

31.10.21 am

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Date: 31 October 2021

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning those who are in the building and those who are watching online as well. I know there's quite a number of folks this morning who have opted to stay online just with the numbers of COVID rising in the locality. So a warm welcome to those in the building and to those who are watching online and it's good to see some visitors with us as well and you're especially welcome. It did say on the screen a second ago tea and coffee is served after the service but we're not doing tea and coffee today and I'm not doing handshakes at the door just to be a bit cautious about things. So you are very welcome but you'll have to wait until you get home for tea and coffee today. The Gaelic service is on at six this evening and the Reverend Kenneth Ferguson will conduct that service. It will be in the building and also online and you've seen on the screen the various notices throughout the week for the kids clubs and the Little Fishers and the Road to Recovery group. The prayer meeting I think although I haven't had a session meeting about this I think it's probably safest to say that we'll have the prayer meeting online this week. So rather than coming in the building and having a hybrid meeting we'll have a prayer meeting online via Zoom this week and hopefully things will have steady by by next week.

And the final thing just to say is that the service is next Sunday the morning service I hope I'll conduct myself and the evening service will be conducted God willing by Donnie McLeod of the Faith Mission and we'll have a fellowship after that service at half past seven. All that's kind of depending on what happens in the course of the week with Covid but that's the plan. He's going to preach in the Church of Scotland in the morning with ourselves in the evening and a fellowship after that.

And on Saturday during the day in the church building he has a bookstall, a kind of Christmas bookstall more than anything else. So if you're looking for some Christmas ideas of gifts and books then there's the opportunity to come next Saturday into the church here and Donnie and Lewis will be here and we'll be we'll have things available for us. So these I think are all the intimations and I'm hoping that we're going to have the words of the first praise on the screen in just a moment.

I could see a conference going on over in the corner which made me think that there might be a problem but no all is well we've got teamwork happening over there. So let's begin this time of worship and let's worship God. We'll sing our first hymn which speaks about the the many sins that we know are in our hearts but the the much greater mercy and grace that God has towards us as we come to him.

So what love could remember no wrongs we have done. We'll stand to sing in just a moment. What love could remember no wrongs we have done. All nations all knowing he counts not their sum.

[3 : 3 9] Thrown into a sea with our bottom or shore. Our sins they are ready his mercy is more.

Praise the Lord. His mercy is more. His mercy is more.

Stronger the darkness in every arm. Our sins they are ready his mercy is more.

Our sins they are ready his mercy is more. What patience would wait as we constantly hold. What Father so tender is calling us home.

He welcomes the weakness the vilest the good. Our sins they are ready his mercy is more.

[4 : 45] Our sins they are ready his mercy is more. Praise the Lord. His mercy is more. Stronger the darkness in every arm. Our sins they are ready his mercy is more.

His mercy is more. His mercy is more. His mercy is more. Our sins they are ready his mercy is more. His mercy is more. What riches of kindness he lavished on us.

His blood was the payment his life was the cost. His blood was the cost. His blood was the payment his life was the cost.

We stood near the debt we could never afford. Our sins they are many his mercy is more.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. His mercy is more. His mercy is more. Stronger the darkness near that we are.

[5 : 54] Our sins they are many his mercy is more. Amen. Amen.

Let children. Amen. Let's, let's now unite their hearts together in prayer. Let's, let's speak to God and let's pray together.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that on this new day, on this your day, we are able to come into your presence. We're able to come into this place with the expectation that you will meet with us.

Because you have promised, Lord, that we're two or three gathered together in your name, that you'll be amongst us in the power of the Holy Spirit. And we believe that to be true, Lord, and we pray that as we meet together for this hour, that our hearts would be stirred.

And we ask, Lord, that we would sense in our emotions, in the deepest place of our soul, that you are with us. That we would know that, that we'd have that assurance, that thrill of knowing that the God of all creation is coming close to us.

[7 : 17] And ministering to us and speaking to us through your word. We thank you that in the hymn that we've sung, we're given that picture of who you are and your character.

You're a God who loves us. You're a God who does not overlook our sin. You tell us, Lord, in love that we are sinners.

But we thank you that your mercy is great. And as we confess our sin, as we say in our hearts and in prayer, that we know that we are sinners.

We know that we fail and we fall short. We know that we say things and we do things and we think things which are wrong. We know that often our lives are full of a fixation on ourselves.

And we live in such a way as to put ourselves first. We put others down the list. And Lord, sometimes we live as if you were not there.

[8 : 20] And we know that that is sin. And we confess that, Lord. And we pray that you would wash our sin away. We thank you that you would treat us not in judgment but in mercy.

That you would show us your grace. That you would cleanse us in the blood of Jesus. We thank you that he died on the cross. His blood was shed. So that our sin could be washed away.

And so we bow before you this morning, Lord. And we ask that you would make our hearts clean. That you would take away all our transgression, all our sin.

As far as the east is from the west. We pray that you would remove it from us. And you would clothe us with the righteousness of Jesus. We thank you that not only did Jesus die for us.

But he lived for us. The life that we couldn't live. We sin and we fail. We struggle, Lord. Not to do the things that we try to avoid.

[9 : 24] We struggle to do the good things we want to do. But we thank you that Jesus lived for us. And he never sinned. And as we trust in him, his righteous life is given to us.

And our sin is taken from us. And we thank you that Jesus rose from the dead. On the first day of the week. On the Lord's day, he rose from the dead.

Showing that our sin was forgiven. Salvation was secured. And eternal life was now available to all who would simply ask for it. And so we pray, Lord.

