'd be saying come on we're struggling to keep our heads above water we're just recovering from the last round of bruises we're on the run this is not the time to ramp things up and put ourselves into a position where people will see us and be able to take shots at us this is not the time to start a mission campaign that's how we tend to see things but Jesus sees things differently and he invites the Philadelphians if that's the right word to share his vision they may see a closed door as they experience the hostility of the world but Jesus says verse 8 see I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut and that was true of salvation Jesus has opened the door to salvation maybe somebody needs to hear that this morning for the first time or the thousands time Christ has opened the door of salvation you can be saved Psalm 22 he has done it everything that was necessary for you to know salvation forgiveness of sin eternal life he has done it the door is open no one can shut that door and he calls us to respond and walk through it how do we do that by confessing our sin by saying Lord I trust you come into my life save me keep me there's an open door this morning the door that was open to the church in Philadelphia is still open for us here today it's a door of salvation but it's also a door of service what does an open door of service and opportunity look like in AD 95 well an open door of opportunity gospel opportunity and service looks like a crushed weak unpopular church placed in a hostile multi-faith tolerant to all things but Christianity society and Jesus says to the church there look I've opened the door for you now is the time to go out in my name with my gospel and this is not a one-off kind of scenario this is so often the way that Christ works remember Nineveh the book of Jonah a wicked people a violent city and God chooses a prophet who is the least competent prophet of any prophet that we read of in scripture he gives them a hard to preach message he sends them into the city and Jonah's saying I don't want to go there this is madness this is not an open door and yet God persuades him that he must go and when he went with his unpalatable message to the violent city the whole city listened and the whole city was saved didn't look like an open door but it was very much an open door remember the early New

Testament church that we've studied in the book of Acts the authorities were stacked against them they were small in number there was violent opposition there was gagging orders on preaching the truth now was the time to keep a low profile probably we would have said God says no it's not out you go go to the ends of the earth with the gospel and as they do the gospel spreads like wildfire and the more oppressive and aggressive the culture becomes the faster the gospel spreads remember China communistic Christianity absolutely not tolerated and yet in that culture 12 million Christian corners a year for year after year I think the point is let's be aware of placing too much emphasis on our own eyesight very often we look out into our families amongst our friends into our village church and we think well it just doesn't look too

[64 : 41] Christian friendly at the moment and if I speak about Jesus I might be rejected I might be ridiculed now's not the time not today not this week maybe a wee bit down the line things will become easier but this doesn't look like an open door and yet Jesus says are you sure about that remember what Jesus said to the disciples in John 4 verse 35 he says do not sin four months more and then the harvest I tell you open your eyes and look at the fields they are ripe for harvest could this be a day could this be a place could this be a country where Jesus is saying to us open your eyes see I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut because to my mind things in many ways don't look too different here today to the way they look back in

Philadelphia we are a small weak church compared to what we once were a generation or two ago we are in an increasingly multi-faith anti-gospel culture we look out the window we see apathy we feel antagonism we face disinterest and opposition sometimes some would say this seems like a hopeless mission but Jesus in the church in Philadelphia teaches us not to look at things that way our God is the God of surprises surprise opportunities so let us be alert let us be seeking let us be ready to advance when day by day person by person God opens doors that he intends us to travel through solid church surprise opportunity peace and finally just in a word a sure hope today more so than ever it seems like people are looking for hope hope you want to see evidence of that listen to some of the songs that have been written look at some of the stories in the newspapers people

are so much looking for hope in a world that is so difficult to live in at this point in time and people look everywhere they look in the bottom of a glass they look into needles in their arms they look into horoscopes increasingly in tarot cards and we see the rise of spiritualism and fortune tellers and all kinds of magical mystery experiences that have been employed as we look to the future so that we can look at it with some kind of hope how could the church in Philadelphia the people of Philadelphia look forward with hope how can you and

I look forward with hope well the answer is simply by trusting the promises of Christ I was conducting a wedding on Friday it was and I made the point just in the wedding service that all the things that we recognise as part of a wedding the capes and the dresses and the cards and the dinners and the thrills and all these beautiful things which are all enriching the day they're all lovely but for the marriage itself all we need is a promise all we need is the I do or the I will of the bride and the groom everything else is it's extra and as Christians what we need as we look to the future is the I will of

Christ that's what keeps us going that's what our hope is finding it's in the promises of Jesus and he's not a frugal with them even in this short passage he's not hesitant with his I will just look at them as we finish verse 9 Jesus says I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan who claim to be Jews that they are not but are liars I will make them come and fall down on your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you Jesus knew the struggles they were having he doesn't say go to arms and fight against him he says leave your enemies with me I open their eyes in my time and they that Jesus was going to take hold of some of the least likely most aggressive people against the church and he was going to do with them what he did with Saul and save them no one is beyond the reach of

Christ no one is too far gone verse 10 Jesus says I will also keep you from the eye of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth what a comfort that word must have been as they were looking to the future verse 12 him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God pillar speaks of stability Philadelphia was built on a fault line they were used to seeing everything crumble regularly and yet Jesus says trust me and you will never crumble I will make you a pillar in the temple that will never fall and that's a temple that you will never be debarred from and cast out of verse 12 I will write on him the name of my God I will also write on him my new name Jesus is saying to them others may disown you others have disowned you others have hated you but I have claimed you you are mine

[71 : 08] Isaiah 43 but now this is what the Lord says he who formed you O Jacob he who formed you O Israel fear not for I redeemed you I have summoned you by name you are mine when you pass through the waters as they had I will be with you and when you pass through the rivers they will not sweep over you when you walk through the fire you will not be burned the flames will not set you ablaze for I am the Lord your God the Holy One of Israel your Saviour why do we doubt we doubt because we look within we doubt because we look around us and we get into the I can't syndrome I can't do this and I can't do that and I can't go there and I can't speak here and I can't keep on well today as we finish let's be encouraged to shift our focus from the

I can't of self to the I will of Jesus he is the one who gives us a sure hope he is the one who opens doors of the most surprising opportunity he is the one who will make a church that do not deny his name and his word solid and verse 11 he is coming soon are you ready for the day that he comes for his church for his bride you can be ready as you look to Jesus as you and I repent of our sin as we believe in him accept him as our saviour follow him as our lord he who has an ear verse 13 let them hear what the spirit says to the churches let's pray heavenly father we pray that you would give us that ear that we would hear what you are saying to us and that we would put our faith in Jesus your son and we pray this in Jesus name amen we finish with mission praise 243 the words again on the screen mission praise 243 how firm a foundation ye saints of the lord has laid for your faith in his excellent word what more can he say than to you he hath said you who unto Jesus for refuge have fled stand to say lord jesus christ and the love of god the fellowship of god the holy spirit be with us all both now and forever more amen without." Thank you.