

# 7.12.25 pm

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Date: 07 December 2025

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] Good evening. A warm welcome to the service this evening. Good to see everyone and welcome also those who are online.! The notices you got in the email and Scott went over a few in the morning. I had a quick listen on my way to Leverborough this morning and the only thing I would add to what Scott said this morning is that we have the evening communion service next Sunday evening, God willing. And if there are any who know the Lord, who are trusting the Lord and haven't yet come to the table, the invitation is extended. The session we'd love to meet with you and so please prayerfully consider that. Well let's sing now to God's praise and we'll sing from Psalm 34 as we worship God.

Psalm 34 and the first two stanzas of the psalm. God will I bless all times. His praise my mouth shall still express. My soul shall boast in God.

The meek shall hear with joyfulness. Extol the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord. He heard and did me from all fears deliver.

These two verses of Psalm 34. We will remain seated to sing in Gaelic and then afterwards Donald will lead us in prayer in Gaelic please. The meek shall hear with joy.

The meek shall hear with joy. The meek shall hear with joy.

[ 1 : 52 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 4 : 22 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 6 : 52 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 9 : 22 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 11 : 52 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Amen.

[ 14 : 22 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 16 : 52 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 19 : 22 ] Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 21 : 52 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 24 : 22 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 27 : 52 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 30 : 22 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 32 : 52 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

you. Hello. Hello. and Lord of all. He became a little child.

C.S. Lewis, in one of the Narnia books, wrote, Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than the whole world, which is a thought that blows our minds.

[ 34 : 56 ] So even as we think about the incarnation, as we think about Christmas, as we move into the season of Christmas, this season, the incarnation, it speaks to us about the humility of Jesus.

He became a little child, the one who is God and Lord of all. And then as we see Jesus grow and begin his public ministry, Jesus is not seen and painted in scriptures as a celebrity pastor of a series of megachurches.

Jesus doesn't have an entourage serving him. He's not driving around in limos. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 20 and at verse 28, The Son of Man, that's the phrase that he used to speak about himself, The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.

And these words that Jesus spoke, they weren't hollow words, because we could go to John chapter 13, and we see Jesus serving his disciples in the most breathtaking way.

It says in John 13, that Jesus rose from supper, he laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it round his waist, then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

[ 36 : 37 ] Now this was a job that was not expected to be done by even a Jewish slave.

It was beneath a Jewish slave. And yet here we see the king of the Jews, we see God the Son, washing the dirty, stinking feet of the disciples, because they wouldn't do it for each other. And they wouldn't do it for him. Which is just breathtaking humility. And yet Jesus humbles himself further than that.

By going to the cross. To wash not our feet with water, but our hearts with his blood. Paul, the apostle in Philippians 2, said, Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing.

[ 37 : 56 ] Taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death.

Even death on a cross. the humility of Jesus. The humility of Jesus.

The disciples, as they come swaggering up to Jesus with their inappropriate question, they badly needed to learn that to follow Jesus, to be like Jesus, meant taking the lowest place.

Not trying to grasp at the highest place. Not trying to be the greatest, but humbling themselves. And in that culture, it's very different to our culture, but in that culture, back in the New Testament times, the ones who had the lowest place were the children.

They had no power. They had no rights. They had no votes. They had no resources. They weren't listened to.

[ 39 : 26 ] They had the lowest place on the social ladder. So Jesus illustrates humility by pointing to this small child.

And he says in verse 3 and 4 to his disciples, you need to become like children. You need to be humble if you are to enter my kingdom and be my disciples.

So point number one, disciples of Jesus are to be humble.

And as we prepare to come to the Lord's table, how are we to come? Well, we're to come with no trace of pride.

No delusional thoughts about our own greatness. We come knowing that we are sinners.

[ 40 : 41 ] We come confessing our sin. We come in humility, trusting in all that Jesus has done for us.

And seeking to be like him. We come singing the words of the hymn that we just sang. Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling.

Naked come to thee for dress, helpless come to thee for grace, follow I to the fountain fly, wash me, Savior, or I die.

And I think that disciples of Jesus are to be humble. Second point, disciples of Jesus are to be stepping stones to faith and not stumbling blocks.

Or if I put it another way, disciples of Jesus are to help people believe in Jesus and not hinder them.

So Jesus says in verse 5, whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.

[ 41 : 53 ] But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, and the word sin there in the Greek is the word skandalizo, which means literally to stumble. Whoever, says Jesus, causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble into sin, literally, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

So Jesus, at this point, as he speaks to his disciples, he's pointing them to, he's looking at this little one.

And it's crystal clear as Jesus has his shoulder, his hand on the shoulder of this little one, that he loves this little one, he cares for this little one, he wants to protect all the little ones.

But who are the little ones? It's a question that we've got to ask. And the answer is, the little ones certainly include children. He's speaking literally about children.

There's no question about that. Jesus loved the children. He says in the next chapter to his disciples, in chapter 19, verse 14, let the children come to me.