Perhaps some of us have never prayed this before. But give to us, we pray, that everlasting life. Which begins in time. And goes on eternally. We pray, Lord, for those who are in need this morning.

All of us are in need. But we think of those in particular need. And we ask, Lord, that you would minister to them. We thank you that we can carry people to you in prayer. We pray for those who are sick and those who are weak.

[10 : 31] We pray for those who are coming, perhaps towards the end of life. And we think of Mary Sheena, especially in Harris House. We ask, Lord, that she would know your presence.

That she would know your peace. And that she would know in her consciousness that you are God and that you are with her. We thank you that you are with us always.

And even as we approach death, we thank you that we have nothing to fear. Because the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus, said that he would carry us through death. Into life everlasting if we are trusting in him.

And we thank you for Mary Sheena, for her faith. And we ask, Lord, that you would protect her. And that you would bless her with your presence at this time. And we pray for those who are at home today.

Some who are struggling with COVID. And we ask, Lord, that you would minister to them. That you would lay your hand of healing upon them. You are the great physician.

[11 : 36] And we pray, Lord, that those whom you love that come to our minds. That you would have your hand of healing upon them.

And when they do struggle, we pray that they would be sustained. And upheld by your strength and your grace. We pray for others, Lord, who are anxious. Who are nervous about moving around in the community.

And coming out to services. We thank you that we have the technology to be able to come together in this way. But we pray that where there is anxiety, that you would take it away. You've said to us, Lord, that we're to be anxious about nothing.

But to pray about everything. And we thank you that as we pray, your peace, the peace of heaven, comes to us. So, Lord, we ask that your hand would be upon all who are struggling at this time.

We pray for those who are grieving. We think of Nanny in Stornoway who lost her sister this week. And we pray that she would know your comfort. And we pray for that whole family.

[12 : 45] And we thank you, Lord, for each person who is here today. And we pray that you would meet us at the point of our need. We pray that you would bless our homes. That you would bless our families.

That you would bless all those that we love. As we think of them in our mind's eye. We pray for them and we bring them to you at this time.

And we thank you for those visiting with us. Especially for Neil and for Fiona. We thank you for the Challenger bus. And for the blessing that has been in this place for many years.

For so many young children who heard the name of Jesus through Neil and the team. And we ask, Lord, that the seed that was planted would continue to grow.

And we pray for Neil and for that ministry as it continues. That you would give wisdom. And that you would guide them as they look to you. To hear our prayers. Take away our sin.

[13 : 44] And help us to keep looking to Jesus. For we pray these things in his name. And for his sake. Amen. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward please?

And. I've got not something to show you today.

I've got someone to show you today. And it's Neil over there. But Neil's going to come forward. And I'm going to go and sit down. But Neil, it's great to have yourself and Fiona with us today.

Do most of you recognise Neil? Can I take this off? Yes. Is that okay? Michael says yes. And what Michael says goes. Thanks, Mike. Where's Michael? Cool. Thank you, Michael.

I'm going to sit down, Neil. Thank you. Morning, church. It's lovely to be back in Harris. It's a while since I've been here. Katie. Brilliant. Great. It's lovely to see you all.

[14 : 56] And maybe some of you don't know me. But it's. I love Harris. I think this is the best place in the world. As you know. And it's great to be back. And I thought I was on holiday until last night at half past nine. And unfortunately a ping went on my phone.

And it was your minister, David, saying, Would you like to speak tomorrow morning with the kids? I won't tell you what my wife said, David, at that point. But she's forgiven you now. And anyway, it's great to be here. And I want to just share with you some good news this morning.

Can I tell you something amazing? In fact, I brought a bag with me. Is that okay? Because I didn't have time to get a lot of props. But I managed to find some things in the house. Okay? And these things are very important to me.

Can I show you what I've got? But first I need to ask a question. What's your favourite food? Who loves food? I do. Michael, do you like food? I like pizza. Fantastic.

Michael, pizza? Yeah. Lasagna. Cheese pizza. Cheese pizza, Michael. All right. Anybody else? I hate pizza. Sorry? Macaroni. Cheese. I used to like that.

[15 : 55] Yeah. Anybody else? Potato waffles. Sorry. Potato waffles. Yeah, they're good, Michael. Fantastic. Okay. Yeah, what would you like? Pizza.

Pizza. Do you know what? Yay. Yeah. Ice cream. Ice cream. Ace. Do you know what I really, really, really, really, really, really like? It's custard and ice cream.

I thought you were going to do it on. God. Well, I'm coming on to that in a second. Michael, listen, do you want to come up and do, do you want to come up here? I like Michael. Do you know, I would have loved to have had you on the bus, Michael.

You and I would have been good friends. Do you know, God. How else do you? I can just sit down there, okay? Well, I brought some things that I like, and one of them is something that I really like to eat.

Can I show you what it is? Custard. Do you know, Michael, I couldn't get the custard in the bag. It would go all kind of squidgy and sort of, but I did bring something that I really liked. Does anybody remember what I liked to eat once upon a time, a long time ago, before I had a heart attack?

[17 : 02] Does anybody remember what I really liked? Is it Anish or Renai? Renai. Renai. Do you remember what I used to like, Renai? Chocolate. Chocolate. Renai, do you remember, actually, the brand of chocolate that I liked?

Whisper gold. Not whisper gold, Michael. No. Oh, that's my door. Afraid not? Does anybody remember the chocolate I loved? Dairy milk. Not dairy milk, Michael.

