

21.4.24 pm

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Date: 21 April 2024

Preacher: Steven Osman from Solas

[0 : 0 0] Good evening and a warm welcome to the service tonight. Good to see all of you here. Good to have Steve with us. Steve Osmond from Solas this evening. We intimated this morning that Steve would be here and we're looking forward to hearing God's word through him and also hearing how he and Andy and others are serving the Lord at this time in the country. So I'll hand over to Steve just in a wee while but we'll begin this time of worship and we'll sing to God's praise singing from Psalm 27 and the first two verses of the Psalm in Gaelic. The Lord's my light and saving health who shall make me dismayed. My life's strength is the Lord of whom then shall I be afraid.

When as mine enemies and foes most wicked persons all to eat my flesh against me rose they stumbled and did fall. We'll sing these two verses we'll sing down to verse six in English in just a moment but we'll sing these first two stanzas in Gaelic and just for your confusion Steve we sit to sing in Gaelic and we stand to sing in English. I'm not sure what's the history behind that but that's how things are done so we'll sit to sing to God's praise.

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SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS SONG
 PLAYS SNING SNING pray. Heavenly Father we thank you for this day and we thank you for your word that we have sung we thank you that as we sang that you are that you are our light that Jesus came into this world and said I am the light of the world we thank you that you Lord Jesus are our savior and the eternal health that our souls need and long for is found as we look in faith to Jesus. We thank you for the the message of the gospel that we gather around Sunday by Sunday as we come here and as others gather in different places. We thank you for the the message of salvation. We thank you for the the message of resurrection eternal life. We thank you for this the Lord's day that day where we remember that Jesus the savior died to take away the the punishment for our sin and we thank you that he rose from the dead and our hope is guaranteed in the fact that we bow that we worship a risen living savior. We thank you Lord for the the blessing that we have even as we thought about this morning the blessing that is offered to us that we receive as we believe in Jesus the blessing of knowing that our sins are forgiven when we confess them the blessing of knowing that we have that eternal health that salvation that Jesus himself has secured for us at Calvary. We thank you that we have a hope that is sure and certain. We thank you that we have the promise that you are with us Lord through life and you are with us even through death into life that's everlasting. And Lord we thank you also for the privilege that we have to be involved in the work of the gospel that as those who receive your blessing as those who know the joy of being in Christ we thank you that you give us the privilege and the responsibility of of sharing with others the message of the good news of Jesus. We ask that you would help us to do that that we would be salt that we would be light in this place in Tarbert and North Harris in every area that we are connected with. We pray that you would give us courage that you would give us wisdom that you would give us opportunity that you would give us sensitivity that we would be ready to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as doors open for us to speak about Jesus. And Lord we pray not only for this place but we pray for the country that you have placed us in. We pray for this nation that once was known as the land of the book, a nation that was once known for the light that was within us. And now we confess Lord that there is much in the way of darkness and your word has been set aside from many of the public places. But we thank you that still we have the freedom and the opportunity to speak of Jesus. We thank you that we don't have to fear tonight that this meeting will be disrupted, that we will be stopped. We praise you Lord that we are able to gather together in this way in freedom, that we are able to join together in worship and lift the name of Jesus high. And we pray that you would help us to not take that for granted but to rejoice in that and take every opportunity that you give us to come together and to worship you. And we pray for Steve and also for Andy as he

[8 : 17] preaches elsewhere this evening. We thank you for Solas and for this ministry that you have raised up over past years. We thank you Lord for the ways that they are able to get into the different organizations in different places and share the message of the gospel. We think of the Apostle Paul who reasoned and who persuaded so many that came into his way to persuade them of the resurrection of Jesus. And thank you Lord for those that you have gifted in these particular ways to be able to reason and to speak persuasively, bringing forth the evidence and opening your word and meeting sensitively and wisely with those that you've placed around them. We thank you for Steve and for Andy and we thank you for the meetings on Friday and Saturday that have passed, for the young folks who heard and who asked questions and who received the truth of the gospel message. We pray that you would bless all that was shared and we pray that you would bless them as they continue to serve you and that you would help us as we hear of this ministry to remember them in prayer and to be encouraged about all that we hear being done in

Help us to remember and to bring to you regularly in prayer those who minister in need. These particular contexts and we ask Lord that the work of the gospel, the message of Jesus would progress with great speed and momentum in these dark places and we pray for the progress of the gospel also in this place. That even though the name of Jesus may not be welcomed in the way it once was, we pray that the gospel would go forth in great power and that we would see many more coming to faith in Christ.

