

2.2.25 am

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Date: 02 February 2025

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning, a warm welcome to the service this morning. Sorry, we're just a few minutes late in starting. A special welcome to those who are visiting with us.

It's good to see some visitors with us today, and you're especially welcome. If you're able to stay, at the end of the service there's tea and coffee served, and it's good to get the chance to enjoy fellowship together.

The notices you either have on the email that's gone out, or you've read on the screen beforehand, so I won't go through all the notices this morning, but I will highlight just a few.

Just to remind you of the evening service tonight at 6, 6-7, so be encouraged to come along to that. One thing that wasn't in the sheet, because it happened yesterday, was the brunch.

The young ones put on a brunch yesterday to raise funds for the free church camps that many of them go along to. So that was a great success. It was good to see so many people there.

[1 : 02] And just a word of thanks to all who helped and who came along, and to those who donated to it as well. I don't have the exact figure, but I think it was over £700 that was raised yesterday in the morning.

And if anybody wasn't there and wants to donate some more, you can still do that. Speak to David or Mary Cameron. This coming Friday, the Jam Connect Unrooted, the kids' clubs, won't be happening as they usually are.

And the reason for that is the Island Study Conference. And that conference, it goes from Friday through into Sunday. And so we've had this on our notices for the last few weeks.

And just a reminder for the conference. The times of the meetings, just I'll run through them very quickly just now. The first is on Friday at half past seven.

They're all here in the church. And the first one will be taken by the Reverend Dr. Sinclair Ferguson. And the title is To Be Found in Christ. Saturday, there's a breakfast, 8 till 9.

[2 : 14] But probably not in here. That's across in the hotel. Morning worship, 9.30. The first meeting, really, is at 11 o'clock. And that is by Colin MacLeod, taken by Colin MacLeod from back.

Entitled The Book of the King. And then there is another meeting at half past four. Sinclair Ferguson, Our New Life in Christ. At 8 o'clock, the second talk by Colin MacLeod.

And then on Sunday, we'll have services, as usual, at 11 and 6. The morning service will be conducted by Sinclair Ferguson. Entitled Abiding in Christ.

And the evening service, again by Colin. Continuing on the theme of The Book of the King. And then there's a fellowship, a conference, at the end of the evening on Sunday evening.

So that gives you a picture of the services for next Sunday and the conference meetings before that. The last thing, I think, to highlight, well, two more things, actually.

[3 : 19] The team, the catering team that will be on duty here for next weekend for the conference, the fellowship, the teas and coffees, is team two.

Just Sunday evening. So Sunday evening, team two. You know who you are. So you can be on alert for that. And the last thing is just to remind you that we have the POV, the Presbytery Oversight Visit, Wednesday, 12th of February.

A weekend Wednesday. Questionnaires, if you want to fill them out, are not compulsory. But you can still fill them out if you want to do so. And if you could just put in your diary the 12th of February.

There's a number of people who maybe are not in the habit of coming out on a Wednesday evening. But it's a congregational meeting. And it's good to hear what they have to say.

And it's good for us as a congregation as a whole to be able to engage with the Presbytery and speak to them. So they can make an assessment just on how things are in the life of the church here.

[4 : 27] These, I think, that's a bit of a marathon, are all the notices. So let us worship God and let's sing to his praise. The psalm that we studied on Wednesday evening.

Psalm, the first psalm in the Psalter. Psalm 1. That man hath perfect blessedness who walketh not astray in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinner's way.

Nor sitteth in the scorner's chair, but placeth his delight upon God's law and meditates on his law day and night. We'll stand to sing and we'll sing to God's praise the whole of this psalm.

Psalm 1.

Psalm 1.

[6 : 05] Upon God's law and meditates on his law day and night.

He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, which in his season, which in his season, unniels his truth, and his sleep fadeth never.

And all he does shall prosper well.

The wicked are not so, but like they are unto the child, which when it drives to unfill.

In judgment therefore shall not stand, such as ungodly are, nor in the assembly of the just, shall wicked men appear.

[8 : 13] For why the way of godly men?

unto the Lord is known, with us the way of wicked men, shall quite be overthrown.

let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's pray together.

