

18.2.24 am

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Date: 18 February 2024

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. A warm welcome to the service this morning. It's good to see all of you. I know a lot of our folks are away, but it's good to see quite a lot of people visiting with us today, and you're very welcome. If you're able to stay behind at the end of the service, please do so. And there's tea and there's coffee, and there's a wide selection of cakes today, so be encouraged to stay by. The intimations and notices have been on the screen. I don't intend to go through them all. All I'll say is that evening service at 6 as usual. Be encouraged to come out for that, 6 till 7. And then next, YF, actually, that's a good one to note. YF, which you might expect would be off tonight, is not off tonight. Our hard-working YF leaders are working on the holidays. So YF is on half past 7 to half past 8 tonight, and so be encouraged to come to that. Any visitors who are here would also be very welcome to come along to YF after the service. Next Sunday, the service in the morning will be taken by the Reverend Gordon Matheson, who was in Strath and Slate. Usually we would have a Gaelic service at the end of the month. We won't have that next Sunday. The reason being, it's the Leverborough, the South Harris communion weekend. So you've had the details of who's taking the services over the weekend. It's on the screen there. And we will not have a service in the evening to allow people to go out to the evening service and the fellowship in Leverborough, if you're able. These, I think, are all the notices. So let's begin this time of worship. We'll sing from the psalm, from this altar. Psalm 130. Psalm 130. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. My voice,

Lord, do thou hear. Unto my supplication's voice give an attentive ear. Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shes mark iniquity? But yet with thee forgiveness is that feared thou mayest be. We'll sing down to the end of the psalm. This short psalm. We'll sing to God's praise. We'll stand to sing.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. My voice, Lord, do thou hear. Unto my supplication's voice give an attentive ear. Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, should mark inNINGNINGNINGNI
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My hope is in His word, more than may that for morning watch.
My soul is for the Lord. I say for that they love to watch.

[4 : 1 3] The morning light you see. Let Israel open the door.

For within there seems to be. And plenteous redemption is ever found within.
And from all this iniquities. He Israel shall redeem.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We'll join together in prayer. Amen.

[5 : 3 8] Let's pray. Amen. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can come to you at the beginning of this your day.

And we thank you that in our souls we can wait upon you. Knowing that as we wait upon you, you are the God who will meet with us. The God who will renew our strength.

The God who is able to redeem us. And we thank you for the riches and the encouragement, the hope, the comfort that is in that word, redemption.

We thank you, Lord, that you did not leave us as individuals in our sin. We confess that we are sinful, we are fallen. We confess that our hearts are dark.

We confess that the goals that we set for ourselves even day by day as we determine that we will not sin, that we will walk steady.

[6 : 49] We confess, Lord, that we break them time and time again. We say with the Apostle Paul, the good that I want to do, I leave undone.

The evil that I don't want to do, so often I find I'm trapped in it again. Who will rescue me from this body of sin? And we thank you that the answer is Jesus, your Son, Father, our Savior.

We thank you that, as we so often sing, there is that truth, that there is a Redeemer. Jesus, God's own Son, precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.

And we do thank you, Father, for sending your Son. We thank you for also the work of the Holy Spirit, who lives within us when we believe he comes to make his home within us.

A fact that is impossible for us to understand, and yet it's true. And we know it, and we thank you for it.

[7 : 57] We thank you that the Holy Spirit is in this place, moving amongst us. We thank you that we have the promise that where two or three meet together, in the name of Jesus, that God is here.

And you move in the power of the Holy Spirit. So, Holy Spirit, be at work amongst us, we pray, and within us. We ask, Lord, that you would awaken those who are dead in transgression and sin.

Those who have no thought of sin, who have no thought of eternity. Whose minds and hearts are full of just the temporary, the transient, the shiny things of this world.

We don't look down on any such people, Lord, because that's where we were. That's where we are in our sinful state. But you are the God who is able to awaken us.

We pray for an awakening. Lord, that you would bring to life those who are dead. That you would speak to the valley of the dry bones.

[9 : 09] That there would be life. We pray for those who are your people. We confess, Lord, that our hearts can be lukewarm. We confess that we can stray.