Psalm 27 verses 3 to verse 6. Against me though I am host and camp, my heart yet fearless is. Though war against me rise, I will be confident in this one thing.

We'll sing down to the end of the verse Mark 6 to God's praise. We'll stand to sing to God's praise. God's praise.

[illegible]

For he in his pavilion shall be hide in evil days.

Above all those that are my foes, and round encompass me.

And sing, yea, I, to God will praise his name.

A short reading from 1 Corinthians chapter 15. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and reading at verse 1 to verse 8.

The Apostle Paul, as God the Holy Spirit inspires him, writes, Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, Which you received and which you stand.

And by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, Unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received.

[15 : 45] That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures. That he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. And that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time. Most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Last of all, as the one untimely born, he appeared also to me. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us.

We're going to sing again to God's praise. And we'll sing that hymn that we know well that's on the screen. Though the nations rage, kingdoms rise and fall, there is still one king reigning over all.

So I will not fear, for this truth remains, that my God is the Ancient of Days. And after we've sang this hymn, Steve's going to come up and lead us in the rest, or the next part of the service.

[16 : 49] O the nations rage, kingdoms rise and fall, there is still one king reigning over all.

So I will not fear, for this truth remains, that my God is the Ancient of Days.

And I will not fear, for this truth remains, that my God is the Ancient of Days.

O the dread of night overwhelms my soul. He is here with me, I am not alone.

O his love is sure, and he knows my name, for my God is the Ancient of Days.

[18 : 34] And I will not fear, for this truth remains, that my God is the Ancient of Days. And I will not fear, for this truth remains, that my God is the Ancient of Days. And I will not fear, for this truth remains, that my God is the Ancient of Days. The truth remains, that my God is the Ancient of Days.

All the power, all the power, all the glory, I will trust in his name, for my God is the Ancient of Days. The Ancient of Days.

The Ancient of Days.

The Ancient of Days.

The Ancient of Days. The Ancient of Days. The Ancient of Days. The Ancient of Days. The Ancient of Days. Very good evening to you, and so good to be here.

[20 : 20] The drive down was amazing. This is my first time coming out to Lewis and Harris. And for the last few days we've been up in Lewis, which has been fantastic.

I've loved it. But I must say, the drive down has really made me think that I'm definitely going to come back to Lewis quite quickly. I mean to Harris quite quickly. The scenery here is just amazing.

It's absolutely beautiful. So we have been here for the weekend. Myself, my colleague and boss Andy. And we're from a ministry called Solas.

And I've only been in the country, as you can tell from my accent. I'm not really from around these parts. I'm from sunny South Africa. And I've been in the country for just on eight months after having come out.

I touched snow for the first time on the 5th of December last year, which was quite a novel thing to me. I think our neighbors think we are absolutely nuts because it started snowing. And my wife and I at 9.30 at night were out in the street playing in the snow.

[21 : 24] So, you know, the crazy South Africans next door. There they are. There we go. That's myself and my family. That's my wife Robin, Hazel and Olivia, our four-year-old and two-year-old.

And behind us is a little lake that was actually frozen. The first time I'd ever seen a frozen lake. So that's quite something. If you want to click to the next slide for me.

We also brought our two dogs with us. That's Charles and Eleanor. Charlie and Ellie. And, yeah, they survived the winter, but they're still not really speaking to me. They're not happy that I brought them out to such a cold climate.

But, yeah, there they are. I studied in the sciences. I did a master's degree in zoology, specializing in, did a lot of evolutionary biology, and then in ecotoxicology.

