

Growing?

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Date: 19 April 2020

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning.

It's good to have you with us this morning, whether you're watching on the television, online, or whether you're listening in on the telephone, it's good for us to have the chance to come together and worship.

Intimations, just a couple of things. One is to say that the evening service will be online just before 6 o'clock tonight, and we'll look at Psalm 119, a very short look at a long psalm, and that's this evening.

The services next Sunday will be a morning service as usual, and I hope to be able to take that service myself. And the service in the evening will be the monthly Gaelic service, which will be taken by Faragher MacLeod, one of the elders here.

YF meets tonight at half past seven online as usual, and the prayer meeting will meet on Zoom on Wednesday at half past seven also. So be encouraged to come to these meetings.

[1 : 25] And now let's begin our time of worship. Let's worship God, and we sing to his praise from Psalm 1. Psalm 1, the whole of the psalm. 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.

Dear night, he shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, which in his season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never. We sing the whole of Psalm 1 to God's praise.

That man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinner's way, 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.

He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, which in his season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never.

And all he doth shall prosper well, the wicked are not so.

[3 : 49] But like they are unto the chaff, which wind drives to and fro, In judgment therefore shall not stand, such as ungodly are.

Nor in the assembly of the just shall wicked men appear.

For why the way of godly men unto the Lord is known?

Whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's pray. Our heavenly Father, we thank you once more that we are gathered on your day, the day that we remember that Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, your Son, the one in whose name we pray, we thank you that we remember each large day that he is the one who died for our sin and rose from the grave to give us the assurance of everlasting life.

[5 : 35] We don't remember this simply on Easter Sunday, but every large day that we gather we celebrate that fact. And we thank you that we have that hope, we have that assurance, and we have these eternal truths that we can hang on to by faith.

In a world where things are so uncertain, in a world where things, especially just now, seem so unstable and rocky, we thank you, Lord, that we are able to hold on to Jesus, that we have an anchor for our soul, one who is sure and steadfast, one who holds us.

So help us, Lord, we pray, on this day, to have our eyes fixed upon Jesus. Help us, we pray, as we open your word, Lord, and as we read the scriptures, as we meditate upon them, that we would see Jesus.

We thank you for the psalm that we sang. And as we look at that psalm, and as we see two ways, and as we see the way of blessing, the way of perfection, we see Jesus.

We know that we cannot live that way. We can try, but we fail. Day by day, we fail. But we thank you that we can come back asking for your forgiveness.

[6 : 58] And, Lord, we say from the outset today that our hope is not in ourselves and our own endeavors. We are saved not by our own works, so that none would boast, but we are saved by the grace of Jesus.

And we ask, Lord, that you would make us truly thankful for that, each moment of each day. We thank you for all that Jesus did to make it possible for us to save, to be saved, taking our sin from us on that cross and giving his righteousness, his perfection to us.

We thank you for this great exchange that the theologians talk of, where all our filth is removed from us and the riches of Jesus, the peace, the joy, the assurance of eternal life is given to us as we believe.

So give us faith, we pray, each one of us, that we may believe. Faith comes by hearing. And we ask that you would give us ears to hear your word in the time that we have in gathering together this morning.

We pray for all who gather together this morning in different places. You know us, you know our needs, you know our concerns, you know the struggles that we have. And we bring them to you in prayer, Lord, as we are encouraged to.

[8 : 25] We are not built to be able to take heavy burdens on our own shoulders, but we thank you that we have friend in Jesus, one who is able to take these burdens from us.

And we pray for those who are in particular need this morning, those that we know are sick and who are struggling, some who are suffering with this virus and who are connected with us, part of our family.

And we ask, Lord, that you would draw near to them, that you would lay your hand of healing upon them. And we pray that in the midst of their struggles, that they would know that you are God and that you are with them.

We pray on for those who are in their own homes, living alone, isolated. We pray for them week by week, Lord. But we know that week by week and day by day, they and we need to know that nearness of Jesus.

We need you every hour, Lord. And so we come constantly asking that you would help them, that you would help us. We pray on for those who are out on the front line and for those who are serving the public in different ways.

[9 : 40] And as we have asked for protection over them in the past, we continue to do so now. We pray for our leaders, as you have called us to. We ask, Lord, for wisdom for them, even though often they do not ask for wisdom from heaven for themselves.

We ask, Lord, that in these days where we feel our own vulnerability as a nation, we ask, Father, that you would draw us back to the book that we were once known for within the nation.

We pray, Father, for our young ones. We thank you for the fact, as far as we know, that they are healthy, that they are bright, that they are doing okay at this time.

And we miss them from this building, the different clubs where they gather together. And we pray that as we bring them to you in prayer, that you would be near to them and that you would minister to them.