That we can have our love grow cold. And so we pray for a touch, a reviving touch, upon each one of our hearts. We pray for a reviving touch upon this place.

These islands that have known revival in past years. We pray for a reviving touch upon this land.

That the book, the word of God, would be opened again.

That the name of Jesus would be lifted up. That we would know times of blessing. And times of refreshment. We thank you for the psalm that we have sang.

We thank you for these songs, these laments, these prayers. That you give to us. We thank you that when we are in the depths.

[10 : 09] When we feel our sin. We can cry out to you. And you hear us. And you forgive us. When we confess our sin. You are faithful and just to forgive us of our sin.

To purify us of all unrighteousness. Because of all that Christ has done. On the cross for us. So we ask Lord that you would cleanse us.

That you would hear us. As we cry out. And we thank you Lord. That when we are going through hard times. We can cry out to you. And you are the God who hears our prayers.

And we pray for those who are going through hard times just now. We pray for those who have experienced suffering. Even in this week past. We pray for Angus Alec.

And Neil Cameron. Both who will be watching at a distance today. We thank you for the surgeries that they have been through. Neil is scheduled. And Angus Alec is so sudden.

[11 : 10] We thank you for taking them through these surgeries. And for the measure of health and strength that they enjoy today. Bless them we pray in their homes. We thank you for them. And for the encouragement that they are to us.

We pray for their recovery. We pray for others Lord who are at home. Those who are struggling with long term illness and infirmity.

We ask that they would know that they are remembered. By your people. And Lord we pray that they would know your presence where they are. We pray for those who are going through all kinds

of difficulties and trials.

We pray for Mary. We thank you for Mary. Latham Morrison being with us today. We ask that you would bless her. We pray that you would draw near to her.

We continue Lord to pray for her. We pray for her healing. We pray for her recovery. We pray that your hand would be upon her. For good.

[12:12] And that you would strengthen. That you would uphold. That you would bless all of the family. We are. We are looking to you Lord. As the God who is able to do far more.

Than we can ask or think. And we pray that you would be at work. In healing. In recovery. In encouragement for your people. For the glory of your name.

We ask now Lord that you would lead us. That you would guide us. That our worship would be in spirit. And in truth. And we pray that we would know. Your presence and your blessing.

On this day. Hear our prayers. Pray for all who are visiting with us. We thank you for them. We pray for the congregations. That they are attached to. In different places.

And we ask Lord that. You would be at work. In all these places. That you would. That you would be drawing people. To yourself. So hear our prayers.

[13:09] Take away our sin we ask. In Jesus name. Amen. Boys and girls. Would you like to come out please? How are you all today?

Tired? Tired? I'm not sure if I should ask why. But I'll ask anyway. Are you tired? Not enough sleep Henry?

Working too hard? Out on the hill? Chasing the sheep? No. Not well. Playing games. Playing games. Playing games.

Your dad's sitting nervously at the back. So I won't ask any more questions. Happy birthday Lois. It's her birthday today. She doesn't want anyone to know. So don't tell anybody. I've got something to show you today. And I struggle with this. What do you see there on the screen?

[14:22] An arm. An arm. An arm. And what do you see beside the arm? Another arm. Another arm. And what's in the hand of the arm that's next to the arm?

Emily, yeah. A needle. A needle. Why do you think? I'm the same as you. I can't handle. I cannot handle these needles. And I'm looking straight at Joyce just now. Which is distressing me.

She's the one that does got quite a lot of the needles here. Why do you think I'm showing you the needle? I am scared of needles. Yeah, I don't like them. But at school. Some of you at school this week.

What's got it? Doll, did you have that this week too? She was nodding and said, you had to get a drag. And I remember when I was about your age having to get a drag in school.

And we all were called out to get a drag. I actually heard of one teacher in the class who played a nasty trick on some of the students. He said, I've just got an email in.

[15:30] And it sounds like they're running short of supplies for the main arm syringes. So the rest of the vaccines or the rest of the jabs are going to have to be administered through the islands.

And there was a gasp of horror. And he said, it's okay. We're only joking. But have you ever, who's ever had a jab? Put your hand up if you've had a jab.