Our heavenly Father, and we thank you for the opportunity that you've given us once more to come together as your people.

In the name of Jesus Christ, in the name of Jesus Christ, your son, our savior. We thank you that we come in worship. We come in response to your call to draw near to you.

[9 : 30] And we thank you as we so often remember that as we draw near to you, you have promised that you will draw near to us. That as we come together, even just a few of us in the name of Jesus, we have the promise that you will be here with us and you will bless us.

And so we pray for that blessing as we bow in your presence. We pray, Lord, that you would be close to us. We pray for each of us here in the building in this room.

As we come before you, you know the different households, the different families, each heart. You are the God who searches us and who knows us.

And you know the things that distract us, the things that our minds may be full of at this point. You know the struggles that we have at heart level. You know the circumstances that we have to deal with in our lives, which often can be a challenge.

You know our needs. And we thank you, Father, that you love us and you have promised that as we pray, you will give to us what we need.

[10 : 42] And so we pray that you would meet us at the point of our need this day and that you would help us, that you would be near to us as we bring everything to you in prayer.

We thank you that we can bring our sin to you in prayer. Even as we think back over the last few days, since we were last in this room, we can recall things that we've said that we wish we hadn't said.

We can recall things that we have done that we wished we hadn't done. We can recall words spoken and thoughts that have passed through our minds, motivations which have been wrong. some that have been seen by others, some that we have been conscious of ourselves, and some even that we are not conscious of, but Lord, you have seen.

And so we come before you confessing that we are sinners and we ask for that cleansing that comes in and through the blood of Jesus. What can wash my sin away?

[11 : 55] Nothing but the blood of Jesus. And so we thank you for that blood that was shed, for the cross that we return to week by week, to remember that our Savior bled and died, to make it possible for us to be forgiven and to have eternal life.

We thank you on the Lord's day that we remember that he not only died, that Jesus rose from the dead and promises resurrection life to all who believe.

And we thank you for the comfort that that brings to us even on this day, as we are conscious of those whose hearts are sore, as we think of those who have passed from time into eternity, even since we last met in this building.

We thank you that there is hope in Christ. And as we think of Morag, especially, having gone on from this world to be with the Savior that she loves, we thank you that there is a sure and certain

hope in Jesus.

We thank you that we're promised that when we come to Jesus, we will never be driven away, but we will be received. And that's a promise that we experience in this world as we come in repentance and faith.

[13:11] And it's a promise that we know in full measure for eternity, where we are received by Jesus into the place that he has prepared for all who love him.

So we thank you for that hope. We pray for your comfort to be with Anna and with Kiki and with Dahl and Sheena here and all of the family here and elsewhere.

We ask that they would know the peace of God with them, the compassion, the comfort of God the Holy Spirit. We pray for others who are struggling at this day with loved ones who are ill.

We think of Max as she is by her father's bedside just now. We pray for Alistair as he struggles at this point in his life.

We ask that as his physical strength fades, that he would know your presence, that he would know your peace, that he would know the inward renewal that comes from believing in the Lord Jesus.

[14:15] We thank you that even when we are not able to reach someone with our words, the Holy Spirit himself is able to minister to all those who are almost in a different conscious state to what we are in.

So we pray for that, for Alistair and for all who are sick and for all who are struggling at this time. We thank you for Jesus. We've sang in that psalm of walking not astray.

And we are conscious of how often we walk astray. But we thank you that Jesus never walked astray, that he never sinned, that he is the perfect, blessed, righteous man, the God-man.

And as we trust in him, we are promised that our sin is taken from us and his righteousness, eternal blessing is received in and through him. So bless us, Lord, we pray.

We pray for all the many things that we've seen on the notice sheets this morning, many activities where we would seek to come together as your people and reach out with the gospel.

[15:21] And we pray for each endeavour, from the children's clubs to the Island Study Conference to the normal week-by-week preaching of your word, to the conversations that we have in the shop and in the home with those who are not yet in Christ.

Bless us, we pray, and help us to be salt and light in this world, to reach out with the message of the gospel. We pray for anyone here this morning who has not yet trusted in Jesus, or anyone who may be watching at a distance who has not yet trusted in Jesus.

