

## 7.4.24 am

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Date: 07 April 2024

Preacher: Reverend Donald Macdonald

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. It's nice to see some visitors with us this morning and you're most welcome. And if you have time, there's tea and coffee after the service and we'd be delighted for you to stay with us and share in fellowship.

The service this morning and this evening will be taken by the Reverend Donald MacDonald. We're grateful for Roland being here with us and we pray that God will indeed bless what he has to say to us.

There's intimations. There'll be no youth fellowship this evening and it'll be back after the holidays. Ladies' fellowship, Little Fishes and Road to Recovery are on during the course of the week and continue to pray for them.

The prayer meeting this week will be held by the minister and will be in person and on Zoom at 7.30 on Wednesday. As you're aware, David is still on holiday, returning tomorrow.

If there are any pastoral needs, please speak in the first instance to one of the elders. But Reverend McCritchie is also available if needed. Service is next Sunday. We'll be taken by our own minister.

[ 1 : 12 ] I think there's details for the church cleaning rota as well. I'm aware of the intimation in relation to our hope to have Scott McLeod and his family joining us as he goes through his training for ministry.

And please, if anyone is aware of houses or a house that he would be able to access, I know that he is following up some leads. But please, if anyone is aware of anything, speak to one of the elders and details will be passed to Scott.

There are a number of intimations in relation to the weekend of Friday the 19th of April to the 21st of April, when speakers from Solace, Andy Bannister and Steve Osmond will be up for the weekend.

There are details of some youth events that have taken place on Friday night at Coppy Java in Stornoway. And if anyone requires details for that, there is a requirement for young people to book, obviously because of the size of the venue and because there will be food served.

So there is a link there. And there is a poster that we can put up at the end with a QR code with details for booking.

[ 2 : 30 ] And there's a further cafe night in the Woodland Centre, which is open to anybody over the age of 18. The idea for this weekend is to look at Confident Christianity. And there will be events that you can take non-Christian friends along to as well to listen.

And I do believe we've actually got one of the speakers coming to preach that weekend as well.

Anyone requiring any more details can contact Reverend Colin McLeod in back or Marianne Campbell at Stornoway Free Church.

And I think there's one final information for some community work within the village on Wednesday the 10th of this week.

If you can meet at the community centre at 10am and between 10am and 1pm on Wednesday. It's for picking up litter and bags, gloves and everything will be provided.

And if anyone requires any more details, there is a further poster in relation to that. I think that's all the intimations. I'm now going to hand over to Reverend MacDonald.

[ 3 : 37 ] And wish him every blessing as he leads us in worship this morning. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 6 : 16 ] I'll point in the anguish of the grave With evil and evil I was overcome Then on the name of God I call Lord save The Lord God is kind and full of grace Bold, righteous and compassionate is He The Lord bless all those of childlike grave When I was in great need He rescued me Resto my soul, Lord, has been good to you For you, Lord, have saved my soul from death

My feet from stumbling and my eyes from tears That I may live for you while I have rest Let us engage in prayer Almighty God, we thank Thee this morning for every person Who can say with the psalmist, I love the Lord Those whose lives have been turned around By the power of divine grace And to seek to live for Thee while they live Grant most gracious God that as we engage in this act of worship May it please Thee to move in our midst

As we seek to worship Thy great and glorious name Give encouragement to those who may be discouraged Give uplift to those who may be downcast Give understanding to those who may not have understanding Of the teachings of Thy truth And grant, O Lord, that as we unite together in worship That our hearts may indeed thrill to the sound of the Gospel Bless every person here, old and young alike Bless every home which is past the time of the church We give Thee thanks for all who worship here from Sabbath to Sabbath And we pray Thy blessing upon the congregation at large And every person who belongs to the congregation Whether committed or uncommitted Whether just a nominal attachment or not Bless every home Bless every home which is pastored by Thy servant here Bless those unable to be present today Through Thy restraint in providence Those who may be in residential care Those who may be in the solitude of their own homes Or in a hospital ward We commit them all to Thy care and keeping For Thou art the great physician And Thou art able to do for them above and beyond What we can ask or even think Bless, we pray Thee Thy servant whom Thou hast set over them Bring him back from days of occasion Refreshed and revived in spirit Ready to dig up the challenge of the work

