

A question of resurrection

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

And this evening we have the Gaelic service at six tonight and at half past seven there will be an English fellowship and tonight that will be led by the youth fellowship.

And the title of the theme of what they're going to be doing tonight is talking about the question, why worry when we can trust? Why worry when we can trust?

They were at a meeting a couple of weeks ago and so they're going to speak about something that they learned from that meeting. So why worry when we can trust? And my guess is that there are quite a number of us, if not all of us, who are prone to worry.

[1 : 42] And so there's a word of encouragement there for us tonight. So half past seven tonight if you're able to. In the course of the week you can see various things as normal and I won't take time to go through these.

You can note them at your own convenience. There is a couple of things that are not on the sheet which maybe came later than the sheet could be printed but I see that they are on the screen.

The first thing is that the Thanksgiving service stroke prayer meeting will be this coming Wednesday at half past seven. So please note that the Thanksgiving service this Wednesday at half past seven.

Also as we've done in the last two or three years now, the National Day of Prayer is this Wednesday. And there are sheets out in the vestibule where if you're able to you can put your name against one hour on the sheet.

And the hope is that we'll be able to for that day have 24 hours where as a congregation we're praying. And there are various things that we're prompted to pray for.

[2 : 50] And I can give you details of that in the course of the week if they're not out on the vestibule. So that's the National Day of Prayer this Wednesday. Sheets out there. So please, please look at that as we certainly have the need to be praying for our nation and for revival.

And also just finally to note that the Community Cafe which was last Tuesday raised £207 for Western Isles Cancer Care Initiative. And just a word of thanks to all who attended and those who donated to that.

These I think are all the intimations. Lord God, we thank you for this new day.

We thank you for this Lord's Day. This day that has been set aside and that has been gifted to us. A day where we are called to stop working.

And a day where we are called to come in a particular way. To seek your face. And to seek to know your presence.

[4 : 00] We thank you Lord that we are able to find rest in you. A rest and a peace. A joy and a hope that we can find in no other place in this world.

Save through the promise that is given to us in Christ. We thank you for his words. Come to me all who are weary and burdened.

And I will give you rest. And so Lord we pray that we would know. The reality in our experience. Of that rest that is promised. Through the words of Jesus.

We thank you that there is rest for our souls. When we come to Christ. We thank you Lord that the sin which we carry.

Which weighs us down. Which burdens us. Which takes the life out of us. Which leaves us discontent. Which causes us to go down.

[5 : 01] Roads which are destructive. And roads which leave our souls parched and thirsting. We thank you Lord that you have not left us. In that state of lostness.

You haven't left us to carry the weight of our sin. With no prospect of being able to lay it down. But we thank you Lord God that you have dealt with our sin. In and through Christ. And when we come to him. Confessing that we are sinners. And seeking that forgiveness.

We thank you that we are promised. That you will hear our prayer. You will forgive us from all our sin. You will purify us from all unrighteousness.

And you will make us righteous. In and through Jesus. So Lord we thank you for the gospel message. That we return to each Lord's day and each day in our lives.

[6 : 06] This is where our hope is. This is where we find refreshing for our souls. This is where we find revival for our souls. This is where we find salvation.

And we ask Lord that you would encourage us. As we take time this morning to meditate upon who you are. And what you have done for us in Christ. And what you are doing for us.

And what you promise that you will do for us. We thank you for the words that we have sung. They point us to the fact that you are our creator God. And everything that we see around us.

These scenes which take our breath away at times. We thank you that they speak to us about the God who made all of us. The stars and the mountains and the hills and the forests.

And Lord as we wander through them. As we gaze up at them. We see something of your handiwork. And we pray that we would. As we stand in awe at times.

[7 : 05] That we would bow our heads in worship. And Lord we thank you for our salvation as we have prayed. And we thank you for the prospect of Jesus coming back to this world.

We know that he came in such humility to seek and to save sinners. But we know that he will return to this world. Not with that quiet entry.

