

28.4.24 am

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Date: 28 April 2024

Preacher: Scott Macleod

[0:00] Good morning everybody and welcome to our service this morning. Special welcome to visitors and to those who belong here and have been away a wee while and are back again. It's nice to see several of you.

We are pleased to have Scott McLeod, who's a minister in training, preaching this morning. Most in the congregation will know that Scott will actually be coming here in the summer for the next 18 months to two years as he continues his training at ETS.

And we look forward to having him with us, his wife and family with us too today as well. And they'll be staying for a cup of tea at the end of the service. So please do stay on and take your chance to have a word with Scott and Fiona.

And that would be great. So the evening service at 6pm will be in Gaelic, taken by Hamish Taylor from South Harris Congregation.

And that will be followed by an English fellowship. That was due to be, we were due to have Stuart Weir from Care Scotland there tonight. But sadly for him he's got family health issues so he's not been able to come.

[1:11] But I believe that Phil Pickett will be coming down from Carloway to be present at that. Monthly community lunch tomorrow from 12 until 2.

As usual, takeaways will be available. And you can make donations to Crossroads Care if you wish. Other meetings through the week.

Ladies Fellowship, Little Fishers Road to Recovery at the usual times. The prayer meeting in person and on Zoom this week. On Wednesday at 7.30 as usual.

And Hikakalwik, the Gaelic Mother and Toddlers group, meets this Thursday at 10. And then the services next Sunday will be taken by the minister. Scott was saying he hasn't quite got the housing situation finalised.

So please do keep praying about that. And if you're the owner of a luxury mansion that costs nothing to run and you've got nothing to do with. Please do have a word with Scott at the end of the service.

[2:11] So these are all intimations and we pray for God's blessing upon Scott as he leads our service today. Thank you for your warm welcome Duncan.

Thank you everyone for your prayers for us as a family. And we are looking forward to moving down to Harris. As Duncan said, the housing situation isn't fully clarified.

But we have a very good option. And we just continue praying for that. And we'll be here with you all as a community and a congregation. Good to be here.

And pray that the Lord would bless our time together. And say well do today as we come to his word. So we'll come to worship God. And we'll do so by singing in Psalm 65.

That's a Scottish Psalter version of Psalm 65. From the beginning of that psalm. Praise waits for thee in Zion, Lord. To thee vows paid shall be.

[3:14] O thou that hear art of prayer. All flesh shall come to thee. Iniquities I must confess prevail against me do. But as for our transgressions.

Then purge away shalt thou. Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose. And make'st approach to thee. That he within thy courts, O Lord.

May still a dweller be. We surely shall be satisfied. With thy abundant grace. And with the goodness of thy house.

Even of thy holy place. We'll sing this psalm down to the end of the double verse. Mark 5. To God's praise. Praise waits for thee in Zion, Lord.

To thee vows paid shall be. Stand. Praise wait for thee in Zion, Lord.

[4 : 16] To thee vows paid shall be. O thou that hear.

The heart of prayer. All flesh shall come to thee.

Iniquities I must confess. Reveal against me do.

But as for our transgressions. Then purge away shalt thou.

Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose. And make'st approach to thee.

[5 : 24] That he within thy courts, O Lord. May still a dweller be.

We surely shall be satisfied. With thy abundant grace.

And with the goodness of thy heart. In all of thy holy place.

O God of earth's salvation. Thou with thy righteousness.

By fearful words. Unto our prayers.

[6 : 38] Thy answer dost express. ThyNINGNING That for the ends of all the earth.

And those afar that be Upon the sea, Their confidence, O Lord, Lord will place in thee.

We'll come to God in prayer. Let us pray together. Our Father in heaven, we give thanks for this day and you. We give thanks that we can come into your house.

We give thanks that we can come and sing praises to your name. We give thanks that you are a saviour who has defeated death. And rose from the grave.

And we remember that you have done this work today. That you give life to all who trust in you.

[7 : 53] That we may come before you and confess our sins this morning. Acknowledging you as the great saviour of our souls.

And if we come to you, you are the hearer of our prayers. That you hear the anguishes of our hearts. The concerns of our souls.

You know us in a greater sense and you know ourselves. So let us come humbly before our God and creator. You are the Lord of lords and the King of kings.

You have all authority in your hands. And Lord, may we be mindful of whom we come before. And open our eyes and our ears to understand.