You're way off. Sorry? Galaxy. You're it. Do you know what? You can get this afterwards. I brought a bar of galaxy. You're sharing with Michael.

Okay. Can you hear me? Is that okay? Can you all hear me? Oh, yeah. Yeah, fun. Do you know what? I love galaxy. And I used to have a badge that said, I hate broccoli. I love chocolate.

But then I kind of had a heart attack. And they say I've only got 48% heart function. But at least I'm not half-hearted. But you know what? I can't eat this anymore.

[18 : 03] But you know what? I managed to bring some on holiday. And I had four bars in the fridge. And I haven't eaten them yet. So maybe I can share them out afterwards. Would you like a bit of my galaxy? Yeah. So that's one thing.

That's one thing I do like to eat. Does anybody else like? Oh, you don't like galaxy, do you? I like galaxy. You like galaxy. Fantastic. So that's one thing I like is galaxy. I've got something else.

Do you know what? Two weeks ago I got a phone call. This is true. And it was my sister who lives in Italy. And she said, Neil, I know you need a holiday. She said, I'll pay for you to come to Italy. My wife doesn't know this.

Sorry, Fiona. Okay. She said, I'll pay for you to come to Italy. I'll pay for all your tickets. Come and stay in Italy for a couple of weeks. You need a break. And I said, no. There's some place I have to go.

And I thought, the most beautiful place on planet Earth is where? Here. It's here. It's Harris. For me, I love Harris. I love the island.

[18 : 59] I love the people. And getting off the ferry on Wednesday, my wife said, wouldn't it be good if we had another lockdown and we could just stay here forever? Well, I shouldn't say forever. She said for a few weeks because we've got some kids back home.

But, you know, that's what I was thinking. So there's one place in Harris that I really love. You didn't bring your children. I didn't bring my kids, Michael. That's one thing I didn't bring. No, they're a bit older than you.

And I didn't think they're kind of working just now. And even my grandkids. I would love to. I'm talking about kids that are like our age. Oh, right. Oh, yeah. I have them as well. But they're grandkids. This is fantastic.

Is this live? This is live, Michael. Fantastic. Do you know, there's one place in Harris that I'd love to go to. Where's your favourite beach? Come on in.

Sheila Boss Beach. Sheila Boss Beach. That's good, but it's not the best. Come on in. Lusk and Tyre. We were there yesterday. It's not the best. Where else? Hogger Boss. Nice. Bit of a campsite there, isn't there?

[19 : 58] But not just now. Yeah. Sorry? Gary. Scarrister. We were there the other day. It was beautiful. Where? Northton. Did that one already this week? That's good.

Come on. You haven't got it. Oh. Nisha Boss. Michael. I had Nisha Boss. Nisha Boss. Well, I thought I'd bring some Nisha Boss with me this morning.

I brought the beach. No, it's not a chocolate bar, Michael. I brought Nisha Boss with me this morning. Okay? Are you ready for me to bring the beach out? We found this in the shop.

I love Nisha Boss. And it's not the biggest beach. You got that from Brown. I got that from the Harris Tweed shop. That's my plug for the Harris Tweed shop. I got this down there the other day.

That's where I see. I love Nisha Boss because I love to walk Nisha Boss. And when I was staying at Mary's house down at Sheila Boss, I used to go there most mornings before we went out on the bus. And I used to walk along Nisha Boss and sometimes up to McLeod's Cairn.

[20 : 58] And that's a very special place for me. Because that's where God often speaks to me. And he speaks to me lots of places. He speaks to me out of his word, out of his Bible, out of this very special book.

And sometimes he speaks to me when I'm out on the beach and I'm walking and just speaking to him. Just like I'm speaking to you, Michael. I speak to God that way. And he likes us to speak to him like that. Sometimes we get very religious and it's got to be a long, long, long, big, big, big prayer.

And sometimes he just wants to say, you know God, I'm having a rough day today. Would you be with me today? You can speak to him like that. He doesn't expect us to be all fancy sometimes.

And sometimes he wants us just to be honest with him and just speak to him like that. And that's one of my most favourite places. Well, I've got something else. The last thing to bring. Sorry, David. You say I had an hour. Sorry, David.

I'll be very quick. I brought something else. My phone. My phone. That's precious. I'm fine. Well, actually, my wife thinks it's a lot precious to me than it really is.

[21 : 59] She hid it from me yesterday because there were so many phone calls coming in. But actually, on my phone, I have something very precious. If I can actually get it to work. The Bible says, the Bible says, the Bible says.

You know what? I think I should just give up this morning, Michael. I think I should give up this morning, Michael. It's a picture of a very special one for me. Can you see that, Katie?

Can you see that? This is actually one of our youngest grandchildren. He's called Ruben. And he loves his granddad. And his granddad loves him. I love all my grandkids. I say that because this is live and recorded.

I do love them all. But this one is very special. He's called Ruben. And I see him most days. And he is very, very precious. But, you know, there's something else I want to tell you about that's very precious.

And that is something that's in this room. And I was thinking about this this morning. God. God is very precious. And God loves food. God gave us food.

[22 : 59] He did. Jesus loved to have a meal with all these disciples and go and visit people. And Jesus actually loved specific places. He liked to go special places. He loved to go to a place called Bethany and hang out with his friends.

He loved that garden. And he also loved people. He liked that garden. He loved Gethsemane. But Gethsemane was very hard for him at the end. Oh. But he actually spoke to his father there.

And that's where he got the courage to actually go to Calvary and die for us. You know, God loves us so much. And I was thinking about that this morning. How God loves you. God thinks you're incredible.