But when he comes the trumpet of the Lord will sound. And every eye will see him. Every tongue will confess he is Lord. Every knee will bow.

Whether willingly or unwillingly. As everybody sees Christ as King. And we ask Lord that you would enable us to be ready. That we would on that day when Christ returns.

Lord that our souls would rejoice as we see our Saviour. And that our souls would not recoil. As we realise that we have not made our peace.

[8 : 09] With the judge and King of all the earth. So hear our prayers. Help us in this day to be truly from our hearts. Singing how great thou art.

Meet us we pray. And lead us and guide us in worship. For we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Boys and girls would you like to come out please? How are you all today?

Good. You're on your holidays aren't you? There's a few of you away. Some of the boys and girls obviously have graduated. And they're not forward today. But.

A couple of volunteers. Who wants to have a try at this? Here's the task.

In my hand I have this toy. I don't know quite what it is. I think it's a watermelon is it? Yeah. And your job. I'll just show it.

[9 : 28] It's over there. I keep forgetting there's a congregation behind me. Your job. Is to. Take this watermelon. And crush it.

So that it's as flat as that book. It's got to stay as flat as that book. For at least ten seconds after you've put it down. So who thinks they can do that?

I thought you might Cal. Well let's have a go. We'll start. We'll do ladies first. So Miriam. You have a shot first. Right.

Ready. Hard as you can. See how. See how much you can. See how flat you can crush it. Crush. Crush. And then. And then. And then leave it now. What's happened? It's just coming back alive. I think you might know where I'm going here.

[10 : 30] It just pops straight back up. Good try though. Anyone else want to have a try? Go on Callum. Oh no no no. Don't crush it. There you go.

See. See if you can. See if you can do it as flat as you possibly can. Yeah. Is it flat? Let's see it now.

It's popped straight back up. Isn't it? I think I would see it. Good try Henry. Go for it. You're coming Michael. Don't worry. I'll put my band in. I'll put my band in. I'll put my band in.

Did it stay flat? No. No. It didn't stay flat. Michael. Michael. Push. Push. Push. You can stand on it yeah?

Good job now. Step off it. What happened? Did it stay? It popped straight back up. Anyone else want to have a try?

[11:36] Grace. You had your hand up. Do you want a shot? Michael. Michael. Michael. Okay. There you go. Push.

Squash. Crush. Did it work? No. It didn't work. Who's the strongest guy or lady in the whole corner? Murdo Faracher. Do you think he'll manage? No. No. He doesn't think he'll manage. Not even with his Popeye arms he's not going to manage. So. No matter how hard you try and push this down. No matter how much you squish it and squash it and try and push it down and flatten it. It just comes straight back up.

Nobody can do it. See if I can do it. Okay. I'll see if I can do it. By standing on it. Do you think my weight's going to. Let's try one more time. I think even if Taffy was on my shoulders it still wouldn't work.

[12:45] Did it pop back up? It's popped straight back up. No matter how hard you try and squash this down. It comes straight back up.

Now let me tell you something about Jesus. See in the passages that we've been reading over the last few weeks when you've been at Sunday school. It's Tuesday in the week.

And Jesus. It's Tuesday of the last week that Jesus was on this world. Was on the earth. And on the Friday Jesus would go to the cross.

But by Tuesday of this week. There are so many people. And they're all trying to push Jesus down. Who actually is trying to push Jesus down? Who's his enemy?

It's the devil. But he uses demons. People who had demons in them. And they go at Jesus. But they're not strong enough to hold him down. And then there's the religious people.

[13:48] Who everybody thought were actually very good. But they weren't good in their hearts. And Jesus knew that. And they tried to trick Jesus with questions and words. Did they manage to trick Jesus? Do you think?

No chance. They tried to push him down. But Jesus was much, much cleverer. And then on the Friday. On the Friday.

On the Friday. Jesus was taken by the soldiers. And he went to the cross. And on the cross. What happened to Jesus? He died. He died. You know what he said? He said he laid down his life. Nobody took it from him. He laid down his life.