We thank you for those who have Bibles opened in their homes. And we ask that you would bless them and speak to them in the time that they gather around your word. And for others, perhaps, who may come to clubs, but who don't have the Bible open in their own homes, we ask that you would bring back to their mind and memories the verses of Scripture that they have learned.

[10 : 56] We know that the Holy Spirit works in that way to bring back to our mind and our memories your word in order to feed us and in order to encourage us and help us.

So, Lord, we pray for our young ones. We pray for the elderly, those in care homes. Again, we ask for your protection over them. And we ask that this virus would not penetrate these homes, but it would be kept away.

We pray that you would drive this virus back, Lord, and that you would drive us as individuals, as a church, as a nation, to look to you, to seek to draw near to you, knowing that as we draw near to you, that you draw near to us.

So bless us, we pray. Help us not to go through life burdened, carrying sin, but to confess our sin. Help us not to go through life burdened with worries and cares that we should not be hanging on to,

but to hand them all over to Jesus and enable us, we pray, to grow as Christians, to become more like Jesus.

And we ask that you would sanctify us to that end. So hear our prayers, take away our sin, lead us and guide us as we would seek to worship you. And we ask all this in Jesus' name.

[12:13] Amen. Boys and girls, it is good to see you today through that little lens there. And I want to show you something this morning to start off with, but I don't have it here.

It's something that's going to come on the screen. So what I'll do is, I'll stop talking just now and I'll take a wee break. And there's a video that's going to come on the screen. And I want you to watch the video and look to see what you see.

And then we'll talk about it in a wee second. So, see you in a minute. We'll see you in a minute. We'll see you in a minute.

We'll see you in a minute. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Well, if you look at the pictures when you was a tiny tot, yo, dude, you have changed, but God has not.

[14:07] Boys and girls, you saw that video and I wonder, did you see anyone that you recognize in that video? And I know that the answer to that question is, yes you did.

Because what you were looking at on that screen was pictures of yourselves. But not yourselves as you look at yourselves in the mirror today.

But these are pictures that go back a few years. And they're pictures of you some time back. Now what do you notice that's different between what you were like back then and what you're like today?

And the answer to that question is, well you've all grown up. Even after a few weeks, when hopefully we will get sometime soon to come back into the church building here, we'll be able to see that the boys and girls, you've actually grown taller in the time that you've been away.

We've been away I think for five weeks now. And even in five weeks you'll have grown taller. And if it goes on a bit longer you'll grow taller and taller and taller. Because that's what happens.

[15:17] You grow taller and you grow stronger. People like me tend to grow shorter and we get a bit wider. But God has designed us, especially you boys and girls when you're at the age you're at.

He's designed you to grow up physically. That's how God made us. And that's how he made us. Not just physically, but that's how he wants us to be spiritually.

As Christians, God wants us to grow up. Not just to trust him and stay like Christian babies forever. God wants us to grow up and to become stronger and to become brighter and to become steadier as Christians.

God wants us to grow up and to become more and more like Jesus. That's what it says in Romans chapter 8, in verse 29.

Paul, when he's speaking to the church in Rome, he talks about how God wants us to be conformed to the likeness of his son. And that's just a more complicated way of saying he wants us to become like Jesus.

[16:29] Now, sometimes for you, people might say to you as you're getting older, Oh, you're getting us like your father or you're getting us like your mum.

You might have seen one picture on the screen there. And it was a picture that showed Grace and me in the same shot. And although I don't really see it, and although Grace doesn't really see it, everybody says that we're so alike.

She was so pleased when that picture went on the screen. Because she's so proud to look like her dad. She's not really at all. She's horrified. But that's just what people say. They say that she's like her dad.

And people say that to us about people in our family. You're like your mum. You're like your dad. But wouldn't it be good if people could say to us, You know this?

You're growing more and more and more like Jesus. You're becoming more and more loving. You're becoming more and more of a joyful person.

[17:30] You're so peaceful. You're so patient. You're so kind. You're so faithful. You're so gentle. You're so good.

And you never fly off the handle. You've got such good self-control. These are the fruits of the Spirit. And these are the fruits that when they're seen in our lives, they show people Jesus.

And wouldn't it be good if people could say, of you and I, you know, as time goes on, as you're growing, you're becoming more and more like Jesus. Now, how do we grow?

Well, you know the answer to that question, don't you? Because you sing this song in Sunday school all the time. Read the Bible. Pray every day.

And you'll grow, grow, grow. I won't sing this song. Don't worry, girls. But that's the thing to remember. If we want to grow, read our Bibles, pray every day, and we'll grow, grow, grow.

[18 : 36] Because as we're reading our Bibles, and as we're praying, that we're actually spending time with Jesus. And when we spend time with Jesus, he makes us more and more like him.

So boys and girls, it's good to see that we grow up, and we become bigger, and we become stronger. But it's even better when we see people growing up, to become more and more like Jesus.