Far more important than our favourite food. Far more important than our favourite place. Far more important than our things that we have. God thinks you are special.

So turn to the person next to you and say, God thinks you're special. You're not doing it. Adults. I know we've got. Can't you do that again?

[23 : 58] Michael, you tell them. God thinks you're special. And God loves you. Do you know some of you adults? You don't turn to the person next to you and say, God thinks you're special.

Can you turn to the person next to you? Because somebody needs to hear this this morning. Can you turn to the person next to you and say, God thinks you're special. God thinks you're special. And do you know the final thing I want to share with you this morning?

Is that God loves you. God loves you. The person that created all the food in the world. The person that created all the places in the world.

And all the people in the world. Loves you. And thinks you're special. So Katie. God loves you. And thinks you're special.

He thinks you're special. Even though you're old and I wish you'd get off the platform. God loves you. And thinks you're special. And that's amazing.

[25 : 05] So I think. Can we sing a song about that? Is that okay? I'm going to get off the platform because David will be pulling my coat in a second. Is that okay? I thought we could sing a lovely chorus. Angus. Do you know Jesus' love is very wonderful?

So high you can't get over it. And so low you can't get under it. I'm going to sing it a cappella. And you can't go around it. And you can't go around it. Oh what wonderful love.

Is that okay? I think we'll have to stand for this. Are you allowed to stand in church? Are you allowed to do that? Okay. Can we do Jesus' love is very wonderful. And the actions are so simple. And it goes Jesus.

Can we go Jesus' love is very wonderful. Can we do that? Jesus' love is very wonderful. And we go oh wonderful love. And then we go so high.

Can you touch the ceiling? So high you can't get over it. So low you can't get under it. So high. Do not hit the person next to you. So high. And if it's your husband and wife. Please do not take this as an excuse to batter them.

[26 : 00] So high. You can't get behind it. Oh wonderful love. Can we do that? Let's go Angus. Jesus' love is very wonderful.

Jesus' love is very wonderful. Jesus' love is very wonderful. Oh wonderful love. Because it's so high.

You can't get over it. So low. You can't get under it. So wide. You can't get around it. Oh wonderful love.

Do you know some of the adults are not doing the actions? Can you point at the adults that are not doing the actions? Can we pick it up a key? One key. Is that a few Angus? Is that a few?

Can we pick up a little? Jesus. That's great. Jesus' love is very wonderful. Jesus' love is very wonderful.

[26 : 57] Jesus' love is very wonderful. Oh wonderful love. Because it's so high. You can't get over it.

So low. You can't get under it. So wide. You can't get around it. Oh wonderful love. Oh wonderful love. Do you want me to pray?

Sorry? Oh do you want me to pray? Oh absolutely. Great. Okay. Father. We just want to thank you that your love is so wonderful.

Your love is amazing. It took your son to Calvary. To die for us. As your word declares. For God so loved the world. That he gave his only.

His one and only son. That whoever believes in him shall not perish. But have everlasting life. I pray Father. Even as these children go into children's church.

- [27 : 57] That you would speak to them individually. That you would open up their hearts to hear your word. For your word is spirit and it's life. And Father we pray for life in children's church this month.
- And pray for the teachers as they minister your word. For your anointing to be upon them. It's not a separate service. But Lord that they may know your anointing. As they minister this morning.
- And so Father thank you. Thank you for the simple message. That you love us. And you think we're special. Because you sent your son to die for each one of us individually. And for that we want to say thank you.
- And now I praise your blessing upon the children. And upon the teachers. In Jesus name. Amen. You can go now.
- No. Okay. Thanks. Thank you Neil.
- [29 : 18] And although you were conscious of the time, I said you could speak for five minutes, you only probably spoke for about four and a half because the kids speak for at least 15 every week. So it's good to have them and thank you very much for speaking to them.
- We're going to sing again now, the words on the screen, and we're singing about the grace of God, your grace that brings this sinner home. Amen.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. And sings the song of righteousness.
- By blood and not by merit. Your grace that reaches far and wide.
- [30 : 26] To every tribe and nation. Has called my heart to enter in.
- The joy of your salvation. By grace I am redeemed.
- By grace I am restored. And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.
- The grace that I cannot explain. Not by my earthly wisdom.
- The prince of life without a stain. Was traded for his sinner.
- [31 : 24] By grace I am redeemed. By grace I am restored.
- By grace I am restored. By grace I am restored. By grace I am restored.
- And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.
- If you have a Bible with you. And if not it is on the screen. So don't worry. And we are going to read from Luke chapter 15. Luke chapter 15 and the whole of this chapter.
- Jesus is preaching. To a group of people. And we have the sermon of Jesus here.
- [33 : 21] In Luke 15. So this is God's word then. And it's God's word now to us. Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.
- But the Pharisees and teachers of the law muttered. This man welcomes sinners. And eats with them. Then Jesus told them this parable. Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them.
- Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country. And go after the lost sheep. Until he finds it. And when he finds it. He joyfully puts it on his shoulders. And goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together.
- And says rejoice with me. I have found my lost sheep. I tell you that in the same way. There will be more rejoicing in heaven. Over one sinner who repents.
- Than over ninety-nine righteous persons. Who do not need to repent. Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins. And loses one. Does she not light a lamp.