And those are some photos that I took under a microscope of what are called diatoms, a little algae, and you can use them to build water quality profiles for environmental risk assessment and that kind of thing.

[22 : 28] But my time in the sciences was quite interesting because sort of halfway through that time I became a Christian. And my friends thought this was strange. They asked me, well, Steve, how can you be a scientist on the one hand and believe in God?

Surely these two things are at opposite ends of the spectrum and you can't have both. You've got to choose one or choose the other. And so very quickly I started having conversations with them, trying to find answers to their questions.

Because to me this just made sense. If God has made this beautiful world, surely I would want to go out and investigate it and, you know, see the fingerprints of God and all the beautiful things that he's made.

And so I started having really good conversations. And I was by no means a natural evangelist. I was terrified of telling people about what I believed. But through learning how to ask good questions and just answering people's questions and finding out that they are actually really good answers out there, I've come to really enjoy engaging with people and telling them about what I believe.

And so long story short, I then made my way over and joined the team at Solus where we really focus on two main things. The first is evangelism. We go out to, well pretty much anywhere that will take us and invite us to share the gospel.

[23 : 49] Look at, you know, the big questions of life and purpose and value and meaning. And we'll go out and share the gospel. We'll preach a message or share a message around, you know, questions of God and science or the reliability of the Bible, whatever it may be.

We do this on university campuses, cafes, pubs, whatever. And we then do a lot of Q&A, engaging with people who don't believe what Christians believe.

They might be atheists, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, whatever. And there we go to really share the gospel and show how it makes sense of life better than anything else does.

Recently, I was at the University of Glasgow with the Christian Union there doing a talk. And afterwards, a chap came up to me and said, you know, a year ago, he had come to a talk and there was this chap, Andy Bannister, who is at Solus with me.

And he listened to Andy give these talks. You know, he came there as skeptic. He had lots of big questions. And he said by the end of it, he felt he was, you know, ready to become a Christian. All those questions had been answered.

[24 : 53] And he was like, well, I guess this is true. And then in the part in the year after that, he had joined a church and become a Christian. And this is just one story. Many, many, many stories we hear the fruits of what we actually do as we go out and share the gospel.

So that to me is super encouraging. Something else we do is training. So we'll go out to churches and train people in persuasive conversational evangelism.

You know, it's terrifying sometimes to think about actually speaking about your faith. And I don't think it should be that way. But it is. You know, the culture does seem hostile to what we believe. And so we go out to just try and remove the barriers to people being able to share their faith, to show them there are really good reasons.

And there are good ways to actually interact with people who may believe something different to us, to be able to listen to them and really share with them the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. So that's the other end of the thing that we do.

And yeah, we've just been having so much fun this weekend doing both of those things, evangelism, training. But we also do a couple of other things. We have a series or a whole range of online resources.

[26 : 03] If you go to our website solas-cpc.org, you'll find a ton of resources. And some of my favorite resources there are our short answer videos. We have more than, I think, 180 short clips, about four to six minutes long, where we engage on some of the big questions of the faith.

And so if you have a friend or colleague or family member who has questions and you don't really know the answer, that is a great place to go. Look at those resources. You'll probably find a video on the question that you've received or the question you have.

And if you don't find the answer, email us. We'll make a video and we'll put it on the website. We love doing that. It's one of the highlights of my job, making those videos. So that's some of the stuff we do.

And how do you get involved? Well, I'll just share one or two thoughts. Firstly, it would be prayer. Often we're going out to places where we have no idea who's in the audience.

Sometimes it can be a very hostile audience. And so we would just absolutely love your prayers for us as we do that, that you would pray that the Lord gives us wisdom and insight and encouragement and energy and strength.

[27 : 09] But also for the people who we're sharing the gospel with. So many people never have heard of Jesus. They've never set foot in a church. They don't know anything. And so I pray that those who hear the gospel, that seed would be planted and then it would grow and grow.

And they would come to faith. They would come to put their faith in Jesus. So please do pray for that. And then use those resources. I do encourage you to send them to your friends and family and colleagues who maybe don't believe what you believe.