[ 43 : 17 ] Don't be a barrier. Don't hinder them. Let them come to me. So Jesus, as he says to the disciples, as he warns them about not causing the little ones to stumble, he's talking about the children because he loves the children, but the definition of little ones is likely wider than small children.

Because as we come to Jesus, as we become Christians, we are received, we are adopted into the family of God, and we become children of God.

So whether you're 10 or 12 or 14 or 95, if we are trusting in Jesus, we are little children of God.

1 John chapter 3 verse 2, if you want a verse to back that up. But the trouble with children is that we are, as we sang, we're prone to wander.

If you leave a child in an open space, they're not going to stay just beside you. They're going to wander off into all kinds of trouble. And that's a picture of what we're like. We're prone to wander.

We are prone to drift into sin.

[ 44 : 36 ] Like little children, when they're learning to walk, we are unsteady. We find it easy to stumble. And so Jesus says to his disciples, and the disciples themselves are also little children, Jesus says to his disciples, disciples, you are to help each other walk steady and not stumble.

Disciples, he says, you are to help each other believe in me and not doubt. But when someone does fall, Jesus is saying to his disciples, help them back up.

Don't point at them on the deck. Don't say, look at the state of him. Look at how he's fallen. No, no. Go and pick him back up.

That's what you're to do. And Jesus is saying to his disciples, when someone drifts into unbelief, and someone who once was close with the Lord drifts and is away at a distance, don't let them wander.

Go and get them. Bring them back. Be a stepping stone to a little one coming back to Jesus.

[ 46 : 04 ] Not a stumbling block that causes them to trip and fall even more. One commentator, Hale, says this, God cares for each Christian, but he especially cares for the young and weak Christian who goes astray.

We too should care for such Christians and make every effort to bring them back. we must encourage such lost brothers and sisters to repent and turn back to Christ.

Disciples of Jesus are to be stepping stones and not stumbling blocks to faith in Christ. And I wasn't going to do this, but I think we should just for a moment, in our mind's eye, think about some little ones of all different kinds of ages.

Little ones who maybe once were walking steady and now were either shaken or they fallen.

let's think of some little ones who once used to sit in fellowships with such zeal and love for Jesus and how they seem to be cold and distant and unreachable.

[ 47 : 54 ] Think of faces names. Think of names. Pray for them. And then having prayed for them, having talked to the Lord about them, not talking to other people, talking to the Lord about them, having talked to the Lord about them, reach out to them.

Pray for that opportunity. to reach out to them, to bring them back. Disciples of Jesus are to be stepping stones to faith, not stumbling blocks.

The problem with the disciples here was that at this point, they were stumbling blocks. Jesus is humble.

The disciples are proud. Jesus lowers himself from heaven to earth for the sake of our salvation.

The disciples are trying to exalt their own name to the heights of heaven for their own glory.

them. They're stumbling blocks. They're distorting for the person who is interested, the picture of what a disciple of Jesus should look like.

[ 49 : 32 ] And so Jesus calls them out. And he says, that needs to change if you're going to be my disciples. That needs to change if I'm going to use you to bring other people to me.

Third point, disciples of Jesus are to be ruthless with sin. And we're talking not about other people's sin here, we're talking about our sin.

Disciples of Jesus are to be ruthless with sin. And if you look at verses 7 to 9, my time's just about gone, so I'm not going to read the verses again. But in verses 7 to 9, Jesus talks with really quite shocking language about cutting off hands and cutting off feet and tearing out eyes.

And it seems like very serious language and drastic treatment that he's prescribing. But with some conditions, that's what's needed.

Think about sepsis. I'm no doctor, but I remember at one point where Mary's brother got sepsis, his leg became septic, it became infected, and the infection was starting to take a hold of the body.

[ 50 : 57 ] So how does the doctor treat that? Well, what the doctors did was they zapped the infection with antibiotics that were as strong as they could possibly find in the hope that that would work.

But if it didn't work, what was the next course of action to be? What they were saying was, if that doesn't work, if the infection in the leg can't be controlled, the leg has to be cut.

Because if it's not, the infection will go through the whole body, and that can lead to death. sin is like a sepsis of the heart.

So Jesus says to his disciples, be ruthless with your sin. Don't allow sin to find a harbor in your heart. Cut it off.

tear it out. Because if we don't, Jesus warns us in verse 9 that sin leads to death.

[ 52 : 12 ] It leads to eternal death. It leads to verse 9 being thrown into the hell of fire. So this is serious, which is why Jesus speaks with such strong language.

Disciples of Jesus are to be ruthless with sin. He tells them that back in that place at that time. How do we apply this to ourselves today? Well, in exactly the same way.

Disciples of Jesus today, followers of Jesus today, we are to be ruthless when we see sin within us. When the Holy Spirit shows me as he shows you the sin that lurks within your heart and mind, we are to be ruthless with that sin.

So if on our phones there is an app that we find leads us into sin, Jesus says, cut it off.

Delete it. Get rid of it. If there's a place that we tend to frequent that's leading us into sin, Jesus says, stop going there.