- [34 : 23] Sweep the house. And search carefully until she finds it. And when she finds it. She calls her friends and neighbors together. And says rejoice with me. I have found my lost coin.
- In the same way I tell you. There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God. Over one sinner who repents. Jesus continued. There was a man who had two sons.
- The younger one said to his father. Father give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them. Not long after that. The younger son got together all he had.
- Set off for a distant country. And there squandered his wealth. In wild living. After he had spent everything. There was a severe famine in that whole country. And he began to be in need.
- So he went and hired himself out. To a citizen of that country. He sent him to the fields. To feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach. With the pods that the pigs were eating.
- [35 : 21] But no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses. He said. How many of my father's hired men. Have food to spare. And here I am starving to death. I will set out.
- And go back to my father. And say to him. Father I have sinned against heaven. And against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men.
- So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off. His father saw him. And was filled with compassion for him. And ran to his son.
- Threw his arms around him. And kissed him. The son said to him. Father I have sinned against heaven. And against you. And I am no longer worthy to be called your son.
- But the father said to his servants. Quick. Bring the best robe. And put it on him. Put a ring on his finger. And sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf. And kill it.
- [36 : 16] Let's have a feast. And celebrate. For this son of mine was dead. And is alive again. He was lost. And is found. So they began to celebrate. Meanwhile the older son.
- Was in the field. When he came near the house. He heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants. And asked him what was going on. Your brother has come. He replied.
- And your father has killed the fattened calf. Because he has him back safe and sound. The older brother became angry. And refused to go in. So his father went out.
- And pleaded with him. But he answered his father. Look. All these years. I have been slaving for you. I never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me. Even one young goat.
- So I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours. Who squandered your property. With prostitutes. Comes home. You kill the fattened calf for him.
- [37 : 14] My son. The father said. You are always with me. And everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate. And be glad. Because this brother of yours.
- Was dead. And is alive again. He was lost. And is found. Amen. And may God help us to understand.
- His word. We are going to sing. In Gaelic now. Two verses. Of Psalm 1. Psalm 1. And the first two verses. Of Psalm 1.
- I will read it. In English. That man. Hath perfect blessedness. Who walketh not the stray. In counsel of ungodly men. Nor stands in sinners way. Nor sitteth in the scorner's chair.
- But placeth his delight. Upon God's law. And meditates on his law. Day and night. These two verses. Of Psalm 2. One sorry.
- [38 : 10] And we'll sit. To sing. In Gaelic. Thank you. Wha'i. Is inferior.

Sorry. In the in theses Dalime Chant CH lists each other and Adele's function, pin veulent music Share your Portugal ■■■ising English

Thank you.

and it it Okay, let's pray for a moment as we come back to God's word.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. And as we meditate upon it now for a few minutes, we pray that you would help us to understand. We thank you that the same Holy Spirit who caused this word to be written is living in all who believe and is promised to be the teacher of all those who want to understand.

[41 : 40] So help us, Holy Spirit, we pray, to understand the truth of your word. Help us to hear the words of Jesus preached all these years ago and enable us to know that they are words for us today.

So help us, we pray, help the children as well in Sunday school to hear and to understand the truth of the fact that you love them and you call them as you call us to come to you.

And for all other churches around us and those who meet throughout this day, we pray that they would know your blessing as well and hear your voice. And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

I wonder, have you ever had occasion where you've wandered into a place?

Maybe you've been at a meeting or you've gone to a party or you've even walked into a staff room or a home and you've got that sense of unease and you've immediately thought, am I welcome here?

[42 : 46] I remember once going to a birthday party a long time ago in a place and I got a sense of that and somebody came up to me actually in the course of the evening and said, by the way, there are some people here who are not happy that you are here.

And we've probably all had a bit of that experience where we've wondered, should I be here? You feel like people are pointing at you, you feel like eyes are on you and you wonder, to what degree am I welcome?

And these kind of questions were probably going through the minds of some of the congregation that Jesus was preaching to on this day that we've read of in Luke chapter 15.

And we've got a picture of the congregation in the first two verses of Luke chapter 15. So if you've got it in front of you, you'll probably find it helpful to have the text nearby.

But we have a picture of the congregation in the first two verses of the chapter and we see that there are two types of people that Jesus mentions.

[44 : 03] He mentions that there were tax collectors and sinners. And that was kind of biblical code for dishonest, disreputable people, those that would probably have a bad reputation.

And then there were another group of people that Jesus identifies and they were the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. And they were people who were thought to be good, clean living, respectable, church-going kind of people.

So that's the profile of the congregation. Two extremes of people and probably some in between as well. And before Jesus begins to preach, there's a kind of murmuring that's heard.

And the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, the churchy people, are whispering, they're murmuring.

And they're looking in the direction of Jesus and they're saying, this man, Jesus, welcomes sinners. and he eats with them.

[45 : 19] It's meant to be an insult. It's meant to put Jesus down. But it actually lifted Jesus up and showed us the kind of person, he is the God-man, he's the one who welcomes sinners.

No matter where they've been and what they've done. And he eats with them. I heard a story sometime back about a woman called Edith.

And this woman called Edith, she wasn't in the habit of going to church. She never went to church. But this particular Sunday morning, she woke up, no one had asked her to go to church, but she had a sense of kind of dissatisfaction within her.

And she thought, I'm going to go to church today. So she wandered out of her house and she went to the nearest church she could find. And she sat down in the pew and she kind of sat nervously wondering, am I wearing the right things?

You know, am I welcome here? And there was the first singing and the prayer. And then the minister began to read the Bible.

[46 : 35] And he said, the text for today is Luke chapter 15 and verse 2. And he read the text out in the old fashioned, the King James Version.