That was on the Friday. But. And he did it, Henry. Yeah, right. Because he was wanting to take away our sins. But on the Sunday. What happened?

[14:47] On the Friday. Jesus was. He went down into the grave. On the Sunday, Miriam. What happened? You're right. He came back alive.

He came back alive. Do you know why we meet every Sunday? It's because this is the day. That we remember. That Jesus came back alive. Not even death.

Could hold Jesus down. No one. And nothing. Could crush. Jesus. And do you know what he promises? He promises.

That if you trust him, Calum. Or Miriam. Or any of you here. He promises. That any of you trust him. That the power.

And the victories. The big word. For Jesus winning. What Jesus won. On the cross. His power. He promises. That he.

[15:43] Won't just keep for himself. But he will share with us. So. We have great. Reason to be happy.

If we're trusting in Jesus. You know. I was at a funeral. Do you know what a funeral is? Yeah. Like. Somewhere where you talk. To other like. Minifest.

Well. That's a fraternal. It's close. No wait. But the funeral. The funeral. The funeral is. When somebody dies. We come to the church. And we pray. And I was at a funeral. For a girl who died. And it was very sad. But even though we were sad. There was still happiness there. Do you know why? Because Jesus promises.

That those who trust him. Not even death. Can hold them down. But when he comes back. He will rise. And back. Up. Just like he rose up.

[16:40] From the dead. So boys and girls. Make sure. That you're trusting. Jesus. And you will be more. Than conquerors. More. Than winners.

Because of what he's done. So let's close our eyes. Put our hands together. Let's pray. Lord God. We thank you.

For the amazing. Good news. About Jesus. We thank you. That even. Though the devil. Used every trick. To try and. Push Jesus down.

Even though the devil. Thought he had. Pushed Jesus down. On the cross. We thank you. That not even death. Could hold Jesus down. But he rose. From the dead.

And we thank you. That he promises. That if we trust in him. We are more than conquerors. Through him. We are those. Who will rise from the dead.

[17 : 35] Just like. He rose from the dead. So. We thank you. That when. We're trusting in Jesus. And when we think about these things. We don't have anything. To worry about. And be scared of. In this life. And we don't even have to.

Worry and be scared of death. When we're trusting in Jesus. Because we know that he. Has beaten death. So we ask that all. The boys and girls here. And all the mums and dads. And grannies and shenners. And everybody who's here. We pray that. We wouldn't just know these things. In our heads. But we pray that we would trust Jesus. In our hearts. That we. Would have that same hope.

That. Jesus. Had. And showed. As he raised. Up from the dead. And we pray. All these things. In Jesus name. Amen. Thank you boys and girls.

You listened very well. Today. We're going to sing now. The hymn. That's on the screen. It's Mission Praise. 1-1-0-5. And it's called. See what a morning. It's a hymn.

[18 : 32] About the resurrection. Of Jesus. Stand to sing. In just a minute. See what a morning.

The Lord has been right. With the dawning of hope. In Jerusalem. For that the grave was turned with light As the angels announced Christ is risen See God's salvation Brought in love, born in pain Paid in sacrifice Fulfilled in Christ's love Where he lives, Christ is risen from the dead Weeping, where is he laid?

As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb Here's a voice speaking, calling her name It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again The voice that spans her ears Speaking like staring low, bringing peace to us Will sound till he appears For he lives, Christ is risen from the dead Long with the Father, ancient of days Through the Spirit who holds strength with certainty Honor and blessing, glory and grace To the great ground with power and authority And we are raised with him Death is dead, love is one, Christ is conquered And we shall reign with him For he lives, Christ is risen from the dead And we shall reign with him And we shall go out and remember to be praying for them And let's turn in our Bibles now to Mark chapter 12 Mark chapter 12

And we'll read from verse 28 Of the chapter If I know he won't We'll read from verse 18 If you can go back a little bit please So Mark chapter 12 So Mark chapter 12 and verse 18 This is God's word Then the Sadducees Who say there is no resurrection Came to him, that's Jesus With a question Teacher, they said Moses wrote for us That if a man's brother dies And leaves a wife but no children The man must marry the widow And have children for his brother Now there were seven brothers The first one married and died

[22 : 54] Without leaving any children The second one married the widow But he also died leaving no child It was the same with the third In fact, none of the seven left any children Last of all, the woman died too At the resurrection Whose wife will she be Since the seven were married to her?