Do you enjoy it? No. You get to go off school if it's just like during school. Well, you might enjoy going off school. But do you actually enjoy getting a jab? It actually feels nice.

It doesn't feel nice. Oh, no, it doesn't feel nice. No, that is soothing. It sucks the blood out. So, enough. No, no more talking about that, please. If I faint, Michael, you're going to have to take over. And he would do it quite happily, I think. Why would you get a jab when we don't enjoy getting a jab? Maybe it could save your life.

[16:32] So, you get a jab. And it's never nice to get a jab. But the reason that we sometimes get a jab is because the jab in the arm, which isn't very comfortable, is easier to handle than the worst thing that might come to us if we don't get the jab.

So, sometimes we would get a jab in the arm, not because we enjoy it, because we know, but because we know that if we get the jab in the arm, it might save us from something that's worse. So, that jab that you got in school, obviously, was to protect you from other things. And I can't remember what these things were. But here's a question. Would you get a jab and take the pain in your arm if it was going to save one of your friends from something bad?

Just imagine. Just imagine. This is not... You know where this is going. Just imagine. If you were getting a jab in your arm, and that jab in your arm would protect Michael from getting sick.

Or somebody else from getting sick. Would you do it? Would you take the pain in your arm? Because it would help somebody else. Because it would save somebody else from getting really sick.

[17 : 58] You'd have to think about that, wouldn't you? And it's easy to say just now, Oh yeah, I'd do it. No problem. I would do it. I'd stand it. I'd get it. But when it came to it, I'm not sure how easy it would be.

Where are we going with this, Michael? Who took the pain for us? And Jesus didn't just take a jab in the arm, did he?

Jesus, he was nailed to the cross, it tells us, in the Bible. Not just a wee needle. But big, horrible nails. Were driven into his hands and his feet.

He was put on the cross. And he suffered and he died on the cross. And why did he do it? To save us. To save us. And why did he want to save us?

Because he loves us. Because he loves us. Because he loves us. And what does he ask us to do? To follow him. To follow him and to trust him. So when we think about Jesus, we think about his suffering for us.

[19 : 10] Remember how much he loves us. Remember how much we can trust him. And he asks us to trust him. So let's pray just now. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you love us.

We thank you that we know how much you love us. And we think about how much you suffered for us. We thank you, Jesus, that you left heaven. That you came to this world.

Knowing how broken this world is. And we thank you that you came. Knowing that you would suffer. And that you would die. And we thank you that you did it.

Because you loved us. And you wanted to save us from our sin. We thank you that you took. The poison of our sin. Into your body on the cross.

So that that poison could be taken away from us. And that we could be given life. That's everlasting. So we pray, Lord, that the boys and girls.

[20 : 11] And all of us, you're a bit older as well. That we would hear. That we would understand. That we would believe. In all that you've done for us. And that we would trust you. We thank you that if we want to become Christians.

That we want to have our sins forgiven. We thank you that if we want to have life that begins in this world. And goes on forever. All we have to do is ask. All we have to do is pray.

All we have to do is what the psalmist said in the first song. We just have to cry out to you. And say, Lord Jesus, please save me. So save us, we pray.

Make us well, we pray. And help us to trust you and to love you. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. How much do we have to pay, by the way?

Just before we sing. How much do we have to pay to be saved? Nothing. Nothing. What's the word that we use? How are we saved? We're saved by? Begins with gift.

[21 : 16] God. We're saved by God. But we're saved by what? We're saved by grace. It's a free gift. We just have to ask. We're going to sing now about the grace of God.

Your grace that leads the sinner home. And we'll stand to sing just a moment. The sermon to God's praise. God's praise. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. By grace I am redeemed, by grace I am restored, and now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.

The grace that I cannot explain, nor by my earthly wisdom, the grace of life without a stain was traded for this sinner.

[23 : 19] By grace I am redeemed, by grace I am restored, and now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.

Let grace my song that overflow, my song resound forever.

For grace will see me welcomed home, to all beside my Savior.

By grace I am redeemed, by grace I am restored, and now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.

Okay boys and girls, if you head to Sunday school, remember to pray for them as they go. Amen. And if we could turn in our Bibles please to Matthew chapter 4.