And let's pray about that now. Lord God, we thank you that you love us. We thank you that you designed us, that you made us, that you care for us. We thank you that as we eat our food, and as we get water, and we thank you that we have these things here.

As we get our sleep at night, you make us grow up to be bigger, and stronger. And we pray, Lord, that in our hearts, we would become stronger as well, and steadier.

Because we want to become more, and more like Jesus. So help the boys and girls, and help the mums and dads, and all of us who are listening in, and watching.

[19 : 42] Help us to trust Jesus, because we know, Lord, when we trust you, that you come into our lives, you come into our hearts. And we pray that you would work, within our hearts, as we read the Bible, and as we pray, that you would come close to us, and that you would work in us, in such a way, that we become more, and more like Jesus.

Forgive us for the times that we're not. Forgive us for the times that we, that we sin, and we, we don't look like Jesus at all. We thank you that, as we confess our sin, you do forgive us.

And we pray, that you would work in our lives, and that you would make us more, like you. And we pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now if you could open, God's word please, your Bibles, at 2nd Peter, and chapter 1.

2nd Peter, chapter 1. And we'll read the whole, of this, chapter. This is God's word. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle, of Jesus Christ, to those who, through the righteousness, of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, have received a faith, as precious, as ours.

Grace, and peace be yours, in abundance, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power, has given us, everything we need, for life and godliness, through our knowledge of him, who called us, by his own glory and goodness.

[21 : 15] Through these, he has given us, his very great, and precious promises, so that through them, you may participate, in the divine nature, and escape the corruption, in the world, caused by evil desires.

For this reason, make every effort, to add to your faith, goodness, and to your goodness, knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control, and to self-control, perseverance, and to perseverance, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love.

For if you possess, these qualities, in increasing measure, they will keep you, from being ineffective, and unproductive, in your knowledge, of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone, does not have them, he is short-sighted, and blind, and has forgotten, that he has been cleansed, from his past sins.

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager, to make your calling, and election sure. For if you do, these things, you will never fall, and you will receive, a rich welcome, into the eternal kingdom, of our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So I will always remind you, of these things, even though, you know them, and are firmly established, in the truth, you now have. I think it is right, to refresh your memory, as long as I live, in the tent of this body, because I know, that I will soon, put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ, has made clear to me.

[22 : 43] And I will make every effort, to see, that after my departure, you will always be able, to remember these things. We did not, follow cleverly invented stories, when we told you, about the power, and coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But we were eyewitnesses, of his majesty, where he received, honour and glory, from God the Father, when the voice came, to him, from the majestic glory, saying, this is my son, who my love, with him, I am well pleased.

We ourselves, heard this voice, that came from heaven, when we were with him, on that sacred mountain. And we have the word, of the prophets, made more certain.

And you, will do well, to pay attention to it, as to a light shining, in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the morning star, rises in your hearts.

Above all, you must understand, that no prophecy, of scripture, came about, by the prophets, own interpretation. For prophecy, never had its origin, in the will of man.

[23 : 47] that God, that men spoke, from God, as they were carried along, by the Holy Spirit.

Amen. And may God bless, that reading, of his word, to us.

Let's pray for a moment, as we turn back, to God's word. Help us, Lord, we pray, as we open, your word. We recognize, that, these words, were written, by those, who were carried along, by the Holy Spirit.

This is the word, of God, and not the word, of man. So help us, we pray. Give us the help, of God the Holy Spirit, so that we would, be given understanding, and that we would know, these truths, applied, to our lives.

And we pray, not only for ourselves, but for all the, the congregations, around us, in this community, of every denomination, as your word, is opened, in different places, through different medium, at this time.

We ask, that you would, add your blessing, Lord, and that you would, continue to, to build your church. And now we, we ask, Lord, that you would, help us, that you would, stir our hearts, that they would be like, good ground.

[25 : 00] And we ask, that the seed of your word, would take root, in it, as we, come before you, in this way. So hear our prayers, help us, we pray, in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. If you could, turn now, in your Bibles, to the, the passage, that we read, from 2nd Peter, and chapter, one.

And if you could, have that, open in front of you, for the next few minutes, that would be, helpful.

Now it's obvious, as we're, as we're meeting, in this way, that I stand, before a camera, in an empty church, that we're still, we're still in this period, of lockdown.

And I don't know, what you miss, during this period, of lockdown. There's different things, that we want to do, that we're not, able to do. And, I have to say, one of the things, I miss, about these days, on a Saturday, in particular, there's actually two things, on a Saturday, I miss.

One is island bites, I have a craving for them. Very often on Saturday night, and I can't go there.

But, the other thing I miss, about Saturday nights, is football. Being able to, to watch football.