Jesus replied Are you not in error? Because you do not know the scriptures Or the power of God When the dead rise They will neither marry Nor be given in marriage They will be like the angels in heaven Now about the dead rising Have you not read in the book of Moses In the account of the bush How God said to him I am the God of Abraham The God of Isaac And the God of Jacob He is not the God of the dead But of the living You are badly mistaken One of the teachers of the law Came and heard them debating Noticing that Jesus Had given them a good answer He asked them Of all the commandments Which is the most important The most important one Answered Jesus is this Hear O Israel The Lord our God The Lord is one Love the Lord your God With all your heart And with all your soul With all your mind And with all your strength

The second is this Love your neighbour As yourself There is no commandment Greater than these Well said teacher The man replied You are right in saying That God is one And there is no other But him To love him With all your heart With all your understanding With all your strength And to love your neighbour As yourself Is more important Than all burnt offerings And sacrifices When Jesus saw That he had answered wisely He said to him You are not far From the kingdom of God And

So hear our prayers, take away our sin and enable us now as we turn to your word to know the help of the Holy Spirit as our teacher in this time. And we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. If you could turn now to Mark chapter 12, please. We have become familiar with these scenes on the news over time where somebody suddenly comes into focus and becomes the point of interest for the journalists and the paparazzi.

It could be a politician, it could be a sports personality or a pop singer, a member of the royal family as we're seeing at present. But for whatever reason, they come under scrutiny.

They've done something, they've said something and it's stirred a great media interest. And whenever they walk out the doors, they're met with a sea of photographers and the flashing and the clattering of the cameras.

[36 : 02] And whenever the journalists can get close enough, the microphones are in their faces and they're being asked questions. And it doesn't take long before the hand goes up and we hear the response from them or from the bodyguard protecting them.

No more questions. Distance, please. No more questions. If I was to give this sermon a title today, I'd probably give it the title More Questions.

More Questions. The last few weeks as we've been looking at Jesus as he comes closer to the cross, we see that he's under more and more scrutiny.

Wherever he goes, he's followed. Whenever the religious leaders can get close enough to him, the microphone is up.

The notebooks are out. And Jesus is questioned. Not because they want to learn, but because they're trying to catch him out. They want to push him down.

[37 : 13] They want to attack him. They want to snuff out his voice and his very presence from the community that they're in. And we've seen that in the last few chapters and we see that again today in chapter 12 as we have two more questions that are posed to Jesus.

And I just have the two points today. I want to look at these two questions. The first question is a question about resurrection. That's the first section that we looked at there from verse 18 to verse 27.

And the second question that we'll look at is a question about righteousness or how we can be at peace, how we can be right before God. It's a question about resurrection then a question about being right with God, a question about righteousness.

So first of all, the question about resurrection. I was reminded when I was studying today, not today, but in the course of the week, about a guy here who all but accosted me one day in the street.

And I wasn't long here and he had a list of questions. He had a whole list of questions that he was just desperate to ask me.

[38 : 37] Question number one, he had a smirk on his face when he made his approach. Who did Cain marry? He stood back proudly. Question number two, how did Noah get all the animals into the ark?

Explain it, come on. Question number three, how did the Israelites, maybe a million of them, cross the Red Sea? How did the sea stand up on end like walls and they pass through?

Explain it. And he had a whole catalogue with these questions. They're the kind of questions that are designed to sort of draw us in and waste our time.

The guy was honest enough after a minute or two to admit that. He said it was one of his favourite hobbies, arguing with and having a chuckle at Christians. But they're the kind of questions that people pose to you to try to draw you in and try to make you and try to make the God that you worship look ridiculous.