[25 : 03] Matthew chapter 4. And just for those who are visiting, you can see the context we have in Matthew chapter 3, John the Baptist.

And John the Baptist, he's preparing the way for Jesus. He's preaching out in the wilderness. And then we see the baptism of Jesus by John as Jesus stands in our place as he receives that baptism of repentance.

He stands in the place of sinners. And then there's the temptation of Jesus. He's tempted by the devil. He does. He is successful in what Adam was not successful in, in what Israel was not successful in.

Adam fell. The first Adam fell. The last Adam, Jesus, he stood firm. Israel fell. Jesus, he stands and he is obedient.

He's in our place. And we see now at verse 12 through to verse 17, John is stepping back and Jesus is stepping forward.

[26 : 11] This is the beginning of his public ministry. So John, Matthew chapter 4 and at verse 12. Now when he, that's Jesus, heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.

And leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled.

The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light.

And for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. From that time, Jesus began to preach, saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We're going to sing again now from Psalm 67. Psalm 67, the first two stanzas of the Psalm in Gaelic.

[27 : 20] I'll read the verses in English. Psalm 67 and the first two stanzas. Lord, bless and pity us, shine on us with thy face, that the earth thy way and nations all may know thy saving grace.

Let people praise thee, Lord. Let people all thee praise. So let the nations be glad in songs their voices raise. These two stanzas we sing in Gaelic.

And we'll remain seated to sing in Gaelic. And we'll remain seated.

And we'll remain seated.

And we'll remain seated.

[29 : 20] And we'll remain seated.

And we'll remain seated.

And we'll remain seated.

NINGNINGNINGNINGNING Amen.

Amen. If you could turn back in your Bibles, please, to Matthew chapter 4.

[31 : 50] And let's pray as we go back to the passage. Heavenly Father, we pray that you would bless us.

We pray that you would pity us, that you would look upon us in mercy. We pray that you would shine your face upon us, that you would give to us peace.

And as we open your word, we pray that you would give to us understanding. And we pray that you would show yourself to us. This is your word. This is the means through which you have revealed yourself to us.

And we thank you for the word made flesh, Jesus, your son, our savior. We pray that we would see Jesus, that we would hear the word of Jesus.

Even as we study these few verses together, we look to you, Lord. And we pray for your help. Because apart from you, we can do nothing.

[32 : 52] We pray for the congregations around us as well. We pray, Lord, wherever Christ crucified is preached, that you would be adding your blessing, that you would be building your church.

And so we pray for all the denominations around us. We pray for Bruce Jarden in the FP Church.

We pray for Ian Murdo on holiday today.

But we pray for Donald John as he opens your word in the Church of Scotland. And we ask, Lord, that you would be at work in this place. And, Lord, that you would bless us and that you would help us to look to you.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Most of us in life, we tend to like things to be predictable.

We like to know what's going to happen. And we would rather have some sense of awareness of what's up ahead.

[33 : 57] That's why we check the forecast, I suppose. We check the forecasts. We, on the islands, probably check XC weather more than anybody anywhere else in the land.

And we do that because we're planning to travel. We like to have a sense of what the day is going to be like on the day that we travel. So we check the forecast in advance.

And yet the reality is that there are times when we check the forecast, we do the planning. But when the day comes, things don't work out the way we expected.

Or take another mundane example. Something like cooking or baking. How do we go about that? Well, we get the recipe, we open the book, we check the website, whatever it is.

We get the recipe, we follow the recipe, and we expect that if we mix all the right ingredients together in the right sequence, and then we put it in the oven for the right amount of time, that then something good and something tasty and something recognizable will come out.

[35 : 10] That's what the recipe says. That's what we follow. But that's not always what happens. I remember once following the recipe for egg fried rice.

And I had the book there, and I had all the steps, and I had all the right ingredients, and the girls were hungry. And Mary was coming back about late that day. And so I went through the whole thing, followed all the steps, and as I was cooking it and adding the eggs to the frying pan with the rice, it didn't look quite the way it looked in the book.

It didn't look like it had quite the right kind of texture, but I served it up because I'd followed the steps. But when the girls tried it, they immediately declared it, after one bite, to be inedible.