[26 : 14] Part of the, the Saturday night routine, for me is to, is to, to watch the, the football, as it comes on television. And I'm one of these people, who doesn't switch the, the TV off, after the game is played.

I like to, to watch on. I like to listen, and watch, to see what the manager, and the players, have to say, in the interviews. And, I know I'm not alone in that.

We all tend to be, interested in, in interviews. Maybe not football interviews, but, interviews with people, who, who interest us. I noticed this week, past, that, one of the most watched things, on television, was the, was the interview, with the Prime Minister.

After coming out of hospital, when, as he said himself, things could have gone, either way. People were interested, in hearing, what he had to say, about the experience, that he had, and interested in hearing, what he had to say, about the country, at this, very strange time.

And so, they made sure, to tune in, and to, watch the, the interview. Now, why am I talking, about, about these things? Well, for many months, we were studying, Mark's gospel.

[27 : 29] John Mark, is the, the writer, of the gospel, as he is carried along, by the Holy Spirit. But we know that, Simon Peter, the disciple, he is the one, again inspired by, the Spirit of God, who is, who is coming alongside Mark, and, and giving him, these eyewitness accounts, of, of what he saw, and heard, and experienced, during the ministry, of Jesus.

And through Mark's gospel, as we studied it, Peter's personality, as we know him, it breaks through, in many different places.

Peter, is very direct, he's very quick to speak, and, and Mark's gospel, is a gospel, where that, that fast moving pace, and that directness, is, is evident.

Peter, is somebody, who's, who's very straightforwardly, honest, and, and that comes through, strongly as well, in the gospel, nothing's sugar-coated, he tells things, the way they are, he doesn't

airbrush out, mistakes and failures, not even his own.

And there are various points, in Mark's gospel, where, I would have liked to have, almost hit pause, and, and asked for an interview, with Peter, with Peter.

[28 : 48] I'd like to have heard, what was going through, his mind, and what reflections, and what lessons, that he would, want to share with us. And although that, was not something, that was possible, it's not something, that features in, the gospel of Mark, second Peter, and first Peter, they, they, they read like, they read almost like, interviews, interviews, with Peter.

Peter, in these letters, gives us, an insight, into his mind, and his life. It's almost like, an interview with Peter, the older Christian.

And in these letters, he, he gives us an insight, into, to what, he wanted, for the, the church of, of Jesus Christ, back then, when this was written, in about, 80, 65 AD.

And, this also gives us, an insight, into, to what God wants, as he speaks through Peter, for the church of, of Jesus Christ today. So, so as we tune in, to this interview, with Peter, as we open this, this letter, the second letter, that he has written, the first question, I want to ask is, is where is Peter now?

That's the first point, where, is Peter, now? Now, as I, I noted already, this is a, a letter, that was written, over 30 years, after Jesus' death, and resurrection.

[30 : 20] So, it's an interesting, question to ask, it's a, it's a necessary, asked question, to ask, where is Peter now? You know, if we've, been away from friends, for a period, then, we, invariably, ask that question, if you go to, school reunions, you may, see somebody, who hasn't, you haven't come across, for 20, 30 years, and the first question, you ask is, well, what have you been doing, since I last saw you?

And so, we ask that question, of Peter, where are you now? Because, at the end of, Mark's gospel, we, we left Peter, in a terrible state, in Mark 14, we read about, how, how Peter, he denies Jesus, three times, with curses, at the end of, Mark chapter 14, and verse 72, we, we see Peter, it's, it's like the last shot, in the camera, of Peter, in Mark's gospel, and he's broken, he's weeping, bitterly, and that's the last, we see of him, in that gospel, in Mark 15, as Jesus dies, on the cross, there are women, who are there, who are, standing before him, expressing, that love, that they had, for Jesus, but, but Peter, where is he, well he's nowhere, to be seen, he failed his Lord, terribly, in spite of all, that he, he said he would do, in terms of his, his faithfulness, and yet, in Mark 16, where we were, last Sunday, as the three, women, learn, that Jesus, is risen, from the dead, they are given a message, from an angel, and the angel, says to these, three women, you are looking, for Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified, he is risen, he is not here, see the place, where they laid him, but go tell his disciples, and Peter, he is going ahead of you, into Galilee, there you will see him, just, as he told you, now, if all we had, was Mark's gospel, we would wonder, whatever became of Peter, I mean, clearly, Jesus wants to see him, but for, what purpose, does Jesus want to see him, is it to, to depose him, is it to, to punish him, is it to, to strike him off, as a disciple, and, and put him on, on some list, where he is with the, the ex-disciples, who are no longer, in good standing, well, no, it's not for any, of these reasons, because John tells us, in John 21, that, Jesus, meets with Peter, in order to, to, to lead Peter, to repentance, and to restore him, and that's what happens, you can read about it, in, in John 21, and now, in this letter, which is, 30 plus years, on in time, Peter, introduces himself, in verse 1, as Simon Peter, a servant, and apostle, of Jesus Christ, it's interesting, even in these, few words, how Peter, introduces himself, and gives us, an insight, into where, he is now, notice, when he, identifies himself, he, he calls himself,