So that they would investigate this for themselves. One of the most recent resources we have is a book called *Have You Ever Wondered?* It's just been released.

And this is a really great book to get into the hands of those people who don't believe what you would believe as a Christian. And it really delves deep into the questions of life and existence from a very accessible point of view.

Just showing that belief in God is the thing that really makes the most sense in life. So I encourage you, get your hands on a copy of that *Have You Ever Wondered* book. So that's just a little bit about me and the ministry of Solas.

[28 : 23] So let us now turn to 1 Corinthians 15 verses 1 to 8. And I've titled this message of first importance. Of first importance.

I'll get into it in a while. But let me tee things up first. There are so many misunderstandings out there. So many misunderstandings about the Christian faith and what it is that we actually believe.

And so there was a lady who was having a birthday. She was getting on in her age. And she had three daughters who had left home and set out and become quite successful.

But getting back together, they all discussed the gifts that they had gotten for their elderly mother's upcoming birthday. The first said, I built a big new house for my mom.

She's going to absolutely love it. The second said, oh that's very good. Well, I got her the brand new Mercedes Benz. And I got her a chauffeur to drive her wherever she wants to go.

[29 : 24] The third said, well that's great but I've got you both beat. You know how mom enjoys the Bible and you know she can't see very well. So I have sent her a talking parrot that can recite the entire Bible.

It took ten monks in a monastery two years to teach him. I had to pledge to contribute five thousand pounds a year for the next twenty years. But I think it was totally worth it. Mom just has to name the chapter and the verse.

And boom, the parrot will recite the verse to her. Well, quite amazing. Soon thereafter, their mother sent out a letter of thanks to each of them. To the first she wrote, Melinda, the house you built is just way too big.

I only live in one room and now I have to clean the whole thing. This just isn't working out. To the second she wrote, Mavis, I'm too old to travel. I stay at home all the time. I never use this Mercedes.

And frankly this driver is quite rude. Won't you please sack him? To the third she wrote, That's just a little story about misunderstandings.

[30 : 35] They can get us in all sorts of awkward positions. I've had friends who've come to me and say, How can you believe in Jesus? He didn't even exist.

Or the Bible is just a made up thing. The longest game of broken telephone. Chinese whispers, I think you might know it as. In the world. How can you trust all this stuff? There's no evidence that God exists.

All these misunderstandings. Misunderstandings of what Christianity is all about. This idea that, you know, I'm not good enough. I have to work hard. I have to be better before God could know me or love me.

These misunderstandings. So if someone had to ask you, What would you say your faith is really all about? What would you say if asked is the most important thing to know about Christianity?

What would you say? Well, let's see, as we have read, what the Apostle Paul says to that question. It says this, Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, In which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved.

[31 : 39] It's a continuous thing. You were saved, but it is still this gospel, this message that he preached, that is still saving you. That's sanctification as we grow and learn more about the Lord.

And if you hold fast the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. Now here it is. For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance. Now when the Apostle Paul says, as of first importance, I think we need to stop and we need to listen.

Because it's going to be important. That Christ died for our sins according to the scripture. That he was buried. That he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

And that he appeared to Cephas, that is Peter, and then to the twelve. You see, Christ died, but he didn't just die, he died for our sins.

That Christ died is a fact of history. That Christ died for our sins is the gospel. That is the good news of Christianity. And he goes on, he says, after that, he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters at one time.

[32 : 46] Most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, that's the brother, the half-brother of Jesus. Then to all the apostles, and last of all, he appeared also to me.

This is one of my favorite letters. Paul covers so much territory before he gets to this point in his letter. And there's so much good practical stuff for us in the book of 1 Corinthians.

Things to help us know what to do and how to live as followers of Jesus. But what is his motivation? What is it that energizes everything that he did and everything that he calls us to do?

Well, I think Paul tells us quite clearly in chapter 2, verses 1 to 2 of this same letter. He says, So that's right at the beginning of the letter.

So that's right at the beginning of the letter. Jesus Christ and him crucified. That is where he starts. And then, after that, he goes on for 14 chapters about so many different things.