And the Sadducees come at Jesus. They accost Jesus on the street this day with one of these kind of questions. That was the tone of their questioning.

[39 : 52] That was the purpose and their approach. This is a question about resurrection coming from a people who were known for the fact that they didn't believe in resurrection.

So let's look at the question in verse 18. Then the Sadducees who say there is no resurrection came to Jesus with a question. Teacher, they said, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have the children for his brother.

It's just what's called a Levirate law. It goes back to the Old Testament. I'm not going there today. But we came across it when we studied the book of Ruth. And so they go on.

They have this ridiculous scenario that they put to Jesus. Now there were seven brothers, verse 20. The first one married and died without leaving any children. The second one married the widow but he also died leaving no child.

It's the same with the third. In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. So there's the scenario. We can see the smirk.

[41 : 01] On their faces. We've got them this time. And they stand back. At the resurrection, they say, whose wife will she be since the seven were married to her?

The question in one sense is a fair one because in theory it could happen. This is a scenario that in theory could happen.

But it's so unlikely, it's so far-fetched, it's obvious that it's designed to be a means of poking fun at Jesus. And just by way of application, for those here who are Christians, we have to expect that some people will take great pleasure in poking fun at us.

Whether you get accosted in the street, more likely today it's from the sort of warriors behind the keyboard. people love to take a pot shot at Christians.

So if you're a Christian and you feel sometimes like you're under fire, don't be surprised by that. Don't think that's unusual. If they did it to Jesus, they're going to do it to the people who profess to be followers of Jesus.

[42 : 26] So it's important for us to know as Christians that we will face these kind of questions. Shouldn't take the wind out of us. And it's important for us to know as Christians, how do we respond to these kind of questions?

Well, let's look at how Jesus responds. Does he get in a flap? Do we see him get into a state of panic?

Does he suddenly go silent? Does he have to say you've got me this time? Does he devote the rest of his day to trying to reason with people who actually have no intention of learning anything from him?

Well, he doesn't do any of these things. He gives actually very little time to these sneering Sadducees. One of the commentators, Garland, says, Jesus is not interested in carrying on a dialogue with those who disbelieve.

Jesus is not interested in carrying on a dialogue with those who disbelieve.

[43 : 42] There's a word of warning there. Those who have determined in their own quiet way, in their own hearts, that they will not believe, are very unlikely to hear much from Jesus.

There are people who walk in the doors of churches all the time. But as they walk through the door, they're not walking through the door with a desire to believe in Jesus.

They're walking through the door with a quiet determination that they will not believe. And such people are unlikely to hear much from Jesus.

Remember, if we went back a couple of chapters to Mark chapter 9, we find a man who's a father and a son has been absolutely destroyed by this demon.

The man comes to Jesus, state of desperation. He wants his son to be healed. So he comes to Jesus and he asks if he's able to heal and Jesus says, anything's possible for the one who believes.

[45 : 03] And this father says, Lord, I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief. Now, that man has the attention of Jesus.

that man is given time by Jesus. Those who are struggling with their faith and who want to believe, they are given a whole lot of time by Jesus.

But those who come smirking from a determined position of unbelief are given very little of Jesus' time.

We see that here with these Pharisees. He's very short with them. He says to them in response to their question, you are wrong.

You don't know the Bible. You don't know the power of God. Your whole worldview is wrong. That's Jesus' response to these sneering Sadducees.

[46 : 19] Jesus replied, verse 24, are you not an error because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God? in the ESV it's actually even more clear.

Jesus said to them, is this not the reason you are wrong? Then he says to them at the end of his response to them, verse 27, you are quite wrong.

Kind of refreshing, isn't it? You know, perhaps it's even more refreshing in this kind of age of post-modernity or liquid modernity that we're in.