We ask, Lord, that you would move on the power of the Holy Spirit, that each one of us would see that we are sinners, that Christ is the Saviour, and there is salvation and blessing promised to all who come to him.

So help us to do that, we pray, and we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward, please? Is that everybody?

Okay. I'll start over here. Yesterday, well, this is something that we do most weeks out at Jam and Rooted and Connect.

[16:52] We've got a game that we play, darts. Do you know what darts is? You all know what darts is, don't you? And so, yesterday when we were all having our pancakes and our bacon and eggs and that at the brunch, Michael and me, we went out and we had a game of darts out in the vestibule.

And I had to rush off. And at the point I rushed off, what was the score, Michael? It was one all. It was one all. So it was a draw. It's never good to finish on a draw. It's always good to make sure somebody wins.

Preferably me. So I thought what we would do this morning is we would just finish the game. Just here, yeah. And the way we'll finish the game is we'll have one dart each.

And not the closest to the bull. Not the closest to the bull. But the first, well, we've only got one dart. And whoever hits the bull's eye wins.

So we don't have a nail or anything to stick in. I was hoping Scott would be here so he could hold it up in the rafters. But Gordon's the closest that we've got. So...

[18:06] Don't try this at home. So, er... You go first. So, er... We can wait back here just so we... We're going... So...

Do you want to go first, Michael? You go first. I'll go first. And do it. And do it. And do it. And do it. And do it. And do it. And do it.

And do it. And do it. And do it. And do it. And do it. And do it. And do it.

And do it. little bit worried. I was a wee bit worried that one of us, well Michael might hit the bullseye, but I'm glad that you didn't hit the bullseye. So just to just to remind yourself of what happened there.

You are all watching, yeah? Who hit the bullseye? Who hit the bullseye? Nobody. So it's still at 1-1. We'll have to finish it next time at Jam or Routed Connect, sorry.

[19 : 10] So we both missed the mark. We had a bullseye, that was the mark, right in the middle of the board, and we both threw, and we both missed the mark.

I think Michael, you probably got a bit closer than I did, but the point is we both missed the mark. Now the Bible tells us about something that makes God sad and it makes us sad too.

And what's it called? That thing in our hearts. Sin. And do you know what the Bible tells us? The word that's used in the Bible for sin.

Do you know what it means? If you look up when you speak to the clever people and you say, what does the word for sin mean? Do you know what it means? It means missing the mark.

And for some people you could say, as they try to live lives which are good, they might get quite close to the mark. So sometimes you might throw, shh, not just now, we've not got a lot of time, all the intimations.

[20 : 24] Sometimes you might actually try and live a good life and we might do lots of good things. And we sort of get close and people will say, look at how good that life is.

But in our hearts we might do really good things and be really proud about it. And we might try and boast and say, I'm actually better than you because I did more good things than you.

And then we take something that's good and we stain it with sin. And so we miss the mark. There's other lives and, you know, maybe they do awful things.

And they do things that hurt lots and lots of people and they miss the mark by a long way. But the thing is, everybody in this world, as much as we might try to be good.

Do you think any of you are good all the time? Put your hand up if you think you've never done a bad thing, never done a sin. That's exactly right.

[21 : 27] Any people over here? No perfect people over there? That's exactly right. And the Bible tells us in Romans chapter 3 verse 23, there's no one perfect, no one righteous.

We all sin. We all miss the mark. And the mark is perfection. So that's the problem.

That's the bad news. Where's the good news? Who do you think, boys and girls, came to this world and never sinned and always did the right thing and never missed the mark, ever?

Who do you think? Katie? Jesus. And so when we go into the Bible and we read about Jesus and all the things that he did, we have all these many things that were written and they tell us that Jesus was perfect.

He never sinned. He never missed the mark. And he promises, boys and girls, look at me for a wee second. He promises that if we, we'll take a wee break for a second, will we?

[22 : 49] So, we all miss the mark. We all sinned. Jesus never missed the mark. He always was perfect and he promises that if we believe in him, what does he take away from us?

He takes our sin away, doesn't he? And what does he give to us? He gives to us his perfect righteousness. It's a bit like, it's a bit like you get a professional who throws the dart and it hits the bullseye and he gets the perfect score for the bullseye.