Simon Peter, Simon, is his old name, Simon means shaky, Simon Peter, Peter, has never, forgotten, how shaky, he can be, when he tries, to do things, in his own strength, but Peter, is the name, that Jesus gave him, means rock, and that's, who he was, called to be, and that's, who he is, able to be, when he is, standing, in Christ's, strength, so, he is Simon Peter, and then, he tells us, in this, first verse, what he's doing, with his life, and he's not, back fishing, he's not, on the run, spiritually, after, that, huge failure, that Mark, that Mark, records for us, in the gospel, but he is, a servant, and apostle, of Jesus Christ, he's a servant, he's one, who's under, the authority, of Christ, and he is, an apostle, of Jesus Christ, he's one, who's been sent, in Jesus name, with the, with the gospel, and all I want, really to, to know, in this, first point, is that Peter, is still in service, he's not written off, he isn't on, some scrap heap, of ex-disciples, he's still saved, he hasn't been, snatched out, of the hand, of Jesus, he's still serving,

Jesus, he's still, telling people, about the Lord, that he knew, and he loved, and it's a powerful, illustration, for us, that with Jesus, failure is never final, if we repent, Jesus, will, restore us, if we, surrender, to him, he will, use us, for his glory, no matter, how badly, we may have failed him, in the past, as Peter, had done, in Philippians, chapter 1, and verse 6, it says, he who began, a good work in you, will carry it on, to completion, until the day, of Christ, Jesus, there's no, there's no projects, which, are abandoned, by the Lord, speaking to, Ina Glenn, in the course of the week, and, she was telling me, about Adrian, and how he was, working on, on some very intricate, model of a, of a ship, now I remember, as a, as a younger boy, working on model aircrafts, and, model ships, and I would get, an hour or two, into the project, and, and it would be launched, long before it, it should be launched, and it would be getting launched, across the room by me, because,

[36 : 40] I would be getting so frustrated, I would throw the thing, and it would be in the bin, abandoned, God never, does that, with us, what he begins, he carries on, to completion, and we see that, in Peter, even though he failed, even though he made, a mess of things, God had taken hold of him, Jesus, had called him, and Jesus, restores him, and Jesus, uses him, and we see, that Peter, as we ask him the question, where are you now Peter, we see he's still, in service, we see the work of God, continuing, in Peter, and I suppose the question, in application for us, is, where are we now, we can talk about the past, we can have hopes, for the future, but where are we today, is the work of God, continuing in us, how we trusted Christ, is he working, working in us, is he working, through us, so that's the first point, to note, we, we ask the question, of Peter, where, where is he now, and, he is one, who is still, in, the service, of Jesus, second question, is, what is a Christian, because this is a, a letter, that's written by Peter, he introduces himself, in the first verse, but, he is, writing a letter, to Christians, but Peter, in these verses, he doesn't, use the word,

Christian, he paints a picture, of what, a Christian, actually is, and we need, that picture, we need, that sketch, that Peter, puts before us, here, we need to be able, to identify, these marks, of what, a Christian is, because, so many people, are confused, about what it is, to be a Christian, that's why, when, you ask someone, sometimes, are you a Christian, very often, we don't get, a straight answer back, people will, say things, when they're asked, are you a Christian, like, well, I hope I'm a Christian, or I'm trying, to be a Christian, or, I'm not sure, I don't really know, whether I'm a Christian, or not, well, we need to be sure, we need to know, because, eternity, is, at stake, over, whether or not, we are Christians, we need, clarity, on what it means, to be a Christian, because it's the difference, between heaven, and hell, and Peter, gives us, that clarity, so what, as a Christian, who is it, that you're writing, this letter to,

Peter, and he writes, to those, look at verse one, and two, he writes, to those, who through the righteousness, of our God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, have received, a faith, as precious as ours, grace, and peace, be yours, in abundance, through the knowledge, of God, and of Jesus Christ, our Lord, so what, as a Christian, who is Peter writing to, let me give you, three R's, just to, to help, guide our thoughts, through what it looks like, to be a Christian, first of all, the first R, is a Christian, is someone, who is made righteous, through Jesus, if God was to, to ask you the question, this morning, why should I let you, into heaven, then, the non-Christian, will, will very often answer, in terms of, of their own abilities, the non-Christian, will, will often say, well, I would want to get into heaven, because, I try to be a good person, I try to do, good works,