We're right and wrong and these fixed things have gone right out the window. Jesus doesn't say to the Sadducees, well, your interpretation and your taking these things is actually very interesting. Let's have a coffee about that. He doesn't say to them, well, your belief in the fact that there is no resurrection as you claim, your belief in no resurrection, it's a very interesting belief and as long as it makes you happy, then that's fine for you to hold that belief.

[47 : 32] Jesus doesn't say any of these kind of things that we hear being said all the time. Jesus just clearly states to them, you're wrong. You're quite wrong.

You're not speaking the truth. And then Jesus speaks the truth. The truth.

Not a truth. Not his take on the truth. But the singular truth. That there is resurrection.

Verse 25. When the dead rise, says Jesus, not if they rise, when they rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage.

They will be like the angels in heaven. Now about the dead rising, have you not read in the book of Moses in the account of the bush, how God said to him, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

[48 : 38] He is not the God of the dead, the living. You're badly mistaken. You're quite wrong. See, the line of argument that Jesus uses in response to these Sadducees comes from Exodus chapter 3.

You don't need to go there, but Exodus was one of the few books that the Sadducees actually held to be God's word. They were a bit like the liberals of today.

They picked some books and they binned other books. So the Sadducees only held the first five books of the Bible were of God.

So what Jesus says is, well, let's take one of the books that you hold to be scripture and let's look at what God is saying through the book of Exodus and through the book of Exodus he makes the point here that there is resurrection.

God is not the God of the dead. He's the God of the living. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, yes, they have died in their bodies, yes, they have been buried, but they are not dead, they are living, and they will on that great day be resurrected.

[49 : 56] Jesus affirms here through one of the books that they claimed to believe that there is resurrection, there is life after death.

That's the overwhelming positive truth. that comes through this passage, there is resurrection.

Something for us to learn here in the way that Jesus responds, sometimes when we get drawn into arguments about spiritual things, we can end up getting into such a flap, we can end up being so defensive and so much on the back foot.

That we're like the boxer who kind of puts his gloves up to seal themselves but never actually throws a punch. we can be so panicky and so defensive when somebody says to us, let me ask you a question about the faith that you hold.

Do we zip our lips? We miss the opportunity to share the good news. Every time somebody wants to take a pot shot at you, there's an opportunity to speak the truth to them about Jesus.

And clearly Jesus affirms here that for those who believe in him, there is resurrection.

[51 : 35] Resurrection to eternal life. And granted, much of the teaching about resurrection here is hard for us to take in. We could go various places in Scripture to think a little bit about what resurrection will look like, what our resurrection bodies will be like, what life eternal will be like in our experience, but it's hard for us to grasp.

And so Jesus, in this situation here, he makes clear that after the resurrection, we will know each other.

we will be recognizable, just as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still recognizable. We know from the breadth of Scripture that after the resurrection, we will have an intimacy in terms of our relationships with God and with each other that is far more intense and deep and wonderful than anything we ever have known here.

but everything in the resurrected state, including our relationships, will be different.

There will be some continuity, but everything will be different. And Jesus doesn't go into details on that here because I don't think we have the minds to grasp it.

[53 : 07] if one of the wee ones was to come to John Struthers after the service and say, John, can you please explain to me exactly how my car works?

I want to know every part of it. I want to know all about the engine and mechanics and the electronics and the details. And John, having worked with cars for decades, could say, well, let me begin to tell you some things.

And after two minutes, the child would be lost. I would be lost too. Because the five-year-old child's mind is not developed enough to be able to grasp the details about these processes that make a cargo.

And Jesus knows that much of what is beyond this world, in the place that he has prepared for those who love him, it's just far beyond the grasp of our finite minds.

So Jesus doesn't hear go into details on the things that we can't grasp. He simply teaches the singular truth that we can grasp, and that is that there is resurrection.

[54 : 26] The world might sneer, there might even be people in this room this morning who are dismissing this quietly in their minds, that Jesus teaches that there is resurrection.

This is not all there is. bodies that we have laid to rest at Luskentown in different places.

Bodies that have been lost at sea and never found. Bodies that were exploded on battlefields into a million bits.

bodies that disintegrated and were burned in fire will be resurrected.