And then you have a shot and you throw the dart and you totally miss and the professional says, tell you what, I'll take your rubbish score of nothing and I'll give you my perfect score and you've qualified.

And that's what Jesus did for us. He took our bad away, our sin away. He's given us his perfect score, his perfect righteousness and that's his promise if we believe in him.

So let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, we thank you for your son and we thank you that although we sin, although we walk astray, although we make a mess of things so often, we thank you that Jesus never went astray, he never sinned, he was absolutely perfect.

[24 : 18] We thank you that he promised that if we believe in him, that he will take our sin away from us and he will give to us his rightness, his righteousness.

He will make us perfect in him. And we thank you that Jesus has prepared a place in heaven where there's no sin, there's no sickness, there's no sadness, there's nothing that would cause us to be sad and to be sore.

[31 : 56] And I'll read the verses in English. Because my soul, engraved to dwell, shall not be left by thee, nor wilt thou give thine Holy One corruption to see.

Thou wilt me show the path of life, of joys that is full store, before thy face at thy right hand are pleasures evermore. These two verses will remain seated to sing to God's praise.

And I'll read the verses in English.

And I'll read the verses in English.

And I'll read the verses in English.

[33 : 49] And I'll read the verses in English. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS I pray for a moment.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that we have the path of life shown to us as we open your word, as we listen to the Lord Jesus and as we trust him.

And we pray now that as we come back to these verses that we read, that you would open our hearts, that you would unblock our ears, that you would take the scales from our eyes.

And that you would minister to us in the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray that you would speak to us. We pray for the children in the Sunday school and in the creche and in here also.

[37 : 06] And we ask, Lord, that you would bless them, that you would draw them to yourself. That these wee ones, as we so often pray, Lord, that they would not be kept from you, but that they would be brought to Jesus.

And the things that we say and the way that we teach them and the way that we live. We pray that we would not be a hindrance, but that we would be a help. That they would see, that they would believe, that they would walk with Jesus.

And we thank you for little Elijah here in the service for the first time this morning. And we ask, Lord, that you would bless him. We thank you that his strength is much greater than it was when he was first born.

We thank you for taking him through a difficult first couple of weeks. And we ask, Lord, that you would bless him. That he would grow up to know you and know your love.

And that he would grow up to trust you and walk with you also. We ask, Lord, also that you would help him to sleep. Not just in the day, but at night as well.

[38 : 16] We thank you that we can take everything to you in prayer. The details of our lives, the things that we struggle with. We pray that you would bless Alec and that you would bless Caroline.

And that they too would know your help and your presence each day. So hear our prayers and help us, we ask, as we turn to your word.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. The problem with Christianity is that there is no evidence. There is no evidence. Or there is no evidence to persuade me to believe. And I have heard that comment made many times in different ways, different shapes slightly.

But it is a comment. If you are a Christian and if you are trying to speak to somebody about Jesus, this is one of the things that you will hear repeatedly. Folks will say things like, well, you know, I am a science guy.

[39 : 27] I wish I could be as simple as you and just believe blindly. But I base my decisions on evidence.

And it is a kind of polite put down. But it is not a new. It is a commonly heard objection to believing in Jesus that finds its way all the way back to Matthew 12.

Because that is the kind of things that the religious leaders were saying as they were confronted with whether or not to believe in Jesus.

So three points this morning. The time that we have. The first point, and we will spend more time on this one before you become alarmed by the time. The first point is evidence demanded.

We hear the Pharisees and scribes demanding evidence, science from Jesus. The second thing we will see is empty hearts.

[40 : 38] Jesus, he almost x-rays the hearts of these religious leaders and he shows them, he shows us what's going on there. There's an emptiness, there's a lack of life there. And the final thing is the blessing of the eternal family.

The extended eternal family that we are called into as we believe in Jesus. So that gives us structure. First point then is evidence demanded.

And if you've got your Bibles open, you'll find it helpful just to step through the verses. Verse 38. Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Jesus saying, Teacher. So what we're doing here is we're cutting into a tense conversation that's already ongoing. A conversation that is happening between Jesus and the Pharisees and now the scribes also as they weighed in. And the scribes and the Pharisees, as most of us will know, they were the religious experts.