Mary arrived on scene, for my encouragement, and she told the girls not to be silly. Of course they should eat it. And then she tried it, and she kind of gasped and sighed and said, I think we'll just leave this tonight, and I'll make us all a sandwich.

And yet the thing is, I followed all the steps. I expected things to turn out the way they were in the book, and it all went wrong. It wasn't what I expected.

[36 : 28] It was a bit of a mystery. And in life, sometimes there can be mysteries. And sometimes, as those who follow Jesus, when we're following Jesus, there can be mystery in following Jesus.

We often think that if we follow Jesus, if we become Christians, there will be peace, and there will be joy, and there will be steadiness, and life will be good.

But sometimes, things don't work out the way we expect. Sometimes, in following Jesus, we may expect calm.

But we experience storm. Sometimes, in following Jesus, we expect a smooth road. But things can be rocky. Sometimes, in following Jesus, there can be mystery.

Mysterious things. Hard things. Things that we can't understand. that come our way. And in the passage that we're studying today, a short passage, it begins with mystery.

[37 : 48] So that's our first point, is mystery. Verse 12 says, Now, when he, that's Jesus, heard that John, John the Baptist, had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.

Now, if we rewind just a few verses, we can see John the Baptist. John the Baptist has been very much in focus.

He's pointing us to Jesus, but Matthew's writing about John. And John is preparing the way. He's preaching about Jesus. And there's crowds coming from everywhere to hear him.

John is the preacher of the day. There are huge crowds coming, and they're just hanging on John's every word. And John is baptizing. And there's people coming from, from far away to be baptized by John.

John is the man of the moment. And that's just a few verses back. And we see John baptizing Jesus.

[38 : 57] And yet now, at verse 12 of chapter 4, we see John being arrested. And we know what happens to John.

I'll come there in just a moment. But the question I want to ask is, what happened? It's only a year. We don't have this in Matthew. But between the baptism of Jesus by John and John being arrested, there's about a year that passes.

We're not giving the detail in Matthew. But what happens in the year? What causes such a change? How can John go from being so popular and such a draw to being arrested and carried away?

Has John done something wrong? Well, actually, it's quite the opposite. John had been faithful. And John had been steadily faithful.

John preached Jesus. John the Baptist, he pointed people to Jesus. John called people to turn from sin, to turn from self, and to follow Jesus.

[40 : 19] And the message that John preached, he preached to everyone. Didn't matter who was in the congregation. Didn't matter who it was that came in front of him. And John preached the same message.

He could have VIPs in the congregation. Very powerful people. And John just preached a straight, clear, true message. He never toned it down.

He never ramped it up, depending on the congregation. He was straight, he was true, and he was brave. It's what he was called to do. And not everyone liked that.

And that was the reason that John ended up being arrested and then thrown into prison. Luke tells us that in Luke chapter 3.

In Luke chapter 3, it says, with many other exhortations, this is verse 18 of chapter 3. With many other exhortations, he, John, preached the good news to the people.

[41 : 22] But Herod, the Tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

So John, because he is straight, because he is true, because he is faithful, because he is doing what God called him to do, because he's walking in the place that God calls him to be, John is arrested, and he's imprisoned.

And it's a strange twist. When we think about this, this is a strange twist in the narrative of Matthew's gospel, that John would be arrested and locked up.

If we were preparing a strategic plan for the advance of the gospel, if we were those who were sitting around the table working at a strategy as to how can we get the gospel, the good news about Jesus, out there into this place, would we put John in prison?

Certainly not. We would say John is a key worker. John is a powerful preacher. John is a leader of men.

[42 : 43] We need John to be free and active. We need him on the field, not on the bench. And yet John is arrested, and he's in prison.

He's locked up. He doesn't get out either. He ends his days in prison. And it's a mystery. So just think about it from the point of view of the disciples back then as they observed John being carried away and locked up.

They must have been struggling to process this and comprehend this. Maybe they were thinking, well, God can open prison doors, can't he? And of course he could open prison doors. We just have to look at Acts and think about Paul and Silas, and we see that the prison doors were brushed open for them.