That's what Jesus is teaching. And what Jesus taught on the Tuesday of the last week that he was in this world, he demonstrated on the Sunday.

[55 : 37] because what he taught he showed. On Tuesday he teaches that his resurrection. On Friday he is nailed to a cross and he dies for our sin.

He lays his life down and his body is taken and it's placed in the tomb which is heavily guarded.

But on Sunday when they go looking for him they find the grave clothes have been set aside and he is not there because he is risen.

There is resurrection. resurrection. There is resurrection to eternal life for those who trust Christ.

There is resurrection to the eternal judgment for those who do not trust Christ. There is resurrection.

[56 : 56] Jesus said in John 11, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Do you believe this? Do you? Do you believe this? The Sadducees didn't believe it.

do you do you do you do you see? Do you remember what the Sadducees are like? They had no hope. They had no joy.

They were sad. They were Sadducees. We can chuckle for a second about that. But this is a serious issue. There are those here who will know eternal joy on that day of resurrection.

you. It's possible that there are those here who will know a sense of fearful terror on the day that their bodies rise back up.

[58 : 10] Where are you going to be in terms of these things? Question about resurrection.

Secondly, finally, a question about righteousness.

Verse 28. One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. This is a scribe. And the scribes were those who had clashed spectacularly with Jesus in the last few days.

They'd clashed with Jesus in the temple. They were furious at what he'd done. So one of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating, noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer.

He asked them, of all the commandments, which is the most important? And the tone of this question, the second question, I believe is quite different to the tone of the last question.

The last question came from the position of cynical unbelief, the sneering disbelief of the Sadducees. This question comes from a man who I think is genuinely impressed by what he's heard from Jesus and who is genuinely seeking.

[59 : 19] This is somebody who's been drawn to Jesus. And so Jesus gives him time and he gives him encouragement. Verse 29, the most important one, answer Jesus, is this, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this, love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no commandment greater than these. Now, is this a new novel teaching that was coming to the ears of this scribe?

No, it wasn't. This was an orthodox answer. All the Jews knew this to be truth. It was known as the Shema. It comes from Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 4.

So Jesus, when he's asked the question, he simply responds with scripture. He teaches the truth of scripture and Jesus knew it and the scribe who's questioning Jesus, this teacher of the law, he knows very well that's the right answer.

[60 : 32] And so he says in verse 32, well said teacher, you're right in saying that. God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart and with all your understanding, with all your strength and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

So he comes with a question, Jesus gives him the right, biblical, correct answer and the man says to Jesus in response, you're right.

To us it sounds a little bit smug that this teacher of the law would speak to the Son of God and say, well done, that was a good answer. I don't think that's the actual tone of this man and his response. I don't think he's condescending. I think he's just saying, you and I are in agreement on these things. But the agreement that this man has with Jesus is at head level, hasn't touched his heart. Is there anyone here in that position? pick up the Bible, read the chapters, listen to the teachings about Jesus?

[61 : 53] We agree with it. We're not disputing it, not dismissing it. We agree with it. But it's all at head level.

J.C. Ryle says, we must not only know the leading doctrines of the gospel with our heads, but receive them into our hearts and be guided by them in our lives.

It's one thing to know things in our head. You need to go to the heart of this man. It's what Jesus is showing him. When Jesus, verse 34, saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, you're not far from the kingdom of God.

And then, from then on, no one dared ask him any more questions. See, this man, he came as an expert, as a teacher, to search the mind of Jesus.

But he walked off scene, knowing that Jesus had searched not only his mind, but also his heart.

This man came with his book of orthodoxy to check to see if Jesus would meet his standard.

[63 : 35] But as he walks away, he leaves knowing that he himself has not met Jesus' standard. He leaves this scenario knowing that his theological knowledge, correct as it was, about God being one, and his knowledge of the law of God, which was considerable, all these things that he had, as he walks away from Jesus, he leaves knowing these things were not enough to save him.