[41 : 49] They were teachers. They were recognized teachers. And they speak to Jesus. They address Jesus like he is on the same level as them.

Although we know that they actually thought Jesus was lower than them. They say to Jesus, they address Jesus as teacher. And we can ask the question, is Jesus a teacher?

And of course the answer is, he is a teacher. He's a better teacher than any teacher who ever lived. But the point is, he was much more than a teacher.

He was, he is Lord. He is God the Son. He's not on the same level as the Pharisees.

He's not on the same level as us. He is far above them. He exalted far above us. And yet those who open this conversation with Jesus, they didn't want to see that.

[42 : 51] Teacher, they say, we wish to see a sign from you. And if you've got your Bibles open, you'll find it helpful just to step back a chapter or two as we, we'll just do a quick survey of things as we try to take in the irony of this demand.

They say to Jesus, this is Jesus who they've been watching, who they've been closely following to see what he does. They say to Jesus, we wish to see a sign from you.

Now, these are the men who had just witnessed a demon-possessed man, a man who was blind and who was mute.

He's healed instantly by Jesus. That's verse 22 of the chapter that we're in. And then if you go back just a little before that, verses 9 to 14, there's a man who has a withered hand.

And Jesus just says, stretch it out. And with the power and the word of Jesus, his hand is healed instantly. Surely, surely these things are signs that this Jesus, it is more than just a man.

[44 : 12] He's believable. And then if you step back into Matthew chapter 9, which is not long before in terms of time where we're at in this conversation, look at all the things that Jesus did in the way of signs.

We see in verse 33 that there's a man who was unable to speak and Jesus makes him speak. No doctor could do that for him, but Jesus can do it.

And verse 30 shows us that there are two blind men and they're given their sight. Verse 22 tells us that there's a woman who had a 12-year illness, an issue of blood, and she's healed instantly when she touches just the hem of the garment of Jesus.

Verse 25 of chapter 9 tells us that there's a girl who was dead, there's a girl who's died, and she's restored to life by Jesus.

Surely these are signs. Step back into Matthew chapter 8, we see in verse 32, two men with demons that everybody was petrified of are set free instantly.

[45 : 32] Verse 26, we hear Jesus speak a word into a tempest, a storm, and everything instantly goes calm.

Verse 15 chapter 8 tells us that Peter's mother-in-law who's suffering from a chronic fever, she is healed, as are many others through the ministry of Jesus.

Chapter 8, verse 13 tells us that there's a centurion who has a servant that he cares for, and he comes to speak to Jesus about the servant.

The servant's at home, Jesus is far from him, and yet Jesus speaks a word, and the servant in that moment is healed. Verse 3 of chapter 8, the illness, which was the plague of that time, for which there was no cure, leprosy.

A man whose life was essentially over, he is healed by Jesus. That's just two chapters. That's just a short sample of some of the things that Jesus had been doing.

[46 : 47] And all these scribes and pharisees, they had seen this. They had tracked Jesus every step of the way. There had been no shortage of signs, and yet none of these signs were enough for those men who did not want to see, and who did not want to believe.

J.C. Ryle says, they shut their eyes to the many wonderful works which Jesus had already done. They were not yet persuaded. They yet demanded more proof.

There was evidence enough to convince them, but they had no wish to be convinced. There are still many people like that.

That's the way it was, and that's the way it still is. There are many people that we can speak to about the things of God, and they'll say things like, well, if only God would give me a sign, then I would believe.

If only God would speak to me, they say, as they close their Bibles and leave them on the shelf. If only God would speak to me, then I would believe. If only God would come to me, they say, as they look away from Jesus, then I would believe.

[48 : 23] What does Jesus say to such an unbelieving person, then and still today? God would say, what he says in verse 39, he says, no more signs.

You've had enough signs. Your demand for evidence, and evidence, and evidence, and evidence is denied.

Jesus answered in verse 39, an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

So what is Jesus saying in that verse and his response? Well, what he's saying to the Pharisees and the scribes is he says, you have the Bible. They only had the Old Testament.

But he's saying to these men, you have the Bible, you have the Old Testament, you have books like Jonah, you have chapters that are packed full of evidence that points to me, says Jesus.