When we come to your word and read about God. When we come to your word and read about your son Jesus Christ. Help us to understand who you are.

[8 : 53] Help us to grasp the measurable riches of your grace and your love towards us. And often we struggle to understand why you would love us.

And how you would love us in such a way that you do. That is steadfast and faithful and unchangeable. But you do and you continue to do.

And you will continue to love your people who come and draw near to you. So let us be people who acknowledge our sins before you this morning.

Help us to acknowledge that we need you. For in you and you alone is the hope of eternal life. And that if we fall before the cross at Calvary.

And that confess our sins. You will purge them away from us as we sang there. You will wash them away. And that we would lift our voices with thankfulness this morning.

[9 : 53] That you have done so. You have washed us whiter than snow. That we would be clean in the sight of God. The blood of the Lamb sacrificed for us.

So that we may enter into God's presence. For nothing that is defiled can enter into heaven. And so we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

What a wonderful gift we have in him. Help us to see Jesus this morning. Help us to understand the cross at Calvary.

And what he has done for us. Give us a concern for our own souls. Give us a concern for the souls of others. Give us a concern for the souls in their community.

Those in their families who do not know Jesus Christ. Give us an eternal perspective on things.

That death would sharpen our understanding.

[11 : 00] And set our eyes towards you. That we all must come to that place. And that if we have you with us. You will not leave us nor forsake us.

You will keep us and guard us and walk with us as a good shepherd does with his sheep. That we will not wonder if we keep our eyes fixed on you.

And that you will lead us to green pastures and places where the calm waters flow. You lead us into places of rest. And even this day as a day of rest.

It is something that is symbolic of what will come eternally for your people. We will enjoy being at rest for all eternity. There will be no more death.
No more tears. No more sadness. You will wash all that away. That we will live lives. For your glory.
[12:00] In glory. In your presence. Many of these things we do not understand. Many of these things have been kept from us. But we stand in awe.

When we wonder at what you have prepared for your people. And isn't it a wonder. That you have gone and prepared a place for us. That you are ready to welcome us.
So may we be ready to welcome you into our lives and our hearts and our souls this morning. As you love us. Help us to grasp the depths of that love.
Be with us we pray. Watch over us. Guide us. Guard us. Guard us from the evil thoughts. Of ourselves and the sins of the devil.

And the little foxes that come in. Help us to have a mind upon Jesus. To focus upon him and his word. That we may sit in wonder and awe. At the Lord Jesus Christ.

[13:05] Your son and our saviour. In whom we ask all these things. Amen. I just want to say a word to the younger ones.

And I believe that you all come down and sit in this area here. That's normal. It would be good if you could come down and sit. I don't know.

Do you just sit here? Do you normally do? Yeah. Take a seat there. Yeah. Come and take a seat. So I'm going to be coming down here more often I think. The next wee while. And you'll get to know me. My name's Scott. And I'll get to know all of your names hopefully. Over the next few months. In the next few years. You'll grow up. But today I'll talk to you. Well. I was cutting down my tree. At the back of my house. Big, big tree. I chopped lots of branches off it.

[14:02] And I've got this branch left over. It's a branch of a sycamore tree. And it's got lots of wee buds in it. Lots of wee buds there.

It's starting to grow this time of year. But imagine this was an apple tree. That I had in my garden. And you planted an apple tree in your garden. And you'd hope that you would get apples off it. In the summertime. And if you didn't get apples off it. And you'd be quite sad wouldn't you? You'd have planted this tree. And you don't get any apples off it.

It'd be disappointing. Now if you cut a branch off the apple tree. And you screwed it to the wall there. Do you think you'll get any apples off it?

No. No. Why not? Why don't you grow any apples? It's a bit of a tree. Because it was an apple tree. Why didn't you think you'd get anything? What do you think?

[15:02] Because it's not in the ground. It's not in the ground. It's not connected to the tree, is it? No. Where does the branch get all its goodness from? The roots. The roots.

The roots and the tree and everything. That's where the branch gets its life from, isn't it? The tree. And Jesus is like the tree. And we are like branches.

That's what the Bible tells us. We are like branches. And we get all our goodness from Jesus. But if we're not blowing our lives with Jesus, we won't bear all the fruit, will we?

We're like a branch that's cut off. But if we're connected to Jesus, and connected to the tree, and there's Jesus, all good life will come out to the branches.

And we will bear good fruit. Because God wants to see good fruit from our lives. That we bear good fruit.