To which Thou hast called them And where Thou hast prospered His ministry amongst the people here Bless him in his home and in his family Bless all who go forth with the word of truth today Throughout our nation and to the ends of the earth Bring peace where there is wall Oh, we pray, O Lord That there may be cessation of hostilities In the different areas of the world Where that is ongoing Grant safety to any who may be in danger On land or sea or air today Help us as we turn to Thy truth Cleanse in the blood In Jesus' name we ask it with forgiveness of sin Amen Now I understand that At this part of the service

[ 11 : 42 ] There is a word to the younger listeners I don't know if you come down to the front Or do you just want to stay where you are Or are you more comfortable sitting where you are You can come down here Don't be shy It's lovely to see you Oh, this is what you do You go on your knees I'm not used to people going on their knees A totally novel experience for me I'm going to ask just one question Is your hearing good?

You seem kind of doteful Yours is good This young lady seems to think but her hearing is not so good.

Is that because, do you have a phone? And when you are on your phone, and your mum or dad calls to you, are you so entrust on the phone you don't hear?

Ah, that sounds familiar. Well, I am going to let you into a secret. I have difficulty in hearing. But I have huge difficulty in hearing.

And because of that, I have got an age in either ear. And the other morning, our youngest son, when I say our youngest son, he is 40, he has learning difficulties.

[ 13 : 28 ] So, he has hurdles to overcome that others don't have. And he said to me, Dad, put in your ears. Put in your ears.

So that we can hear what he is thinking. Well, that took me aback a little. But then I figured that he wanted me to hear what he was saying, so that I could tell him what was on my mind.

At least I hope that's what he meant. Because otherwise, I'm not sure I would like to know what even my, the members of my family know what I'm thinking at times.

It could be a dangerous thing to help people know what you're thinking. So you don't know what the person next to you is thinking. But you know, there is one person who does know.

The Bible tells us that God knows our thoughts from afar. It's as if he has an X-ray camera and lasers, and he's able to see right into our thought process and into our thoughts.

[ 14 : 38 ] And he knows what we're thinking. He knows when we're thinking bad thoughts. He knows when we're thinking good thoughts. So, it's important that we have good healing.

The Bible says to us that it is important for us to hear what God says.

I want you to take that with you when you go to your Sunday school today. When you go to Sunday school, ask your teacher to whether that might be.

I love passing burdens on to others. Ask your teacher to they know Psalm 139 and what it has to say.

Okay. Thank you for listening. It's a pleasure to meet you. We'll sing again from Sing Psalms from Sing Psalms 73a.

[ 15 : 44 ] And at verse 21. When in my heart I was consumed with grief, and when my soul was filled with bitterness, then I was like a brute beast in your sight, so full of ignorance and foolishness.

Yet I remain with you continually by my right hand. You hold me as my guide. You lead me with your counsel to the end, and take me into glory to abide.

And we'll sing from verse 21 to verse 28. When in my heart I was consumed with grief. When in my heart I was consumed with grief, and when my soul was filled with bitterness, and when I was like a brute beast in your sight, so full of ignorance and foolishness.

Yet I remain with you continually. By my right hand you hold me as my guide.

You lead me with your counsel to the end, and take me into glory to abide.

[ 17 : 58 ] In heaven's womb have I but you alone.

On earth there's no one else whom I adore.

Although my heart may fail and flesh go weak, God is my strength and portion evermore.

Those who are far from you will be cut down. All those who are unfaithful you destroy.

But I'll draw near and shelter in my God.

[ 19 : 13 ] Your deeds, O Lord, I will recant with joy.

One reluctant attender.

I think we all have days like that. Let us now hear the word of God from the Old Testament scriptures from the book of Psalms and Psalm 116.