But on this occasion, the doors are not brushed open for John. And Jesus knew that John was in prison, but it says he withdrew into Galilee.

And so it seems that John's trial, John's calling at this point was to be in prison, which to him and to us is just a point that's shrouded in mystery.

[44 : 17] And the application for us today is sometimes in following Jesus there is mystery. and we need to we need to be aware of that.

We need to we need to know that. Sometimes in following Jesus things don't go the way we expect. Sometimes in following Jesus in a world that's broken things happen and we just can't make sense of them.

So what are we to do in these situations? What are we to do in these situations where we're where we're faced with mystery and difficult things?

I think the first thing we can we can say is we can take comfort in knowing that God knows what we're going through. He sees us.

He's aware of us. And we're promised in the in the the breadth of scripture that he's with us in it. We have a God who knows what it is to suffer.

[45 : 39] We have a God who knows what it is to go through every experience that we can go through. And he knows what it is that we go through when we encounter mystery.

I think another point we can take on board in terms of application is we can take the assurance from this passage even that suffering is not a sign that we're being punished.

Sometimes as it was for the the case of John suffering comes our way because we're being faithful. sometimes we suffer in all kinds of different ways because we are seeking to be faithful to Jesus. and I think above all when we face the mystery of difficult things we're called to trust God. I love the the phrase that I think it's Sally Lloyd-Jones is her name uses. She's speaking about Mary and she gets the news that she's going to have a child and this child is going to be the saviour. [47 : 01] And it says in that wee storybook Bible Mary trusted God more than her eyes could see. It's such a childish little phrase and yet it's such a precious phrase.

Sometimes that's all we can do. We trust God more than our eyes can see. and when we encounter mystery very often what others see as they look in on God's people is brightness and an example which is just compelling.

How many times even this morning I've heard this said. How many times how many people can we think of the Lord's people are who go through hard things and still they smile and still they trust and still they are steady and still they shine and sometimes it's in the mystery much more than in the clarity that God is at work drawing people to himself through these perplexing situations.

We don't see it. We can't see it. Only heaven will tell these stories. but the first thing we see here we can't understand it but we see it as mystery.

Second point is urgency. Think more about John the Baptist. John he's in prison and I can imagine some people saying about John when his back is turned well I'm not surprised he's in prison.

[49 : 05] I've been around Christian circles and churches long enough to know this is the kind of thing that could be said and probably would have been said. I can imagine some people saying well John's in prison and it's no great surprise is it?

I mean John was very direct. He was very blunt and remember that day when all these Pharisees and the Sadducees came and all these powerful people came and we were saying to John just tone it down a little just be careful and he just spat it out he just straight it was true it was clear it was brave and we knew there was trouble coming.

I can just imagine and hear people saying well you know John he wasn't much of a politician maybe he wasn't the wisest in the way that he preached the way that he spoke the way that he went about things.

He could have just toned it down a little. So I can imagine John's reputation taking a hit at this point but it doesn't matter what people say about John what did Jesus say about John?

Well in Matthew chapter 11 and verse 11 Jesus gives his clear statement about what he thought about John the minister minister and Jesus says truly I say to you among those born of woman there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.

[50 : 30] so in terms of the top ten of ministers in terms of the assessment of how well John had served Jesus says John is at number one he's at the top of the list if you're looking for a model if you're looking for an example of somebody who was faithful John the Baptist no one greater than him says he is and yet do you know how long John's ministry lasted?

It was only 18 months John only served Jesus in that public ministry for 18 months year and a half so what a huge impact in such a short time Ligon Duncan the commentator says John had been prophesied of 700 years before by Isaiah 500 years before by Malachi and yet his ministry only lasted about 18 months then Ligon Duncan asks the question how long has the Lord given to you or to me we don't know and John didn't know either and then Duncan adds that comment do you see how urgent our callings are and I think the truth is we don't see that sometimes we lose that sense of urgency sometimes we're waiting for a better time to speak a better time to serve sometimes we're waiting for an ideal context a different place and when it gets to that point we'll say that's when we'll step forward and that's when we'll serve and that's when we'll speak and that's when we'll point people to Jesus and John the Baptist is saying you don't know how long you've got this is urgent