[49 : 38] So no more signs. Open the word of God. Verse 40, says Jesus, for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

What's Jesus talking about there? Well, he's talking about his death and his resurrection. One commentator says, the point is that Jonah was swallowed up by the sea monster, so he, Jesus, will be swallowed up by the earth.

And as Jonah was delivered from his imprisonment, so also Jesus would rise from the grave. So Jesus, he's pointing them back to the Old Testament, to Jonah, and he's pointing them forward to his death and resurrection.

And he's saying, that's what you have to look at. No more signs. No magic tricks. No magic tricks. verse 41.

Jesus says, the men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. For they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

[51 : 00] Do you remember the story in the book of Jonah? Jonah, he's sent to a people that he did not like.

He's sent to a place called Nineveh. He doesn't want to go, but eventually he has to go. And he goes to this hard, sinful people, and he preaches judgment, because that's what he's told to preach, 40 more days, and destruction comes.

That was his sermon. And the people in Nineveh, they hear the message, they take the warning, and they repent.

They say, maybe if we repent, God will have mercy on us, and God has mercy on them, and they're saved through this disgruntled prophet who doesn't like the people, and preaches judgment.

And yet, here, in front of these scribes and Pharisees, is one who's far greater than Jonah. Here is God the Son. Here is Jesus, and he is preaching, not just judgment, but he is preaching grace.

[52 : 24] He is reaching out in love to say to these people, come, and no blessing, and no salvation, and receive grace.

And yet, these men, they, they hear the message, they see God the Son, but they will not repent. They won't believe. And so, Jesus says, in that very sobering verse, the men of Nineveh will testify against you on judgment day.

Then, verse 42, the Queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

And I'm not going to have the time to go into this, but 1 Kings chapter 10, you can read it this afternoon, and you have the story of the Queen of Sheba. She traveled all the way from likely Yemen to hear the wisdom of Solomon because she detected something in the wisdom of Solomon that must have been from God.

[53 : 47] So she travels across land and sea, you could say, to hear this wisdom, just to experience something of this wisdom that has been talked about, and yet here is God the Son, right with them, the all-wise God, and these men who have been educated in the Scriptures, they won't listen to him.

they won't come to him. And so Jesus says that the Queen of the South, she too will testify against you in your unbelief on the judgment day.

And we might read into this and shake our heads in disapproval as we see how the scribes and the Pharisees rejected Jesus.

But we have to ask the question, where does this leave us? if you are here this morning and you are still not believing in Jesus, then you, then we are in a worse position than any of the scribes and Pharisees God's because we have more than they ever had to persuade us to believe.

They had the Old Testament. They had prophecies that were somewhat unclear, but we have the Old Testament and we have the New Testament.

[55 : 48] we have these accounts, these gospel messages, these eyewitness accounts of the life and the death and the resurrection, the whole story of Jesus.

They couldn't see that. We can. And we have letters from Peter and from Paul and from James and from John that tell us that Jesus died.

They don't just tell us that Jesus died, but they tell us why Jesus died. We have an explanation, we have theology that underlines for us that Jesus died for our salvation. He died for us.

They didn't have these letters. And we have God, the Holy Spirit, who strives with us and who opens the word of God for us and who draws us to Jesus.

When there's that thing that goes on in our hearts and we're being drawn, and we're starting to understand and we're starting to see and we're starting to have a desire for Jesus, God the Holy Spirit is at work.

[57 : 10] He's striving. They didn't have that. So we have much more than these men who are in conflict with Jesus ever had.

And yet some of us still today are saying we would like a sign. If only God would give me a sign. we don't need a sign. God has given us his son and he is enough.

And Matthew, in writing this gospel, is saying, I'm writing this gospel so that you will believe in him. evidence demanded.

Second point, empty hearts. There's a slightly cryptic couple of verses here that almost seems disconnected from the previous conversation.

[58 : 30] But we'll spend a moment just trying to understand it. Jesus says, in verse 43, when the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless, arid places seeking rest, but finds none.

Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits, more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, so that the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation. question. When you and I go to a doctor, the doctor will examine us, and the doctor will initially examine what's going on on the outside.