And it reads like this. This man, Jesus, receiveth sinners and eateth with them. And remember the name of the woman?

Her name was Edith. And when she heard that text, she just about fell out of her pew because what she heard was not this man welcomes sinners and eateth with them.

What she heard was this man receives sinners and eateth with them. So she didn't sleep through the sermon. And she misheard the text, but it was the truth.

Jesus welcomed Edith and she came to faith actually very quickly after that. But you know, that's still the truth. Jesus welcomes sinners.

[47 : 43] And we're all sinners. And some of us are religious sinners like the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. You know, we look okay on the outside but our hearts are dark.

And some of us are rebellious sinners like the thieving tax collectors. we wear our hearts and our sleeves and everyone can see where there are shortfalls in our lives.

But the good news for every congregation is that whatever our name is, whatever our reputation is, Jesus welcomes sinners. sinners. And that includes all of us.

He eats with us. He becomes intimate with us if we will let him. So Jesus has this congregation that's gathered around him and he begins to preach.

And note the fact that Luke 15, we read the whole chapter because this is one whole complete sermon. We could spend eight weeks going through Luke 15 but if we did we'd miss the point of the sermon, I think.

[49 : 01] Because this is one complete sermon. There are some things in life you're not supposed to separate. They're supposed to be taken together. trifle. You know, there's the custard and the jelly and the fruit and the cream.

But you're not supposed to separate it all out. You're supposed to have it all together in one bite. And this sermon that Jesus preached on that day, it all fits together to make one point.

So let's look at this sermon in the time that we have. And you can see from the structure of the sermon that Jesus preached is made up of three stories and then a silence.

Three stories and a silence. So the first story you can find in verse four to verse six. It says in verse three, Jesus told them this parable.

Note that it's a parable. The parable is a parable is something, it's a story that has a message in it. And so this parable that Jesus tells them.

[50 : 08] It comes in three parts, but there's one message. So the first story is in verses four to verse six. And Jesus says, suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them.

Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep till he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, rejoice with me, I find my lost sheep.

So there's the story. And those who were listening, they would have known the Old Testament. So they would get the meaning of the story.

Their minds would likely be going to Isaiah 53, which says, all we people like sheep have gone astray. And so they would be able to understand that Jesus is using the illustration of sheep.

But he's talking about people who've gone away from him and who are lost and who don't know which way to go in life.

[51 : 20] And Jesus is telling us through this story that these people, even the ones and twos who are lost, Jesus loves them.

And he looks for them. He looks for us. Now if we think about the congregation, we can imagine the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, the religious folks.

And we can imagine them as they get the message of this about lost people. We can imagine them whispering to each other and pointing over at the tax collectors and sinners and saying what a lost bunch they are.

No wonder Jesus is telling this story. You can't get a more lost bunch of people than them. And the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, they hated the lost people.

They pushed them away. But Jesus, the good shepherd, he goes looking for the lost. He loves the lost.

[52 : 34] He searches for the lost. He came to this world, remember, to seek and to save the lost. And when he finds the lost sheep, we see this shepherd in the story, he calls his friends together and they have a party to celebrate.

And then Jesus gives the application and he takes us from this world to heaven. And only Jesus can speak about heaven because he's the only one who left heaven to come here.

And Jesus says in verse 7, I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent.

And that's an amazing insight for us. Jesus tells us that heaven has a party when even one sinner who was lost repents, turns back to God and is found.

it's an amazing thing. I've spent a lot of this last week sitting at a bedside with someone who's approaching the end.

[54 : 04] My mind has often gone to heaven. I wonder what it's like. Jesus gives us a glimpse into heaven and he says there's parties in heaven constantly.

When one sinner here and one sinner there and once another in the next place repents and comes back to God. And then Jesus adds maybe as he makes eye contact with the religious people, by the way there's no parties in heaven over people who think they are righteous.

There's no parties in heaven over people who think that they are so good they don't need to repent. And then Jesus moves on to the second story.

So we have the story of the lost sheep and then we have the story of the lost coin. You can see that in verse 8 and 9. And Jesus says, suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one.

Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, rejoice with me, I found my lost coin.

[55 : 26] Now going back to that day I lost a coin, a silver coin, was worth about a day's wages for a labourer. In our money, a hundred pounds say. And it was lost.

I would spend quite a lot of time looking for a hundred pounds if I lost it. Or it may be that this silver coin that Jesus speaks about was one of the ten silver coins that made up a headdress that women wore to indicate that they were married.

It's kind of the equivalent of our wedding ring. So if one silver coin is lost out the headdress, there's great alarm. So she turns the house upside down because she's got to find it.

Because it's precious to her. And when she finds it, she phones her friends and neighbours and she says, I've found my lost coin. I'm delighted about this, so come on round and we'll have a party.

And again, Jesus gives us this window into heaven and he says in verse 10, in the same way I tell you, there's rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

[56 : 45] And that was a message that they needed to hear. I don't really need to say this today because Neil said it better than I can say it. We're all precious to God.

we're loved by God. There was tax collectors and sinners in that congregation who didn't feel precious.

They felt worthless. They were despised people. They were people who were pushed away. But Jesus is saying through the story, you're precious to God.

God, you're like a lost coin to me. I came to seek and save people like you.

Jesus was turning the whole place upside down, seeking people just like them. And Jesus says, when even one of you repents, there's going to be a party in heaven.

[57 : 49] So what an encouraging message to those of us who know that we are sinners. What an encouraging message for us to know that even though we know our hearts can be dark, even though we know that we can fall and fail, Jesus loves us.