[33 : 55] Sexual immorality, the apostles and their gifts in the church, idolatry, head coverings, dealing with pagan practices, observance of the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, prophecy, tongues, so much stuff, so many things.

So many important things. But it all starts with Christ crucified. And then he eventually gets to chapter 15, the verses that we read. And he stops to remind us of what the most important thing is.

The thing that makes all of that other stuff possible. And it's Christ's death and resurrection. It's the focal point of everything. So when asked that question, what is Christianity all about?

It's about Jesus. It's about his life, his death, and his resurrection. So, for the next few minutes, we're going to speak about the reality of the resurrection.

We're going to speak about the relevance of the resurrection. And then a response to the resurrection. Reality, relevance, and response. So let's go first to the reality of the resurrection.

[35 : 00] Did it really happen? Is it true? Did Jesus rise from the dead? And here I'm going to give you just a sample, if you will, of some of the type of thing we would go out and share on university campuses just to show the reliability of the testimony of the New Testament.

You see, we have the Gospel records. They're biographies about the life of Jesus. But are they true? How can we trust them? How can we trust them? Well, here are just a few pointers to the truthfulness of the Gospel records.

The first is that they include embarrassing details. The second is that James and Paul were converted. And then the third is the persecution and death of the first disciples. I'll touch on each one of those very briefly.

The first is embarrassing details. Embarrassing details. Now, if you're going to make up a religion, if you're going to make up some big system of thought, generally, people will do something like this to get money, fame, power, whatever it might be.

If you're doing something like that, you're not going to write a book that makes you look very bad. If you're trying to get people to follow you and look up to you, the last thing you're going to do is make yourself look bad.

[36 : 14] If you speak to any kind of investigator or a policeman who is taking a testimony of maybe an accident or something like that, they will tell you that if someone makes themselves look bad in the testimony, if they say, yeah, I'd been drinking and I drove the car off the road and crashed into someone's fence or whatever it might be.

Chances are they're just telling the truth. If they come with some big elaborate thing where, you know, oh, well, there was a child running across the road and I swerved, you know, I was going to put my life on the line and go off that cliff. Chances are it might not be true because they're making themselves look very good.

But if they make themselves look bad, that is generally a pointer to truth. So what do we have in the New Testament? Well, so much of the time, the New Testament writers portray themselves in a very, very poor light.

They portray themselves as being dimwitted and uncaring. They're rebuked by Jesus over and over again. They're rebuked by each other all the time. And in one of my favorites, Peter, who goes on to be one of the leaders of the early church, is called Satan by Jesus.

It's it's it's you can't make this up. So why if this is if it's not true, if these gospel accounts are not true, why would you find all of these things where these people portray themselves in such a bad light?

[37 : 34] The writers of the accounts portray themselves in such a bad light. And I think the best explanation is because they're just recounting the events as they actually happened. And the same applies to the resurrection event that they record.

One of the most embarrassing things that they do include as well. I'll just jump down to the second one there is that women are recorded as the first eyewitnesses.

Well, why is that embarrassing? Why is that important? At that time in the first century, a woman's testimony was not valid in a court of law. Not at all.

Not at all. If they came and had a charge they wanted to lay, you had to get a man to come and do it with you. If you had three men who had come and give a testimony about something that would be taken. But what we have in the Gospels is that it is women who find the empty tomb.

If you're going to be making this up, if you're going to be creating some narrative to try and get, you know, fame, money and power, the absolute last thing you're going to do is make women be the ones who find the empty tomb.

[38 : 43] Because their testimony wasn't valid. And so we have to say, well, chances are that they just wrote what happened. It was really women who were the first ones to find the empty tomb.

If they were making this up, they would have probably said something like, well, me and the rest of the disciples, we got together, we got our swords, we marched down to that tomb, overthrew the Roman guard, rolled back the stone, and there was our Lord Jesus who said, well done, my good and faithful servants.

And then we went and comforted the cowering woman. But that's not what we have at all. We have women who were the first ones to find the empty tomb because that's just the way it was. And that points to the truthfulness of the whole of the testimony, including the fact that Jesus rose from the dead.