[16:08] And we'll only bear good fruit if we live with Jesus. We live, we listen to his words that he tells us in the Bible.

We live with Jesus. It's just like we are the branches connected to Jesus. And all the things that we do are the fruit of our lives. And the goodness that comes out of us comes through Jesus.

Like the tree and the branch and the fruit. So remember that if you want to live lives that are for the glory of God, you live them with who?

Jesus. And where do we read all about Jesus? In the Bible. We learn all about Jesus in the Bible.

So every day, we should come to your Bibles for a wee minute.

And see if we can find something about Jesus. He shows us how to live good lives. For the glory of God. Okay. We'll say a short prayer together.

[17:15] Close our eyes and put our hands together. Our Father in heaven. We pray that you would help us to read about Jesus every day. We pray that you would help us to understand.

That if we live our lives with you. And that we would be connected to you. And joined to you. That out of us would come good things.

Good fruit to the glory of God. And that God would be pleased with our lives. That we would live lives that are pleasing to God.

And we just pray that when we look at Jesus. We would love him for what he has done for us. And we would love to be people that are not ashamed of Jesus.

And just like the branch. You can tell which fruit will grow on it. We pray that when we live our lives with Jesus. People will see us.

[18 : 15] And know that we belong to Jesus. And that we are his branches. And that we bear his fruit. So be with us we pray in our young lives.

Be with all the young in this community. And congregations. And we pray that we are his children. And we pray that we are his children. And we pray that we are his children. All these things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you for listening to me. And I'm sure I'll be back at some point. I hope the kids talk something. So we'll continue our praise to God. And we'll sing in this hymn.

Mission Praise 746. What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.

Okay. So we'll stand and sing this together. What a friend we have in Jesus. What a friend we have in Jesus.

[19 : 18] What a friend we have in Jesus.

Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.

Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what heedless pain we bear. All because we do not die.

Everything to God in prayer. God, we find a friend who will not die. God, we try us and temptations. Is there trouble anywhere? God, we find a friend who will not die. God, we find a friend who will not die.

[20 : 24] Take him to the Lord in prayer. God, we find a friend who will not die. God, we find a friend who will not die. NING Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden? Convert with a load of care. Precious Savior, still a refuge.

Take it to the Lord in prayer. Do thy friends' prayers for safety. Take it to the Lord in prayer.

In his arms he'll take and shield me. Thou wilt find us all as there. Amen.

Okay, we'll turn now to a passage from Scripture. And we'll turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 15. Gospel of John, chapter 15.

[22 : 04] I'll read from the beginning of that chapter down to the end of verse, Mark 17. Let us hear God's word. I am the true vine and my Father is the vine dresser.

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

[23 : 20] By this my Father is glorified. That you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

[24 : 28] You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide. So that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give

He's in the upper room with them. And it is a swan song to his people. He is telling them how much he loves them.

[31 : 54] Through these chapters from 13 up to chapter 17, you have this discourse with his disciples, with his friends, whom he loves. And he's telling them how much he loves them before he departs from them.

And in many ways, he's preparing them just for what they're about to see. Because they're not going to understand in that time what's happening. But he's making sure that he knows that he loves them and that he will be with them.

It is a weighty expression of the final words to his people before he leaves them, albeit temporarily. The image that is used here in this chapter is the image of the vine. It is an expression of his love. This vine plant that grows out with its many branches.

It is the vine that the Father cares for. The vine dresser. The Father looks after this plant and the Father pours out his love on this plant.

[33 : 06] The stem, the roots, the trunk of it as it were, the main body of it is Jesus. And we are the branches there in verse 5.

I am the vine. You are the branches. The people of God are the branches. But the people of God only bear fruit to the glory of God when we abide in the vine that is Jesus Christ.

As we were saying to the children, we live our lives with Christ, with him dwelling in us in a sense, and that we bear fruit that is pleasing to the vine dresser, to God for his glory.

If we are not connected to the vine, it says that we will wither. And it will not be a pleasing sight to the vine dresser if there is no fruit on the vine.

But you will notice that we are all branches. The comparison is only made between two branches. There is the branch that bears fruit and there is the branch that willers, and that sums up everyone in the sight of God.

[34 : 29] Those who dwell in Christ and with him, and those who separate themselves from Christ, who do not bear fruit. But in the very words here that it says that Jesus is the vine and we are branches, it's in a sense, it kind of clarifies that he loves us.