Psalm 117. I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

The snares of death encompassed me. The pangs of Sheol laid hold on me. I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the Lord.

[ 20 : 44 ] O Lord, I pray deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord and righteous. Our God is merciful.

The Lord preserves the simple. When I was brought low, he saved me. Return, O my soul, to your rest.

For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed. Even when I spoke, I am greatly afflicted.

I said in my alarm, all mankind are liars. What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?

[ 21 : 43 ] I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, I am your servant.

I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst.

O Jerusalem, praise the Lord. Amen. And may he bless to us that redeem from his truth.

[ 22 : 45 ] Now, we understand the practice is now to have an item of praise in Gaelic. And that's from Psalm 107. I'll read the words in English for the benefit of those who not have the Gaelic language.

Then they to God in troubled cry, who them from straits doth free. The storm is changed into a calm, at his command and will, so that the waves which raged before, now quiet are and still.

Then are they glad, because at rest, and quiet now they be. So to the heaven he then brings, which they desired to see.

And for the benefit of those who may not be familiar with Gaelic singing, the presenter gives out the first two lines, the congregation join in.

And then the third line, he presents it solo, and the congregation repeat it, and so on. So, just remain seated.

[ 24 : 06 ] . .

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 26 : 36 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

And at verse 15, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Now, if you'll allow me a little word of explanation as to why I have taken this text this morning.

Perhaps you'll forgive me if I appear a little morbidly introspective. But the news I heard on last Monday morning's Gaelic news bulletin led me to change my intended text for this morning.

That was the news of the death of Isabel McLennan, who may have been known to some of you.

She was involved in Gaelic radio, she was involved in Gaelic radio, and many other things as an employee of the BBC.

[ 28 : 37 ] Her sister is in this congregation is in the name of Gaelic. She was an effervescent character, and I use effervescent in the best sense of the word.

I came to know her, and I came to know her through her, and I came to know her through her involvement with campaigners in the congregation of Kenloch. And during my ministry there, I think it was around 2008 or 2009, that she assumed the position of campaigner leader from a very competent, capable, and excellent previous leader.

You may ask me, what was notable about that? Is this type of voluntary work not undertaken in many congregations?

True. But if I tell you that Isabel lived in what, some may consider a remote area in the village of Maravig in South Laugher.

That, of course, was not her view, that it was remote. She was not part of the Kenloch congregation, yet she undertook the work of leading campaigners, in addition to her own busy, great, and varied workload.

[ 30 : 07 ] She did so willingly, and with her customary energy and enthusiasm. In my view, it spoke volumes of her Christian commitment, involvement, and dedication to the work of the gospel.

That commitment was without question, and shown in so many ways in her home congregation of Park. Others are much better qualified to speak of the life of this highly talented, gifted woman than I am.

In the mysterious providence of the most time, she was taken from the sin of time, at the comparative early age of 57.

And if you're standing in my age category, that is very young. Almost 20 years younger than I am.

Her illness progressed rapidly in weeks rather than months.

And the words of our text this morning suggested themselves forcibly to me on hearing the news of the passing of Ishba, who, at least humanly speaking, seemed so indispensable to the ongoing work of the Lord.

[ 31 : 30 ] I take much comfort from the fact that her minister assured me that during her last days in life she was, and I quote, a joy to be with, totally reconciled and at peace with her providence.

So my intention this morning is not to eulogize, but to focus on the words that I have taken as my text from this psalm, Psalm 116.

Let us see what lessons we may learn from these words. Psalm 116, as I am sure you've noticed, is a psalm that opens with words of deep gratitude, being expressed by the psalmist in response to the fact that God heard his petition.

Prayer, as you know, lies at the very heart of spiritual life. In fact, I would go so far as to say, where there is no prayer life, saving grace is absent.

Prayer is the mark of grace at work in the life of a man, woman, boy or girl. You remember, that was the encouragement and confirmation that was given to a rather skeptical, disbelieving church with regard to a work of grace having taken place in the life of one Saul of Tarsus.