John was only given 18 months and in that 18 months day after day he said look to Jesus look to Jesus look to Jesus look to Jesus when did you and I last say to somebody look to Jesus when did we last say to someone in the shop or in the boat or in the hospital or in our families are you looking to Jesus John teaches us to use every day to urgently in a focused way in an intentional way point people to Jesus so there's mystery and there's urgency prophecy third thing here is there's prophecy prophecy that's fulfilled in the movements of Jesus you see verse 13 to verse 15 we're told that Jesus leaves

Nazareth and he goes and lived in Capernaum by the sea in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled and then we have this quote in verses 15 and 16 which is lifted from Isaiah chapter 9 verses 1 and 2 it's that Christmas quote we often read these verses the people walking in darkness have seen a great light speaking about Jesus now I stuck into Google how often do people move in their life and Google told me that on average people move house and they often move geographical location eight times in their lives and the reason that people move the reasons are varied some move for education especially our students they're in Harris for a while and then they head off to cities to be educated that involves a move and disruption some move for employment from job to job to job and there's a move that's required others move for love they fall in love and they come to the place that their loved one wants to stay some move for a change of life they've had enough of the city they come back to the beautiful place of

Harris and they go through a winter and they still love it after a winter they're going to stay for a while why did Jesus move because Jesus is moving here from one place to another place to another place we thought just a few weeks back about Jesus moving to Nazareth he's gone from Egypt to Nazareth and we thought about the fact that Nazareth was one of these far from desirable places it was one of these postcodes where property would be cheap and it would take an age to sell Nazareth was not a place that people gravitated towards can anything good come out of Nazareth they used to say the dead end place and yet Jesus went there and now Jesus is moving from Nazareth at age 30 and you might say well that's a positive thing people have said well I moved from

[56 : 12] Nazareth that's excellent but where does he move to well he moves to Capernaum what kind of place was that was that a bustling trendy city well it seems not it was a remote place it was an out of the way place one commentator says Jesus goes into the wilderness to build upon the ministry that John has established there and so as we see Jesus moving from Nazareth to Capernaum there's a continuity in the move John steps back Jesus steps forward John steps out of the wilderness Jesus steps into the wilderness there's a continuity there there's also a necessary sense of it being the right time to move because storm clouds are gathering people are starting to watch Jesus and listen to Jesus and the religious leaders are starting to say this man is a problem we need rid of this man so Jesus is heading towards a confrontation but that confrontation would happen in the city of Jerusalem not out in the sticks and this was not the time for conflict and so

Jesus he moves into Capernaum to avoid this conflict with the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the religious leaders it wasn't the time for that he has things to do he has messages to preach but above all this move of Jesus into Capernaum was a fulfillment of prophecy yes there was timing yes there was continuity but it was fulfillment of prophecy because all these years back it was planned that at this time and in this particularly dark place because Capernaum it was a dark place spiritually speaking at this time in this dark place it was prophesied all these centuries before that Jesus the light of the world would come into this place that was living under the shadow of death Jesus the life would come and so to fulfill prophecy and in order to obey the will of his father Jesus left the family home he left his work he left his loved ones left his friends he left everything that was familiar and he moved to Capernaum and he would keep on moving he doesn't build a mansion in Capernaum he's just there for a wee while and he will move and he will move and he will move and he will move and he will keep on moving until he gets to Calvary and it was all in accordance with prophecy was planned the movements of Jesus were planned so what's the application for us as we think about the movements of Jesus at this point in his life well the first thing I think we can say by way of application is see the love that

God has for you because these movements were for you and for me some of us on Tuesday passed probably planned a Valentine's dinner bought some steaks and cooked them up and there was roses on the table and all that kind of thing there was a plan made and there was a plan followed and it was a plan that was formulated to express love and this move of Jesus into Galilee into Capernaum it was just one small part of God's big salvation plan it was just another step on this road to the cross and it was driven by love for those who were lost and those who needed to be found Jesus left the realms of glory where he was worshipped continuously and he came into this broken world where he'd be despised and he'd be rejected and we see him in Bethlehem and we see him driven out into Egypt and we see him moving to