Because we are made to be a part of him. What he's saying is you are meant to be with me. And it is where we find our full purpose in life, when we abide in Christ and in God.

Man's to fend to glorify God, to enjoy him forever. And when we are branches in the vine of Jesus Christ, we will bear fruit to the glory of God.

There is no comparison between the branch that bears fruit and the branch that does not. There is absolutely no comparison. And it makes the greatest of separation between we, the people that are here, maybe today.

What sort of branch are you today? And as we look at this passage, I want us to consider the love that is evidently present here, and the love that is practiced or would be practiced by Jesus.

[36 : 01] Love present and love practiced. But if we are going to look at the love that is present here, I think it would be good to look at the love that is present in us first.

Because so often we are the branch that does not want to dwell with Jesus Christ. So often we find ourselves that we want to be cut off.

We want to live without Christ, because the things of this world are attractive. The devil puts temptations before us. And we can be often tempted to go with him.

And when we detach ourselves from Jesus and go a different route, our branch will wither away.

And if our life is a life without Christ, it will be entirely empty.

And without his love, we will be left bare. And in the sight of the vine dresser, it is no good.

[37 : 05] If we are not indwelling in the vine, we do not receive the goodness that comes to us who dwell with him.

And you can think of all the things that you love in this world. Think of the things that you love. What are the most important things to you? It might be football, rugby, cars, whatever you have that you possess, that you love and you hold dearly.

We can love the greatest of things like people and family, children, parents. We can love the smallest of things. And there is a vast difference between these loves.

But what is your greatest love in the world? What is the thing that you hold most dearly to in this world? And ask yourself, has your love been perfect to that thing or that person?

[44 : 43] Perfectly enacted by what he will shortly do for them. So let us consider love practiced. And specifically, the love of Christ that is practiced.

Jesus' love that he practiced that he practiced that he practiced to us. Christ, when he came into this world, was the manifestation of perfect love.

Jesus' love, God's love, was seen in the flesh through Jesus. Jesus' love, Jesus' love, we truly see what love is and what it means in him.

Search through the Gospels, read through every story about Jesus and you'll see a man that is full of love. He cared for those who were afflicted.

He comforted those who were mourning. He cured those who were blighted by ailments. He did not revive or reject or cast away those who others did.

[45 : 54] He spoke with the low. He spoke with the lowly ones. He corrected the ones who thought themselves high. But it was all done out of love.

It was all an action of his love because he wanted them to know the love of God. And here in verse 13, Jesus is explaining to the disciples what is the greatest display of love.

That a man would die for his friends. And as we come to this verse, in many ways it's just an image. It's a portrayal for us of what the greatest love looks like.

All you could do for someone. Like the fullest action of love. That you give your life for someone. And in human terms, it makes it understandable for us.

That we would die for someone we love. it's almost as if someone was to take a bullet for you.

Someone would push you out from the bus that was coming to hit you.

[47 : 12] And they would get hit themselves. But they would give their lives so that you would live.

And by their action, whatever they did for you in giving their lives for their friend, you would know in no uncertain terms just how much that person loved you, wouldn't you?

You would be absolutely guaranteed, that person loves me with the greatest love that could ever be known in this world. And you would know it in your heart.

You would say, how much that person loved me. And others would say, look at how much he loved it. Be no doubt about it in your mind.

Jesus is reminding his disciples of the greatest love of man and what it looks like. Because he was shortly going to die for them.

The love of Christ drove him to the cross to die for them and to die for us.

[48 : 30] This is how he would show his love. So that they would not doubt. So that we would not doubt.

That we would not even question how much he has loved his people and how much he loves you. love. And it's the greatest display of love in one sense.

And you say, well, is this what Christ has done? And you say, well, yes, it is, because he's given his life for us. He's given his life so that we may not die.

But in another sense, it's not quite the same. Because Christ has done more than that. More than giving his life for his friend.

It is a greater display of the greatest love of man because Jesus gave his life for his enemies. Jesus gave his life for his friends and his enemies.

[49 : 38] Romans 5 says that God shows his love for us while we are still sinners. Christ died for us. The sin that leaves us dead, the sin that is the cause of death is washed away and taken away.

It's almost as if he's just taking the bullet. He's pushing you away from the bus that is just about to kill you. He is washing away the sins that will leave you dead before God so that you may live.

But in order for that to happen, he has to pay the punishment for your sin and the punishment that he received at the cross of Calvary.