[ 33 : 13 ] Behold, he prays, was the assurance that God gave to those who were skeptical about a work of grace taking place in the life of one who hitherto had been so hostile to the work of the

Church of Christ.

From the wording of the psalm, it is obvious that the psalmist had been praying. He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.

I called on the name of the Lord all expressions that speak of the prayer life in the life of the psalmist. The psalmist also expresses his relationship to the Lord.

It is one of love and adoration. I love the Lord, he states. And I would suggest that such a statement can only arise from a heart that has received disclosure of the divine character in his great grace, wisdom and power.

It is not a facile, bland, meaningless statement, but a statement full of depth and meaning. I love the Lord. A statement that is made, in my view, not so much in the first flush of conversing, but is the mature reflection of one who has experience of the white heat of trial and affliction in the life of faith and grace.

[ 34 : 54 ] He speaks of being encompassed by the snares of death, the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me. I suffer distress and anguish and been greatly afflicted.

And so you can see how this man came to love the Lord in the deliverances experienced in his life. The New Testament reminds us that love toward God arises in the human heart because God first loved us. And when that is true, then this also will be true.

One thing I have asked of the Lord, that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

So let me ask the question. How many of us this morning can state, I love the Lord with the same level of conviction and adoration that characterized the psalmist?

[ 36 : 06 ] So three thoughts from my text. First, death itself. Second, the death of saints. And thirdly, the value placed on the death of saints.

Death itself. Man, you remember, was created in the image of God. He was created to live.

In view of the perfect condition which the image of God existed originally in man, that would seem to exclude the possibility of carrying within him the seeds of dissolution.

He was meant to live, but that was conditional upon his being obedient. To the express command of God.

So physical death is not represented in scripture as the natural result of the continuation of the original condition of man, but due to his failure to continue in the path of obedience, death entered into the world of man.

[ 37 : 22 ] You may remember the injunction given to man by the creator. The Lord God commanded the man, said, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.

For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. So death entered the world of man as a direct consequence of sin and as a positive punishment for sin.

The Bible is explicit on this matter. There is no attempt to gloss over the devastating consequences of sin.

The Apostle Paul, writing in his letter to the Romans, expresses it this way, Therefore just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Death is an abnormality. It should not be, but it is. When we are young and with the bravado of youth, we tend to ignore death as if somehow we were untouchable.

[ 38 : 41 ] But youth is no defense against death, as we know in some of our homes and families where death has removed some young in years.

Perhaps as we age, death becomes more familiar to us, more obviously powerful and perhaps for some more terrifying. In chapter 6 of the letter to the Romans, Paul writes, For the wages of sin is death.

Death is something that we earn because of sin. Because it is the wages of sin, death is evil.

It appears to be heartless. It causes deep sadness and countless lives and homes when we are separated from loved ones.

Yet there is something deeply mysterious about death. We know so little of the unseen beyond death.

[ 39 : 48 ] Oh yes, you may hear people comforting one another with vague notions of being up there or looking down from above and so on.

But that is just what these are. Vague, shadowy notions without any real biblical basis or foundation for such concepts.

these notions probably arise from some kind of woolly residual adherence to long-since lost concepts of heaven.

Heaven is real enough, though. It is where Christ is. And you may be aware that there are attempts currently being made to legalize what is euphemistically called assisting dying as if somehow one can avoid suffering and the pain of death.

Should such proposed legislation become law, one may even choose the time of one's death. But there is something that we cannot choose.

[ 41 : 02 ] we cannot choose whether or not to die. That does not lie in our hands. The God who has appointed the day of our birth has also decreed that we die if Christ not come first.

Bible makes it plain that when we die we do not go out of existence. Let me quote from the letter to the Hebrews just as it is appointed for man to die once after that comes judgment.

After death one stands before God to be measured according to the perfect standard of God's holy law. That is very solemn.

However if a person is trusting in Christ Jesus for salvation then one need not fear judgment to come. Why? Because Christ has exhausted the wrath your sins have deserved.