There are symptoms, there are things that they may look at on our skin, or in the way that we walk, or in the way that we behave, that will raise the alarm.

And so the doctor will observe the outward symptoms, but a good doctor will want to go deeper than that, and get to the heart of the matter, to try to understand what's going on on the inside.

[59 : 59] And that's what Jesus is doing here. He's had this conversation, this clash, with the Pharisees and scribes who are saying, more signs please, more stuff, more magic, more miracles please, and Jesus says, no more signs.

You have enough, no more signs. So that's the outward conversation, and then Jesus takes the x-ray beam, and he shines out in the direction of the hearts of these men.

That's what's going on here. Jesus, who is the great physician, he looks into the hearts of these religious leaders who are calling for a sign. And these religious men, the houses of their outward lives, what could be seen on the outside, looked very orderly, verse 44.

It's put in order. That's how it appears. Their lives look, verse 44, like they've been swept clean. There's no obvious moral failures.

But Jesus, he sees into the arid, waterless state of their hearts.

[61 : 22] And Jesus can see there's no life. There's no life in these hearts. hearts. These hearts are empty of life.

On the outside, they have their Bibles. They have their suits. They have their letters after their names. They have their positions in the Hall of Fame in terms of the theological institutions of that day.

Everything looks good on the outside. But there's no life. Eric Alexander describes these men as having religion without regeneration.

Warren Weerspey says, it is not enough to clean the house. We must also invite in the right tenant. The Pharisees were proud of their clean houses, but their hearts were empty.

Mere religion or reformation will not save. There must be regeneration, the receiving of Christ into the heart.

[62 : 45] And as we thought about with the children, it's not just the Pharisees and the scribes. All of us have a heart problem.

And Benjamin told us, or Finley told us, it's called sin. And sin leads to death, eternal death.

So how can that problem of sin be cured? Well, the problem, again, the children would tell us. It's simple. We ask Jesus to take our sin away.

We ask Jesus to come into our hearts and bring his life. and if we ask him, he promises that he will do it.

And if we don't, he promises that he will not. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[63 : 57] Everyone who does not will not. God. And so the thing that was required in the hearts of these religious men was for them to confess their religious sin and to ask Jesus to come into their lives.

As Savior and as Lord and as King, a Christian is someone whose heart is filled with Jesus. Paul describes a Christian as he talks about himself in Galatians 2.20.

He says, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. Thomas Chalmers wrote about the expulsive power of a new affection.

And the sin that we have a dark affection for, for that sin to be expelled from my heart and yours and for a new life to enter in.

We need more than religion. We need to have a relationship with Jesus. we need to have hearts which have that deep spirit inspired affection, love for Jesus.

[65 : 44] And for us to have these hearts, we have to ask God to work in them. God so let me just ask this question as simply as I can, as I so often do.

Have you, have we asked Jesus to take our sin away? Have we asked Jesus to come into our hearts to be Lord and Savior?

If we've never done it, he's not there. If we've never done it, do it now.

The promise that we have is that God will fill our hearts with the spirit, that we will be filled with the Lord Jesus. Not the dry bones of religious ritual, not the filthy rags of our best efforts of good works. They're getting us nowhere. But we want the life, the righteousness of Jesus, the grace of Jesus, which is promised when we ask.

[67 : 21] Evidence demanded, empty hearts. Jesus can see that he offers to fill.

And the final thing, just a word to finish, is the eternal family. While Jesus, verse 46, was still speaking, to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. There's something really sad in this scene. You just try and picture it for a moment. We can see Jesus in our mind's eye.

He's speaking. He's speaking maybe in some room. to a large group of people who are listening to the gospel message, who are listening to the teaching that comes from him.

And outside are his family. Not inside, but they're standing outside.

[68 : 34] They're not with him like the disciples. going in. So what was going on here?

Well, Mark in chapter 3, Mark in chapter 3 at verse 21 tells us what was going on. In Jesus' family, they didn't believe.

At this point, they didn't believe in him. And actually, what they were saying in the family is, he's out of his mind. They thought that he was taking all this ministry stuff just way too seriously.

He was late home from dinner. Sometimes he wasn't coming in to eat at all. And so their concern is to extract him from this room, to extract him from these works of ministry and get him back to the

dinner table just to do normal stuff.