I try not to do, to do bad things, the non-Christian, will, will try and build a case, on the basis of, of who they are, and what they're doing, and what they're not doing, but the Christian, will answer, on the basis, of who Jesus is, the Christian, seeks to, to come to God, through, through, the righteousness, of our God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Christian, will say, as we so often sing, my hope, is built, on nothing less, than Jesus, blood, and righteousness, so what is a Christian, first of all, someone who is made, righteous, through Jesus, the second point, the second mark, of a Christian, is, a Christian, is someone, who has received, faith, and grace, and peace, you've heard the story, before,

I've told it a few times, about the wee boy, from, from Loch Cary, he spent, the day, with his father, down on the shore, and he was heading home, he was starving, he'd been collecting, shelves, when his father, had been doing work, and he's two handfuls, of empty shells, as he's heading, back home, his father, stopped in, at the, at the home, of the minister there, laughing, at Mackenzie, the happy man, as he was known, and Mackenzie, he spoke to the boy's father, and he noticed, the wee boy, and he, he said to the wee boy, are you hungry, and the wee boy, nodded, so Lachlan Mackenzie, said you wait there, for a moment, so he went back off, into the house, and he came

back, to the, the front door, with a, a big thick, hunk of bread, with a, a butter, and jam on it, and he offered it, to the wee boy, he was starving, and the wee boy, looked at it, and then he looked at his hands, that were filled with shells, and he looked at the, the bit of jam, and bread again, and he looked at his hands, and he dropped the shells, and he took hold, he received, that bread, that was being offered to him, and that's a picture, of the Christian, we are those who have, who have dropped, the empty shells, of our, of our sin, we are those who have dropped, the empty shells, of our, of our own pride, and our religious efforts, to try and save ourselves, and we have received, from God, the faith, and the grace, and the peace, that he is so, willing, to give to us, the Christian, is one who can, say in coming, to God, nothing in my hands,

[43 : 03] I bring, simply to, thy cross cycling, naked, come to thee, for grace, helpless, come to thee, for grace, so what is a, a Christian, Christian is someone, who is made righteous, through Jesus, a Christian, is someone, who has received, faith, and grace, and peace, who has received, the salvation, that Jesus has paid for, has offered to us, and the final mark, of a Christian, in these opening verses, is, a Christian is someone, who has, a relationship, with Jesus, and Peter there, he speaks, about those, in verse two, who have, knowledge of God, and of Jesus, our Lord, and the word, knowledge there, is the Greek word, epinosis, which is a, a word that, it doesn't speak about, knowing about God, it's a, it's a word, that's defined, as I'm quoting here, knowledge gained, through, first hand relationship, this is our, personal knowledge, a few weeks ago, when we had our, communion, weekend,

Julian McSween, she shared her testimony, and, in that testimony, she gave such a, a strong account, of, of knowing Jesus, of having a, a relationship, with Jesus, and that's the testimony, of a Christian, we don't just, know things, about Jesus, in the same way, that we may know, things about the queen, or the prime minister, or some celebrity, we know Jesus, we have a personal, relationship with Jesus, we're able to say, with a hymn writer, knowing you Jesus, knowing you, there is no greater thing, you're my joy, you're my all, you're the best, you're my joy, my righteousness, and I love you Lord, a Christian, is someone, who, is in, relationship, with God, who, who, is a relationship, with Jesus, and so, there's a sketch, there's Peter's sketch, of the Christian, one, who is made righteous, through Jesus, through all that he has done, on our behalf, one who has, received, faith, and grace, and peace, that salvation, package, and one who is in, relationship, with God, who's in, relationship, with Jesus, and so, as we, look at this sketch, as we, note these marks, that Peter, draws out for us, we, we must, ask ourselves the question, are we Christians? Are we, trusting, in, Jesus' blood, and righteousness, and not our own, attempts at good works, in order to save us?

have we, come to, to Jesus, in faith? Have we, received, his grace, and his forgiveness, and that peace, with God, that he alone, can freely give?

And are we, those who can say, that we have, this saving, relationship, with Jesus, where day by day, we open, God's word, and we say, speak to me. And we get down, on our knees to pray, and we speak to him.

[46 : 24] We have this close, walk with God. So where is Peter now? That was the first point, that was the first question.

He's still in service. He's still, being worked, on, and, through, by Jesus. What is a Christian? That's the second point, that we considered.

And the, the final, point, the final question, for our time today, is, is what should Christians, be doing? And that's what the rest, of this letter, actually, expounds.

And it can be summarized, in one word, which we've touched on, with the children. Growing. If we are Christians, what should we be doing? Well, well, we should be growing.

So are you growing, as a Christian? Am I growing, as a Christian? Because, if we're not growing, we're going backwards.

[47 : 27] I'm thinking about, this escalator, in, Edinburgh Airport. You're heading, to the terminal, for the Western Isles, in Edinburgh Airport. There's this, escalator, which you stand on, and it carries you forward.