Now anyone who has lost a loved one to death can testify that the loss is not merely temporary but it stays with us forever.

[ 42 : 21 ] We do not get over the death of a parent or a sibling or a spouse or a child. we simply learn to live with the presence of the absence.

Sometimes it may take us a long time to learn to live with the presence of the absence. Memories crowd in.

We imagine the voices of dear departed ones. We see them in our dreams and all of this serves to impress upon us the ever present absence and perhaps break hearts afresh.

So death is a reality. When we are faced with death it is a time to acknowledge our weakness our fragility and our common human mortality.

It is a terrible part of the curse pronounced on man and not even unwavering faith in Christ or the brightness and certainty of Christian hope can entirely disarm the feeling that it is a momentous thing even for a saint of God to die.

[ 43 : 44 ] Perhaps we might look on death as a tyrannical sovereign unarmed dictator a relentless foe severing the spirit from the body the soul from home the heart from all its loved and cherished ties of earth terminating to the believers witness for God their service for Christ and their mission to their fellow men.

So let me ask how do you view death? Are you prepared to meet with God? For there is an inevitability about death.

Secondly the death of saints because the Bible speaks here of the death of saints. When the Bible uses the term saints it's not referring to some super spiritual group within a church or congregation. Not as the Bible designating a group that have achieved sinless perfection. Not as the Bible describing a group that has had a higher life experience.

The term saints means literally holy ones. One set apart by the begetting power of the Holy Spirit of God.

[ 45 : 14 ] Maybe you might remember what Peter writes in his first letter the second chapter verses 9 and 10 because there he gives to my mind a comprehensive description of what it means to be a saint.

You are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

Now the language that Peter uses there comes right out of the first five books of the Bible used to describe the people of Israel.

And Peter is saying to Christians you have been made by God a holy people just as God called Israel to be his people so he has called the church of Christ made up of Jew and Greek slave and free male and female men and women and boys and girls from every tribe and tongue and people and nation and he has called you into his body he has called you into his family and he has made

you his saints his holy ones a holy nation!

[ 46 : 43 ] that's why the apostle Paul and right into the Galatians can write along these lines you are the Israel of God the new testament church the Israel of God the reality of being a Christian and the deduction that Peter draws from that because God has made you one of his holy ones what ought they to do they ought to pursue holiness it is because God has made you to be one of his holy ones that you ought to pursue holiness so holy means just to be literally to be set aside the set aside of God now that would that I would suggest is also a calling and an obligation set aside by God separated not so much from people but from sin not from the world itself but the principle of worldliness

Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones perhaps some of you are familiar with his writings I don't know if you ever heard him once I heard him as a youngster he writes you cannot be a saint and a Christian without being separate in some radical sense from the world you do not belong to it but you are in it but not of it a separation has taken place in your mind in your outlook in your heart in your conversation in your behavior you are essentially a different person no on the outside you may appear the same I remember in my university days which is a long time ago now I had a very close friend and we went everywhere together and after the Lord came into my life his comment was you became a total stranger to me to all intents and purposes from the outside

I look the same but the Lord had changed my life around and thankfully he changed his life around too sometime shortly after and he is no longer with us in this life a separation takes place so a saint then is not some kind of super Christian but every born again believer set aside by the grace of God in Christ Jesus what about the death of a saint well let me use Abraham for a moment as an example the book of Genesis records that these are the days of Abraham's life 175 years Abraham breathed his lives died in good old age an old man full of years and was gathered to his people Abraham was gathered to his people what do you understand from that well

I think in the normal course of events! one might be tempted to think that refers just to the fact that Abraham was buried but that cannot be so since Abraham was not buried with his ancestors he was buried in the same burial place as his wife SarahNINGNING to his people is communicated by Moses, who is the writer of the book of Genesis, to us before the actual burial of Abraham. So whatever it means, it does not mean just as burial. Now remember, Abraham was the man who believed in the resurrection. How can I be sure? Well, in the 22nd chapter of the book of Genesis, you remember when Abraham was going to sacrifice his son Isaac in obedience to the instruction he received from God. Do you remember what he said to the accompanying servants? He said to the young men, stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you. Come again to you. It's a strange instruction, isn't it?