They didn't understand who Jesus was. They didn't understand what he was doing at this point. Thankfully, that changes, but at this point, they don't understand. And so there's a clash.

[69 : 46] There's tensions here. And even that in itself is encouraging for us to know that Jesus experienced firsthand the complicated dynamics.

of family life. We all have our complications in family life, don't we? We all know what it is at times to be dealing with tensions and clashes and the awkwardness of strained relationships.

people and that's what Jesus was in the middle of here in his own family. And so the encouraging thing for us as we look in on this is that when we pray to Jesus, when we're struggling in our own family situations, we're not praying to a God who doesn't know what we're talking about.

He understands. He was in the middle of it all. But it seems that that night Jesus didn't come in for dinner.

He replied, verse 48, to the man who told him, who is my mother? And who are my brothers? Now we might ask the question, has Jesus been insensitive here?

[71 : 12] Is he being unkind towards his family? Is he disowning his family? Well the answer is no, he's not. He's not closing the door on his family.

Jesus loves his family. As Jesus is hanging on the cross in John chapter 19, as he is suffering the excruciating pain physically and spiritually that our sin caused, he's not thinking about himself, he cries out because he has a concern and a care for his mother.

he loves his family. So what's this statement all about? Well this is not Jesus closing the door on his family, this is actually Jesus opening the door for us to be part of his extended eternal family.

Stretching out verse 49, his hand towards his disciples, he said, here are my mother and my brothers for whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my mother, my brother and sister and mother.

the amazing thing that we finished with just now is when we trust in Jesus, as the disciples did albeit in their flawed failed way, when we seek to follow Jesus, not only does he save us from sin, that would be amazing enough, but he saves us into his family.

[73 : 07] He saves us into the family of God. 1 John 3 1 says, see what kind of love the father has given to us, that we should be called children of God, and so we are.

So how amazing is that? Some of us may have no real strong family bonds. Some of us may feel isolated.

Some of us may struggle with the breaches that comes over the course of time that death causes, and the sadness that lingers with us over that.

And yet, we are told here that when we trust in Jesus, we become part of an extended, eternal, unbreakable family.

If you're a Christian, have you thought about this? You have brothers and sisters that you've never met from every tribe and every nation and every generation.

[74 : 28] There are people who were born thousands of years ago who are your brothers and sisters, and in heaven, you'll get to know them.

That won't be the most amazing thing. The most amazing thing will be to know Christ. but another amazing thing will be to be part of this amazing extended, eternal family.

We have brothers and sisters from all over the world, every generation. We have Jesus as our Savior, as the elder brother who understands everything that we will ever go through.

We have the spirit of Jesus living in us, filling our lives with the life of God. And we can come to the almighty eternal God, the God of heaven and earth, and call him Father.

Our Father. Knowing that he hears us, and he helps us, and he receives us, as his children, as we come to him.

[75 : 47] let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the wonder of the fact that we can call you Father.

We thank you for the family of God that we are promised that we are brought into when we believe in Jesus. We thank you for the satisfaction, for the contentment that we experience in our hearts when we are filled with the life of Jesus.

And we thank you that this morning we don't have to wait for more and more evidence to come. We don't have to go on courses, we don't have to go on pilgrimages, we have enough to say even in these moments, Lord, I believe.

Forgive my sin. Receive me as your child. I believe. Help me when I struggle with unbelief, but I believe. We pray that each one of us would put our amen to that prayer. And no more than religion, but the blessing of a relationship with Jesus. We ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to finish of the depth of the Father's love for us, how deep the Father's love for us.

[77 : 11] Mission prays 988. We'll stand to sing.

I'll keep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that he should give his only Son to make a wretched treasure.

While great the pain of searing loss, God's love for us, the Father turns his face away, as wounds which are the chosen one, bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon his shoulders, ashamed I hear my mocking voice, God called out among the scoffers, it was my sin that held it there, until it was a dark face, his dying breath has brought me life, I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything, no gifts, no power, no wisdom, but I will boast in Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, why should I gain from his reward, I cannot give an answer, but this I know with all my heart, his wounds have paid my ransom.

[80 : 09] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with us all now and forever more.

Amen.