These things were not enough to make him righteous. These things were not enough to give him peace with God. These things were not enough to secure for him a place in the kingdom of God. And you know, we can be like this man. We can know who God is. We can agree that he is one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We can know our Bibles. We can memorize confessions of faith. We can recite the catechism. we can be known as one of the most religious people in our community, but none of these things actually make us righteous.

None of these things in themselves secure our place in heaven. None of these things give any guarantee that on the day when Christ returns, we will rise to eternal life.

[65 : 26] We're told there's none righteous, not one, Romans chapter 3. That's the problem of sin. That's the bad news that we learn as we study scripture.

So what's the good news? What's the answer? how can unrighteous men like this very respectable character in Mark 12, and how can unrighteous people like you and I be saved?

How can we be sure that we have a place in the kingdom of God? How can we know that we will rise to everlasting life? How can we be saved? That's the all-important question.

And the answer is by believing in Jesus. It's that simple. It's believing in Jesus, believing in who he is.

It's not just another rabbi. He is the only righteous one. He's the son of God. If you don't believe that, you can't be saved.

[66 : 40] No matter how religious, how respectable, how many good works you do, if you do not believe that Jesus is the Christ, he is the son of God, you cannot be saved.

One commentator says to be in the kingdom, one must do simply, one must do more than simply approve of Jesus' teaching. One must submit entirely to his authority and person.

See, becoming righteous, becoming right with God, getting a place in heaven, it's not about who we are, or who we were, or who we hope we will one day be.

And it's not about what we're doing in terms of our religious acts, it's about seeing who Jesus is, as Lord and Savior. And it's about believing in what he has done on that green hill far away to accomplish our salvation.

We're going to sing it in a minute, there is a green hill far away, and there's that line in that hymn, there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He, Jesus, only, could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.

[68 : 10] And that's what this man still had to see. And that's what this man still had to believe, if he was to be saved.

Was he saved? Did he eventually cross over by faith into the kingdom of God? He wasn't far away. Jesus says that much, but he wasn't yet in. He wasn't far away. But listen to this.

If you've drifted off, if you've fallen asleep, wake up for this. This is a man, and he was that close to the kingdom of God, he's standing in front of the Son of God.

He has the offer of salvation. It was there for him to take. But he doesn't stretch his arm out.

[69 : 22] you're not far, says Jesus. That's the good news, but you're not in.

That's the awful news. What about us? As we finish, we might be that close. We might be almost persuaded.

we might be looking into the kingdom of God, just like we see someone looking into the window. We might taste something of the sweetness of Christ.

We might feel something of the warmth of the gospel. We might be that close, but that close is not close enough. One mark below the pass mark on exam day is a fail.

one goal behind the opposing team in the cup final is a loss. And to be not far from the kingdom of God on the day that we are called from this world is to be lost.

[70 : 41] Dan gave me a poem. I was chatting to him this week, gave me a poem. I'm going to end with it.

It's called Almost Saved. Almost saved and yet to sink over ruined sudden brink. Almost saved and yet to miss an eternal throne of bliss.

Almost saved, yes, see the door open on the unreached shore. Nere its happy threshold crossed.

Almost saved is wholly lost.

Oh, the peril of delay. It's not this salvation's day, it's not this salvation's hour, Christ the Lord of love and power, but tomorrow never may be.

Sinner to thy instant knee, Christ is ready, Christ is nigh. Touch him ere he passes by. Almost saved, what woe so great as to perish near the gate, dropping at the threshold sweet, never of the feast to eat, perishing so near the board loaded by the eternal Lord.

[72 : 16] Oh, the shame, sad soul of this, near to heaven, yet heaven to miss. Let's pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Father, we pray that the tragedy of this scene and the tragedy of that poem may not be the story of our lives.

We pray that there would be none of us who are not far from the kingdom who find that we will be eternally shut out of the kingdom. But enable us, we pray, whilst there is time, whilst Christ passes by to call upon the name of the Lord and to be saved.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. humility and the time.

And put into the Lord .