[ 51 : 31 ] given in the context of going to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. And it would be a strange instruction, were it not for the fact that Abraham considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead after he was slain. And the writer of the letter to the Hebrews reaffirms that. Abraham looked forward to the enduring life of his own soul after it passed through death. I don't know how many read the Westminster Confession of Faith, but if you do have time, it's worth a study and reflection. The language may be a little archaic, but it's still worth studying. And chapter 32 tells us that the soul of the righteous being made perfect in holiness are received into the highest heavens where they behold the face of God in light and glory.

And if my memory serves me correctly, was it not Anne Cousin who put into poetic form the dying words of the late Samuel Rutherford?

The king there in his beauty without avail is seen. It were a well spent journey, though seven deaths lay between.

The lamb with his fair army doth on Mount Zion stand, and glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land. In death our souls are separated from our bodies, which return to the dust as we await the second coming of Christ and the resurrection that will take place. And theologians speak of this period as the intermediate state.

[ 53 : 29 ] The souls of believers are with Christ in the fullness of blessing. And you may have noticed an earlier verse in the psalm when we read it.

In verse 9, I will walk, says the psalmist, before the Lord in the land of the living. Now, you may understand that to speak of those dealt with bountifully and mercifully by the Lord and delivered from the state in which they were in, in trespasses and sins, following the course of this world and the prince of the power of the air, the spirits at work and the songs of disobedience.

You may understand the land of the living to refer merely to this life. But I prefer to think of it differently. If you think of it, ours is the land of the dying.

Heaven is the residence of those who have passed beyond death and dying, for they have entered that place where every tear is wiped away from their eyes, and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. Who would not wish to be in that place?

[ 54 : 57 ] For the souls who die in Christ, their souls are not only joined to Christ, but also to their fellow believers. One current commentator expresses it like this.

They go into the living fellowship of the redeemed. Is that not what was true of the poor man? In Christ's parable when he died, he was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.

There they remained until the day when the dust shall live again. At the sound of the last trumpet and all the dead in Christ shall hear the voice of the glorified Son of Man rise to be reunited with their glorified soul.

What a day that will be! A day of glorious, triumphant praise arising from an innumerable number taken from every corner of the world, every point of the compass, north, south, east, and west.

And the question for you and me is this. Do you expect to be among them? Preparation to be there is required in this life.

[ 56 : 17 ] Finally, the value of the death of saints. The psalmist states, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of a saint. Their lives are precious.

The Bible tells us precious is their blood in a sight. So precious that the Bible reminds us that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

He who did not spare a son but gave him up for us, his continuing care of them, he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. So precious that John writes of the love of Christ for them while they struggle through life.

He prays for their protection. He prays for their purification. His heart is on his own who are in the world. His love never faltered. It didn't fluctuate.

His love never gave up. And when you pause momentarily to reflect on the makeup of the immediate group of foreign disowned, what you discover is they weren't easy to love.

[ 57 : 33 ] You could say they were unteachable. They were lacking in understanding. Their vision of a Savior was so limited and lacking in visions.

They were so self-centered. And as the hour approached and arrived, things got worse. They denied him. They fled. They lost faith in him. And yet what is true? The love of Christ remained a constant.

He loved them despite how disappointing their actions might have been. Oh, does that description, not sound all too familiar?

You know, if we are honest with ourselves, even if you are in Christ today, do we not all belong to the grouping who are not easy to love, unteachable, lacking in understanding, and so on?

You know, there is a saying that love is blind. And sometimes you think it is, but you can't say that of the love of Jesus. His love was not blind.

[ 58 : 43 ] But what is spoken of here is not that preciousness in life, but in death. While the saints of God must experience death before the coming of Christ, there is much in death from which they are exempt.

They are exempt from death as a penalty. The sting of death is removed because they are united to Christ in virtue of his death and in the power of his resurrection.