Nazareth and now we see him again on the move to Capernaum and for three years Jesus had no fixed abode where's your last address for this loan application what address are we going to choose Jesus is on the move he's got no fixed abode he's got no place to lay his head he's just continuously moving all the way until he reached the cross and all these movements all this disruption is driven by a love a love for us he did it because he loved us because he wanted to save us so application see the love that God has for you do you see it that's the comfort in terms of the challenge let's ask the question what are we willing to do out of love for God

[62 : 23] I remember being in a youth meeting years and years ago there was a minister there Ian McCaskill who said a prayer that a Christian should regularly pray is am I Lord in the right place doing the right thing and very often when we pray that prayer the answer is yes carry on doing what you're doing serve me in the place that I've put you but sometimes God will say to people no you're not in the right place and you're not doing exactly the right thing I have a I have a mission for you I'm placing a calling upon your life I want you to go into mission I want you to go into ministry I want you to leave everything that's familiar and comfortable and stable behind and I want you to serve me and if he said that if he placed that calling on our lives would we would we go do we see Jesus moving from this place to that place to that place to that place preaching the gospel calling people to himself he said to us

I've got a mission for you pack your bags change your plans I want you to serve me if he said that would you go if he's saying that to somebody here will you go prophecy last point briefly is ministry verse 17 from that time Jesus began to preach saying repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand sometimes people will speculate I've read articles on this in the past and people will speculate and they'll say if God were to come into the world what would he say to us it's the kind of thing that gets raised in our class in school if God was to come into this world if God is the creator of the world and he was to come into the world and he was to speak to us what would he say that's the kind of discussion point that gets raised in some of these classrooms and the supposition is that he would take us to task over something like our lack of care for the planet why are we using these things why is our carbon footprint so high

God would have something to say to us about this or maybe he'd speak this about the inequality of wealth or the lack of peace in the world and all these things are important issues not belittling them and the word of God speaks clearly on all these kind of issues but Matthew tells us here that God the son did come into this world and he did have something to say to us and the first thing he said as ministry began the main thing that he said the repeated thing that he said was repent think about the first word ever first sermon the opening note in the ministry of Jesus was the word repent Jesus he breaks the rules for public speaking doesn't start on a positive he doesn't open with a funny story he continues where

John the Baptist had left off and he says repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand what does that mean well it's another way of saying the king is here the promised Messiah has arrived has come the savior is near so repent what does it mean to repent it just means to turn around it's not a hard word to interpret in the Greek or in the English it means to do a 180 do a U turn turn around it means to turn away from sin it means that we're to confess our sin to tell God about our sin and to ask for his forgiveness it means to be converted for that conversion of our lives to happen where we come under new management we confess sin we put self to death the God of this age self we put self to death and we say Jesus will you reign will you be my king so Jesus begins his ministry with a with a call with an invitation to be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light Jesus begins his ministry with a call to be taken from that place where the shadow of death is heavy and he calls the people to turn to the one who brings light and life Jesus begins ministry with a call for us to be saved to have our sins forgiven to have our hearts cleansed to have Satan's grip on our lives broken to escape death and to receive abundant eternal life in Christ alone our hope is found and back then and still today we are being called to turn from sin to turn to Christ and to receive eternal hope in and through him so let's sing to conclude the words of this hymn in Christ alone mission praise 1072 in Christ alone my hope is found he is my light

[69 : 29] I send my song his cornerstone his solid ground firm through the fiercest drought and storm what high storm love what dead storm peace when fears are still when striving cease I come for terror my all in all here in the love of Christ I stand in Christ so he took on flesh fullness of God in helpless faith this gift of love and righteousness storm by the ones he came to save till on the cross as

Jesus died the wrath of God was satisfied for every sin on him was laid here in the death of Christ thy limb!

there in the ground his body lay light of the world by darkness slain and bursting forth in glorious day up from the grave he rose again and as he stands in victory sin's curse has lost his grip on me for I am his and he is mine all through the precious blood of Christ!

NING No power of hell, no scheme of man Can ever plug me from his hand Till he returns or comes me home Here in the power of Christ I stand Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.