Now, being in this world, is like being, an escalator, that's going the wrong way. If we want to, progress, as Christians, we need to be, straining, and running, to go ahead.

If we don't, strain and run, to go ahead, and we stop, we don't stay still, we end up going backwards. We drift away, from Jesus. We go further, and further, into the world.

And, the point here, is we need to be, we need to be growing, pressing on. Going forward, as Christians. That's the emphasis, within this letter, and that's, what we'll come through, as the letter continues.

But there's, there's four things to note, about Christian growth, as we move to, a conclusion. Our calling is to grow. Though we can note here, first of all, that we're given power to grow.

[48 : 34] Look at verse three. His divine power, His divine power, has given us, everything we need, for life and godliness, through our knowledge of him, who called us, by his own glory, and goodness.

Through these, he has given us, his very great, and precious promises, so that through them, you may participate, in the divine nature, and escape the corruption, in the world, caused by, evil desires.

You think about an apple. An apple can't grow itself. The apple needs to be connected, to the apple tree. And as the tree grows, so does the apple.

And we, cannot grow, ourselves. We, as Christians, need to be connected, to Jesus. That's what a Christian is.

Someone who is connected, eternally, to Jesus. And when we are connected, to Jesus, with no blockages, no idols, no secret sins, that we're allowing, to come between us, and Christ.

[49 : 38] His life, his divine power, is given to us, and we grow. As we are, in union with Christ, his nature, his divine nature, shapes, and molds, our nature, so that increasingly, the evil desires, and corrupting influences, that Peter, writes about, these influences, which, which cause, our growth, to be stunted, well that decreases, and our Christian, growth, increases.

So although, we're called, to grow, although that's, what we should be doing, as Christians, although we are, called, to become more, like Jesus, we are given, power to grow, as we stay, close, to Jesus.

God, by his spirit, works in us, he grows us, he steadies us, he becomes, he makes us, more like Christ, as we, seek to stay, close to Jesus.

So we're given, power, to grow. The second thing, we can note here, as we, think about, what we're called to do, we're called to grow, we're given, here a list of possessions, for growing Christians.

And Peter, says there, from verse 5, and following, for this very reason, make every effort, to add to your faith, goodness, and to goodness, knowledge, and to, to knowledge, self-control, and to self-control, perseverance, and to perseverance, godliness, and so it goes on, down to, to verse 10.

[51 : 16] And, and Peter here, he, he gives a word, to the, to the lazy Christian. God knows us, he, he knows, how idle we can be at times, and, and in case we, put our feet up, and, and are tempted to say, well, as a Christian, I'll just let go, and let God work, within me, heal, grow me, I just need to sit back, and relax.

Peter says to us, through these verses, no, that's not how this works. There has to be some, effort, put into, your Christian life. Here are some targets, for you to, to aim at, says Peter.

And it all begins, verse 5, with, with faith. And faith, clearly, is God's gift to us. We can't buy it, we can't, earn it, we don't deserve it, but God offers it, to us, in, in his word.

Faith comes by hearing. And when, we are in, God's word, as he, as he, gives to us, this faith, we, we receive it.

It's what makes us Christians. But when we have, received faith, we are to, aim to live lives, which are marked by, by goodness.

[52 : 32] Trying to do the, the right thing, the, that generous, kind thing. And knowledge, learning more, about the gospel, more about Jesus.

And self-control, lives which, our lives lived, where we allow no, no, no vice, no habit, no temper, no, no mood to control us, and to shape our behavior, and our actions, and reactions.

We're to live lives, which show perseverance, stickability. That, that, mindset, and, and lifestyle, where we keep on, keeping on, as Christians.

Lives marked by, by godliness, where we live with our eye, and God, not on ourselves, not on everybody around us, but we fix our eyes on God. Brotherly kindness, lives where we, seek to be kind to everyone, not just those that we find it, easy and pleasurable, to be kind to.

And, we're to live, lives of love, that's God's love, agape love, where we love, not for, our own satisfaction. We love, not in order to get, things back, but we love, even if we get nothing back.

[53 : 53] So Peter, he gives us, some targets, to aim for here. Possessions, that we are to, seek to acquire. We, we can't, we can't hit these things, we can't take hold of these things, on our own, but when we are given God's power, as we are promised, we will be, he enables us, in our efforts, to, to, to live this way, to live holy lives.

And, when we, live this way, God can use us. When we possess, these, Christ-like characteristics, we can be effective, we can be productive, in, in his service.

Gordon Thompson, who, was with us, in the last communion, who spoke on Wednesday night there, he, when he shared his testimony, he described, how he became a Christian, and then he described, very honestly, about how, when he was four years in, as a Christian, he started to drift from God.