And he looks for us. And he calls us to come to him so that we can be saved. That was the message.

Two times. Lost sheep, it's sought and it's found party. Lost coin, it's precious, so it's sought and it's found and there's a party.

But we can imagine the Pharisees now. Sitting in the congregation looking at their watches losing patience with this message of hope for dirty sinners.

See, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, they couldn't see what any of this had to do with them because they couldn't see their sin. They thought they were righteous, they thought they didn't need to repent.

[59 : 16] So Jesus has a third story that's specially for them and it's the story of the lost sons and that's the final story that we have in this sermon.

Jesus continued, he's on the same track, remember, the same message, same sermon. There was a man who had two sons and underline that in your Bible, two sons because we come to Luke 15 and we say, ah, this is the parable of the prodigal son who went off to far off land and he got lost and he came back and it's the prodigal son, but no, this is the story of the two sons and both were prodigals and both were lost and the younger one said to his father, verse 12, father, give me my share of the estate and that's the first shocking statement.

That would have sent shockwaves to this congregation because you didn't say that. And this young son, when he came to his father and said, I want my share of the estate, he was essentially saying to his father, I want you dead because you didn't get the estate until your father died.

But he's saying to his father, I can't wait till you're dead, I want to go now. So can I have my money, please? And amazingly, verse 12, the father divides his property between the two sons.

Not long after that, verse 13, the younger son got together all he had, he set off for a distant country, and there he squandered his wealth and wild living. And after he spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to become, he began to be in need.

[61 : 10] His stomach is rumbling, he's out of money. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his field to feed pigs.

And he longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. So we have this younger son, and he's hit rock bottom.

This is the biblical equivalent of he's a down and out. He has nothing. He's on the streets. He's in the gutter.

He's working with the unclean animals, which for the Jew was a no-no. He's even wanting to eat their food, which would be repulsive to a normal person.

And I think at this point, everyone was expecting the punchline of the story to come. And I think at this point, everybody was expecting Jesus to wrap this all up by saying, and there's a lesson for you.

[62 : 24] Don't be like the younger son. Don't live an immoral life, or you too will end up in the pigsty. Because that's the kind of sermons that the Pharisees preached. And they would give an amen to that sermon in a heartbeat.

But that's not Jesus' story. Jesus is only just getting started with this story, and he continues, and he brings us back to the pigsty.

And we see in verse 17, this younger son, and when he came to his senses, he said, how many of my fathers hired men of food to spare? Here I am starving to death.

I will set out, go back to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men, your servants.

So he got up and went to his father. And we can visualize the scene in our mind's eye. You know, we can picture this filthy, disheveled younger son turning away from the pigsty and turning back in the direction of his father.

[63 : 45] And we have a picture in that scene of what it looks like to repent. You know, twice we've seen that word when Jesus speaks of heaven.

He speaks about people who are repentant. And the word repent simply means to turn around. It means to change direction. It means to leave the life of sin and come back to the father God who is saying, I'll show you mercy.

And that's what this young son does. Comes back to the father. he's got his speech rehearsed. Doesn't expect to be a son anymore.

Expects maybe he can get a job working and be a slave. But it's better than being in the pigsty. So what happens next? Does this young rebellious son get a beating?

Because he's wasted all his father's cash. He's brought shame to the family name. He stinks. He's filthy.

[65 : 02] Does he get a beating? Because that's what the congregation in that culture would have been expecting to hear. And that's what he deserved. That's what they'd have been thinking.

But that's not what happened. Because it says in verse 20, while he, the younger son, was still a long way off, his father saw him.

Because his father's been looking for him. And his father, filled with compassion for him, ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him.

And if you want a picture of God, there's a picture of God. God. Now some of us may have a picture of a stern God who pushes us away.

Because that's what tends to be said in the culture. You want an accurate picture of God. God the son gives it to us here.

[66 : 16] and we see the father wrapping his arms around this prodigal. And this is a picture of what God does to us when we repent.

We come back to him. He doesn't push us away. He doesn't batter us over the head with all our sin. when we truly repent and ask for forgiveness he pulls us close.

He's gracious to us. And the son said to him verse 21 father I have sinned against heaven and against you.

This is a speech remember that he rehearsed. I am no longer worthy to be called your son but the father said to his servants. He cuts off the speech midway. The father said to his servants quick bring the best robe.

Now that's the father's robe. Put it on him. And put a ring on his finger. That was a sign of authority. It had the family name on it. It was like a credit card.

[67 : 34] Give it to him. Put sandals on his feet. That indicated that he was the son not a slave. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate for this son of mine was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. Now if we hit pause here and think about the whole sermon that Jesus has been preaching thus far, do you see the pattern that's emerged?

Do you see the repetition? Lost found party. The lost sheep is found, they have a party. The lost coin is found, they have a party.

The lost son is found, they have a party. And the message comes through three times so that we'll not miss it. It's like Jesus' way of turning the volume up to full, to maximum volume so that we'll hear this.

Jesus wants us to hear this message three times over that God loves to seek and save sinners. He wants us to hear this message that God loves to show mercy to sinners who repent.

[69 : 00] He wants us to see that God will show grace to those who come to him. Even if our sin has been as shocking as the sin of the younger son.

If we turn from sin and turn back to our father, he will receive us and he will forgive us. And heaven will party.

and that would be a great place to end the sermon with the lost son being found.

It's a happy ending. But the story doesn't end here because remember this is the story of the lost sons, plural.