They are exempt from death as a condemnation. Death in the experience of believers is but a gateway to everlasting glory.

And the apostle Paul could write of his own life, to be with Christ. That is far better. The death of his sins is precious to the Lord because their persons are precious to him.

They are his beloved children. You know, every parent who is in a right relationship with their families love their families to be with them, don't they?

[ 59 : 57 ] It is part of the richness and the tapestry of life to be surrounded by members of your family.

How much more so for the heavenly father and the elder brother to have the members of the family around them.

Some of you perhaps have experienced or been by the bedside of those who were passing out of life and possibly you felt so utterly helpless as the power of death took a loved one from you. You may remember the whole gamut of conflicting emotions through which you passed. Deep grief and poignant sadness at the finality of parting.

Sometimes, dare I say it, even a measure of relief that the struggle was over and so on. Think now how precious to the Lord must be the death of a saint.

[ 61 : 09 ] When they come to die he is with them. He is there to support them with his grace. He is there to soothe with his presence.

To brighten with his glory. He is there to nourish the faith that may be wilting. To quench the temptation that assaults them even in final moments. He is there to dispel any cloud that darkens or obscures.

To remove the guilt that distresses. To quell the fear that agitates and to cheer the solitude and loneliness of the valley of the valley with gracious manifestations of himself.

To breathe words of kindness comfort and love as the soul passes out of this life into the glory to be revealed.

Precious indeed is the death of a saint because he gathers them to himself. that you remember was the expressed will of the Savior in his high priestly prayer as he stated his deep longing regarding those given to him by the Father.

[ 62 : 24 ] Father I desire that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me from before the foundation of the world.

To ensure that his desire was met and fulfilled Christ met death. He met death in all the darkness horror and bitterness of the curse.

He grappled with it tested it received its sting having passed through its terrible ordeal as a surety and redeemer he crowns each believer who is brought into his nearer presence and he will not rest until all the travail of his soul all the sheep of his fold all his precious gems encircle his throne and gather round his person.

Not one shall be lost not a babe of the family not a lamb of the flock not a crown jewel shall be missing in that day.

their security is guaranteed they will never perish says Jesus and no one will snatch them out of my hand they are held in the two fold grasp of the father and son deity has redeemed them deity has preserved them weak says shall be there that give you hope doubting believers shall be there restored backsliders shall be there the finger that but touched the hem of his garment shall be there they shall join in the song of the heavenly chorus oh today you may be apprehensive and fearful you may be trembling doubtful fearful but you shall be there this is how one person expressed it in bardic form and it's a translation from gaelic oh but can so vile a creature one of nature so unclean e'er expect to reach the presence glorious in its spotless sheen and this is the answer though you may doubt that that is possible and the answer is this yes the precious blood of

[ 65 : 05 ] Jesus will my filthiness remove that I shall reach the palace where's the fullness of his love the lord awaits all his precious sins they are warmly and lovingly welcomed into the heavenly residence that he has prepared by his death and resurrection bought by his precious blood welcomed with the words well done good and faithful servant enter in to behold the glory of your beloved savior to sing his praises without ever tiring to gaze upon his beloved's face death itself a certainty the death of sins a blessing the value placed on the death of sins only God can give a proper valuation and assessment of those he brings to be with himself let us pray eternal

God we thank thee for the encouragement of thy truth for all who are in Christ Jesus may that be our portion today and the glory shall be thine in Jesus name we ask it amen let us conclude our service by singing to God's praise in Psalm 116 the Scottish Psalter verse verse 15 dear in God's sight is a saint's death thy servant lord am I thy servant shield thine handmaid son my bands thou didst untie down to the end of the psalm dear in God's sight is a saint's death yet in

God's sight is his saint's death thy servant lord am I thy servant sure thy hand made sound my bands go distant time and all things I truly will give and on God's name will fall I pay my votes now to the

Lord before his people all!

within the course of God's on house within the midst of thee O city of Jerusalem Christ of Christ to the Lord give you now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father fellowship and communion of the Holy SpiritNING