[ 53 : 34 ] Stop it. If there is a group of people that seem to always encourage us to sin, Jesus says, exit the group.

find a different group. As we follow the Lord Jesus, as we prepare to come to the Lord's table, we come not dragging our sin with us to the table.

we cut it off. We are ruthless in our repentance of sin.

That's what Jesus is teaching. and if we find that we are taking sin lightly, if we find it's actually very easy for us to sin, what are we to do?

Where are we to go? We're to go back to the cross and we're to take a look at what our sin did to Jesus.

[ 54 : 52 ] Disciples of Jesus are to be ruthless with sin. Last point, just a word. Disciples of Jesus are to seek the lost.

If I just rattle through this very briefly, last paragraph, chapter, verses 10 to 14, Jesus begins this final paragraph in the conversation with a warning to his disciples not to despise.

He's pointed to one of these little ones as an illustration, and then he says to his disciples that they are not to despise any of these little ones. And I can imagine the disciples looking shocked and offended even at the suggestion that they would despise one of these little ones.

Why would they despise? How could they possibly despise one of these little ones? That seems like an insensitive thing for Jesus to say. But what did Jesus mean?

How do we despise someone? Well, we despise people if we don't tell them about Jesus.

[ 56 : 11 ] I think that's the point. We despise people in a sense if we don't tell them about Jesus.

But verse 14, Jesus makes clear, without Christ, we perish. we're lost. We're forever dead.

And Jesus says, that's not the will of my Father, that any of these little ones should perish. So how do little ones not perish and have eternal life?

Well, the verse that should be ringing around in your head just now is John 3, 16. for God so loved the world that he sent his only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.

So little ones will not perish if they believe in Jesus. so the job of the disciple is to tell people about Jesus, not just a minister.

[ 57 : 33 ] If you are a Christian tonight, if you're a disciple of Jesus, your job, as well as mine, is to tell people about Jesus.

We are to seek, we are to reach out to the lost, to tell them about Jesus. And if we don't do that, we are guilty of despising them.

And that might sound like harsh language, but it actually makes perfect sense. Just apply it in the physical sense. If you see a man in a house that's burning, and you don't reach out to him and warn him and try and take him out of that house, people would say, what's wrong with you?

Do you despise him? If we see someone who's sinking in the sea and we have the chance to be able to reach out to them with some kind of buoyancy aid, and we just turn our backs and say nothing, people would say, what's wrong with you?

Don't you care? In the spiritual sense, which is far greater, we have the words of eternal life, and if we don't share them, people die eternally.

[ 59 : 15 ] We, if we are Christians, know the Savior, the only Savior, the only one who's able to give life. We know him, we trust him. if we don't tell other people about him, they will not be saved.

They will die in their sin. So, disciples of Jesus are not to despise the little ones, but are to seek them, to seek the lost, by telling them about Jesus.

And one way, as we finish, that we can tell people about Jesus, and what he has done to save us, is by coming to the Lord's table.

Because as we take the bread, we tell people about his body that was given, that was broken for us.

And as we take the wine, we tell people about his blood that was shed for us. And as we come and sit at the table, we proclaim his death.

[ 60 : 49 ] death. Why? Why? Not just because he's told us to, but because through his death, sinners are saved, and the lost are found.

God. So may God enable us to be the disciples that Jesus teaches us to be.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We confess that there are parts of this passage that we find uncomfortable to preach, to listen to, to meditate upon, and to act upon.

But this is your word. And we ask, Lord, that you would help us. As we see sin, as pride can rise up on us, as it did in the first disciples, we pray that we would confess it and seek that cleansing.

we pray that we would be humble, that we would recognize that we are great sinners, and that Jesus is the great Savior and the only means of our salvation.

[ 62 : 15 ] We pray, Lord, that you would help us to be those who are stepping stones, who point other people to Jesus, especially those who may be drifting just now, that we wouldn't point at them, but that we would point them to Jesus and reach out to them in love and with courage.

We pray that we would be those who are hour by hour if necessary, repenting of sin, being ruthless in our repentance, recognizing that sin leads to death.

And we ask, Lord God, that you would help us to be disciples who have that burden to reach the lost by telling them about Jesus, the only one who can save.

Help us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's sing to God's praise as we finish from Psalm 34, 34, and we'll sing from verses 5 to verse 11.

Psalm 34, verses 5 to 11. They looked to him, enlightened were, not shamed were their faces. This poor man cried. God heard and saved him from all his distresses.

[ 63 : 40 ] Up until verse 11. Oh, children, hither do you come, and unto me give ear. I shall you teach to understand how ye the Lord should fear. we'll stand to sing to God's praise.

Amen. sing to Him from all his distresses.

The angel of the Lord that comes a proud and compassed all those suffer that do him fear and let deliver air.

O kiss and see that God is good who just in him is blessed fear God is saved none that in fear shall be with want your breast the lion's young may agree and and they may love their good but they not truly seek the Lord shall not like any good!

O children hither do ye come and unto thee come and unto thee may be I shall you teach to understand how teach to understand how ye the Lord should hear now the grace of our Lord the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forevermore Amen!

[ 66 : 57 ] you you you you! you you! you! you