We've only seen one son repent and be embraced by his father. And there are two sons.

[70 : 09] Now the tax collectors and the notorious sinners, they can identify with this younger son because they've gone off and done all kinds of nonsense. And everybody had called them names for all they've done.

And they'd heard this message that even if they turn back now they can be forgiven. Maybe some of them did turn back through this sermon. Maybe some of them were saved through this message.

But what about the older son? Who's the older son? Take a look at him.

You can scan the verses. My time's long gone. And you can see from verse 25 to 32. The older son, he's not out in the far country squandering money.

He's been out in the field working for his father. He's doing the right thing. He never went off to the far country. He never wasted his father's money on sex, drugs, and rock and roll.

[71 : 16] He's been clean living. But when you look at this older son, he doesn't really seem to know the father, does he?

Even though he's been close to his property, he doesn't seem to know him. When he hears the noise of a party, he doesn't run in to see his father and say, what are we celebrating?

He goes to a servant and he says, what's going on in there? I don't know if I like the sound of this. There doesn't seem to be any kind of relationship with or intimacy with the father.

And then when his father begins to speak to him, there's a bitterness that pours out of this older son. He says to his father, I'm not coming into the party all these years.

I've been a slave for you. you haven't given me anything, not even a goat. So as the father celebrates the wonder of grace and salvation, as he rejoices at this younger son, who's been so far away and he's come back into his house, the older son, he seethes with rage and he refuses to go in.

[72 : 42] Verse 28. So who's the older son like? If the younger son is like the tax collectors and sinners, who's the older son like?

Well, the older son is like the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. They'd lived moral lives.

They were upright, decent looking people on the outside. They're full of religion. They're never far from the father's house.

They never ventured off into the far country, but they had no relationship with God as father, the Pharisees. They didn't know God. They knew all the rules, yes.

They'd made up many, many of their own rules to add to the rules that they'd find in God's word, that they were slaves to the rules, but this message of grace and forgiveness and mercy hated it.

[73 : 51] It was an offence to them. Made them angry. to see Jesus welcoming the dirty people. And so we see this son bitter and angry, twisted, like the Pharisees.

So what does the father do as we finish? With his bitter, hard, religious, older son. does he say, suit yourself, stay where you are, far away, and let us celebrate?

No, he doesn't do that. He pleads with him. He pleads with this bitter, hard, cold, religious character, and he says to him, would you not come inside?

The tense in the Greek is the continuous tense which says that the father, he keeps on going outside and he keeps on saying to the son, come in, come in, come in.

And that's what Jesus was doing. He kept on going to these Pharisees. he kept on coming to the teachers of the law, he kept on pleading with them to leave behind their hard, cold religion, and come to the father through Jesus, through grace, which was the only way.

[75 : 30] So what comes next? Three stories. What comes next?

Silence. There's silence. We don't hear the older son repentance.

We don't hear about this older son being saved. We don't hear about a party in heaven.

There's silence. The sermon ends in silence. So what can we say as we finish?

What's this sermon of Jesus all about? Well, it's about the fact that everyone is lost. In our nature, because of our sin, everyone is lost.

- [76 : 47] lost. Some are lost. Some are lost like the younger son, you know, in the far country and reckless for the living. And some of us are lost like the older son, close to home with religion and ritual.
- people. But in our nature, everyone is lost. And Jesus is calling everyone to come to him.
- He's calling, to use Dale Ralph Davis' terms, he's calling the sinners that stink of the pigsty, and he's calling the sinners that stink of the church pew to come to him.
- And be saved. So the question is, have you come to Jesus yet? Has there been a party in heaven yet?
- Over your soul? Has there been rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God? Because the message has gone from earth to heaven that such and such a North Harris free church repented today?
- [78 : 12] Or is heaven still silent? When it comes to your soul? Come to the Father.
- God's love to Jesus the Son. Give him the glory. Great things he has done.
- Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for this message, this sermon that Jesus preached, that we have been able to read.
- God's need. And we thank you that the way to know God, the way to know forgiveness, the way to know salvation, the way to know eternal life has been opened up for us.
- And we recognize, Lord, that we can't earn our way into heaven. We can't, through our good works, persuade you that our lives are good enough to let us into heaven.
- [79 : 20] we are all sinners, there's none righteous. But we thank you that Jesus calls all of us to come to him. And we thank you that when we come to Jesus, we will not be driven away, but we'll be pulled close.
- We thank you that heaven rejoices over every sinner that repents. And we pray that there may be someone here today who repents. for the first time.
- We pray that there might be someone who comes to the Father. And we thank you that the way is through Jesus. It's through his cross.
- He died so that our sin could be paid for. He rose so that we could have eternal life. So help us, we pray, not to be like the older brother offended by the message of grace, trying to work out our own salvation through our religion.
- But help us, we pray, to trust in Christ. And yes, to seek to live a life that brings glory to him. But not because we think that will save us, but because it saved people.
- [80 : 41] We want to show our love for you. And we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to finish the words of Mission Praise 708.
- To God be the glory, great things he has done. so loved he the world that he gave us this star, who who yielded his life and has opened for sin, and opened the lightning that all may go in.
- Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.
- O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done.
- O earth and redemption, the purchase of blood, to every believer, the promise of God, the mindless offender, who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice.
- [82 : 41] Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice. O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done.

Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done, and greater rejoicing through Jesus the Son, a future higher and greater will be, our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.

O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done.

And now we pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship, the comfort of God the Holy Spirit would be with us all, now and forevermore.

[84 : 08] Amen.