He died for those who loved him. He died for those who are enemies of him. So he died for those who were spitting on him. He died for those who took his name in vain.

He died for those who wanted to live their life without him. Died for those who didn't want to come to church this morning.

[50 : 53] Died for those who just want to live their lives without him at the moment. man, is that you today?

Is he, Christ, died for you? And you may wonder, well, why on earth did he die for me? Because he loves you.

And it is the greatest expression of his love, so that you may know for sure without doubt and with all certainty that he loves you.

He died for you. and you may stand in awe and say, see how much he loves me. When you look at the cross, when you come to the cross, you stand in amazement because he bore your death and your sin there.

That is why the cross is so treasured by the Christian. They come to it, they stand before it, they view it, they consider what is happening there. they see their own son nailed to the cross.

[52 : 09] And a place where they should have been, Christ is dying for them. So that I may live, so that you may live. And it is the greatest mark of love that has been left to this world.

It is a great mark of great love that we were saying earlier. Jesus, this is Jesus' mark to the world of how much he loves you. It is at the cross where we gain our lives, because he gives his and dies for us.

And then people may say, well I didn't choose Christ to die for me. and you're right. Read verse 16. You did not choose me, but I chose you. You did not choose me, but I chose you.

so that you may know how great his love is. He has revealed this to you today, so that you may know that he loves you.

[53 : 35] So that your life is not one of loneliness, chasing after the things of this world, but your life would be one that is the fullness of joy that it says in verse 11, that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full, knowing the love of Jesus Christ that he has for you.

It is all revealed to you today. If you doubt, does God love you? God definitely loves you because you are here to hear that gospel message today.

For whatever reason you have come, the love of Jesus has been set before you to hear just what he has done for you, so that you may stand and say with all certainty, yes, Jesus died for me so that I may live, and that you can be assured of his love in your life, when you come back to the cross every time, and you stand in awe there, and yes, you can't help but ask why did he die for me? Sometimes we don't have an answer, but you know in what he does that he loves you. Does he love you?

Yes, he does. Why are you here today? Because he loves you, and he wants you to hear about his great love that has died on the cross for you, so that you may live and have life with him, so that you may be a branch that abides in the vine, and be a part of him, and live your life according to what he has commanded, that you may be branches that bear good fruit to God's glory, to the praise of God.

[55 : 55] But it asks something of us, doesn't it? The love that Christ perfectly practiced asks of what love we will practice.

Jesus leaves commands to love one another as I have loved you, to live just like Jesus lived, to love just like Jesus loved.

What is your response to this great love? Will you come to him? will you be a branch that bears fruit for him?

There are only two branches, and today the love of God has been extended to every single one that is here to receive of his goodness, to find a life that is full of joy in his love, through his death.

He has set you free from death. Come and receive him. Live according to his word, live according to his commands, and stand in awe of the love of God.

[57 : 21] Does God love you? Yes, he does. Will we come to Jesus, and confess him as our Lord, and live according to his word for the rest of our lives, and we will have assurance of life, even when death does come.

We will live eternally with him, and bear fruit to his glory. Amen, may these thoughts be blessed to us.

We will conclude by singing hymn, a greater Father's love for us, a vast beyond all measure. Amen. How deep the Father's love for us, how fast beyond all measure, that he should give his only Son to make a rich his treasure, how create the pain of sin.

He longs, the Father turns his face away, as wounds which are the chosen one, bring many sons to glory.

! Behold a man upon a cross, my sin upon his shoulders, ashamed I hear my mocking voice, called among the scoffers, it was my sin that held him there, until it was accomplished, his dying breath that taught me life, I know that it is his.

[60 : 06] NINGNING!NING Why should I gain from his reward? I cannot give an answer, but this I know with all my heart, his wounds have been my ransom.

Close up prayer. Our Father in heaven, we pray that you would bless your word to your people today. May your spirit be active amongst us and working in the hearts and lives of your people. Lord, turn us to behold you in your beauty and your love. Help us to stand in awe of the cross at Calvary.

We pray that your love would be spoken of throughout this land today. That your spirit may bless the reading and preaching of your words, wherever it is preached today.

Remember David and South East and the congregations there that are vacant. Pray that you'd be with them, watch over them, guide them, bless us. Bless us as we part from this place. Bless your words that is preached tonight.

Watch over us, guide us and keep us. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Saviour that died on the cross for us. Amen.

[61 : 57] Amen.