And, he found himself, in a, a place where he was, making no effort, really, to, to live a, a holy life. He was allowing, to use Peter's words, the corruption of sin, to make him, ineffective, and unproductive.

And then, he described that, that night, where after going, to youth fellowship, as he walked back home, he had a, realisation, of where he was, and, how he shouldn't be, where he was, and he repented.

[55 : 16] And he talks about, how, how God, from that point on, changed him, and transformed him, and, and used him, and is still using him. Now, what about the person, who may be four years in, or ten years in, or fifteen, or twenty years in, and who calls himself, a Christian, but who's making, no real effort, to live, a holy life, a life that's marked, by these possessions.

What about the, the person, who professes, to be a Christian, who, who's content, to stick in that state, of being, unproductive, and ineffective.

Well, I think, as we read these verses, here, that person, can never, truly be sure, that they are a Christian. I mean, we may have our name, on a, on a communion roll.

We may be able, to recall, an evening, decades ago, where we, where we came forward, at an evangelist, at an evangelistic, meeting, but, there's no real security, and assurance in that.

Our calling, an election, is made sure, verse 10, as we, persevere, as we grow, and as we, increasingly, possess, these marks, of Christian, character.

[56 : 46] So, what are we called to do? We're called to, to grow, but we're given power, to grow. We see here, the possessions, of the, the growing Christian. We're given here, a promise, thirdly, there's a prize, for the growing Christian.

Verse 11, you will receive, a rich welcome, into the, eternal kingdom, of our Lord, and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Sometimes, the reality is, we become so, immersed in this world, we forget eternity. That's the truth. We forget, that we, we're only here, for a very short time. We have no, continuing city here. We forget, to invest time, and effort, in growing as Christians.

And we're, trying to grow, our bank balance, and we're trying, to grow our business, and we're, trying to grow, our reputation. We're thinking, about things, in this world. It's the influence, of this world.

And we know, that that can, encroach, upon us as Christians. We can, become immobilized, by it. But as we read, this letter, we're reminded, once more, that there is, an eternal kingdom.

[57 : 51] And one day, we will stand, before Jesus, the king. And if we know him, and if we are, seeking to grow, as Christians, we have the promise here, that there will be, a rich welcome for us.

And that should encourage us, and spur us on, as Christians. The final thing here, is there are pages, through which we grow.

And that takes us, from verse 12, right through to the end, of the chapter. Now, some of us, as we, as we look at Peter here, and we think about ourselves, we might be tempted, to say, well, if I, if I had experienced, what Peter experienced, then, then I'd be on track.

If I'd experienced, the glory of, of Jesus, and seen the glory of Christ, with my own eyes. If I'd, sat under, some of Jesus' sermons. If I'd experienced, some of his miracles, and felt his healing touch, then I'd really be going places, as a Christian, I'd be in top gear.

And Peter here, he addresses that, and he doesn't sweep aside, his experiences, but he makes clear, that his experiences, are not, as valuable, and as necessary, as the pages, of this book, the Bible.

[59 : 14] So, if you and I, want to grow, as Christians, we need to be, in the pages, of, this book.

And although, I'm not finished, I think perhaps, that's a good place, to finish, this morning. And we pick up, on this theme, this evening, as we open, Psalm, 119.

What are we called, to do, as Christians, we are called, to grow. How can we know, that we are Christians, we are, we are those, who, who are able to say, that we, we are righteous, through Jesus, we have received, that grace, of Jesus, we have a relationship, with Jesus.

And, where are we now? Are we with Peter? as those, who are still, in Christ, who are seeking, to serve, Jesus, and who are seeking, to go out, with the gospel, of Jesus Christ.

We pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you, for the encouragement, and the challenge, of your word. And we pray, that you would give, to us that, encouragement. And that you would, enable us, to take on, that challenge.

[60 : 39] Help us, we pray, to, to take hold, of the salvation, that's offered to us, if we never have done before. And Lord, if we are Christians, we ask that, we would be those, who are seeking, to grow.

Seeking to live, holy lives, so that you, would be glorified, and that we would know, your blessing, and the assurance, of eternal life. And we ask, these things, in Jesus name.

Amen. Our final praise, is the well-known hymn, Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself, in thee.

Let the water, and the blood, from thy riven side, which flowed, be of sin, the double cure, cleanse me, from its guilt, and power.

[61 : 56] But the labor, of my hands, can fulfill, thy laws, demands.

Could my zeal, no rest, might know, could my tears, forever flow, all for sin, could not atone, thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hand, I bring, simply to thy cross, I cling, naked, come to thee, for dress, helpless, look to thee, for grace.

Fall I, to the fountain, fly, wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw, this meeting breath, when mine eyelids, close in death, when I saw, to worlds unknown, see thee, on my judgment throne, rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself, in thee.

[63 : 59] And I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with us all, both now, and forevermore. Amen. Amen.