Let's move on to Paul and James. Paul and James, why are they important? Well, think of this. Who was Paul before he was Paul?

He was an absolute enemy of the church. He was Saul of Tarsus. He was a Pharisee and his job was to find and persecute, find and imprison, find and kill Christians.

[39 : 51] He was an absolute enemy of the church. But then something happened. Something radically changed. From being a persecutor of the church to very, very quickly becoming one of the most prominent leaders and advocates of Christianity at the time.

Going on to write two-thirds about of the New Testament. And he tells us himself what actually happened. He says, I encountered the risen Christ.

He was on his way to imprison and persecute more Christians. And there Jesus appeared to him, risen from the grave. What's the best explanation? I'd say that he's just telling the truth.

This is really what happened. And he went to his death because he wouldn't recant that belief. Well, what about James? Many people don't know that James, Jesus actually had some half-brothers.

And James was one of those. The book of James in the New Testament was written by the half-brother of Jesus, who is James. But he didn't follow. He didn't believe in Jesus as the Son of God in Jesus' lifetime.

[40 : 54] It is only after the resurrection that James becomes a Christian. So, by show of hands, who here has a brother or sister? Very good.

Okay, so let me ask you. If your brother or your sister came to you tomorrow and started saying that they are God in the flesh, would you believe them?

I have an older brother, whom I love. But if he tomorrow started coming and claiming that he is God in the flesh, and that we should worship him, I might make a phone call to some people in white suits to come and drag him off and take him to a nice padded room.

I'm not going to believe it. It would probably take something as drastic as a resurrection from the dead to make me start believing that. Right? And that is exactly what we have here.

James didn't believe in Jesus' claims to be God in the flesh. He rejected it. He even tried to get Jesus killed before his time. And that's recorded for us in the Bible, strangely enough.

[41 : 58] And then he went to his death without recanting what he believed. What's the best explanation? Simply that he records for us what actually happened.

And that is that he saw Jesus risen from the dead. The next one is martyrdom. Martyrdom. Persecution and death of the first disciples. Now I refer to that very briefly.

James and Peter and Paul were all killed because they would not give up what they claimed. They would not recant their claim that they believed to see the risen Jesus.

Peter was crucified. James was stoned to death. And Paul was beheaded. And we have pretty solid evidence that 11 of the 12 disciples were all killed because they would not give up their faith.

They would not turn back and just say, in the face of persecution, the guys were saying to them, Listen, we're going to crucify you or we're going to burn you at the stake if you don't just say that it's all made up. What did they do?

[43 : 00] They said, I'm sorry, we can't do that. And they were killed for it. Often people will say, yeah, yeah, but we see this all the time. We see people doing crazy things for what they believe in. Flying planes into buildings.

They believed something and they went to their death for it. What's the difference here? Well, these guys are the ones who would have, if it's made up, they would have been the ones who made it up.

Now, why would you die for something if you knew it was a lie? You wouldn't. No one would. And that's the thing. If it was a lie, if they hadn't seen the risen Jesus, they would have been the ones to know about it.

And when faced with the prospect of being crucified, they would have very quickly said, OK, well, no, no, we did make it up. Sorry, just let us go. But that's not what happened. They were put to their death.

So that moves us on to the second, the relevance of the resurrection. The relevance of the resurrection. There's a shared sense in all of us.

[44 : 04] I think that this life is not all there is. And if you look around at the world, this is clearly evident in the way that it's expressed. You see people trying to extend their lives in so many different ways, just yearning to kick against the grave.

And we look around and we see death and decay all around us. And deep within us, we cry out and we say, there's something wrong with that. It doesn't make sense. It doesn't sit well with us. This is a pointer to the fact that there is something beyond the grave.

It is the shared experience that we all have. And we're looking for hope. Is there any hope that there really is life beyond the grave? Well, if there is no God, if we're all just the product of blind random chance and all we are is the material stuff that we're made of, well, then this life is all there is.

There's nothing beyond the grave. As the famous atheist Oxford professor Richard Dawkins puts it, it's all just blind, pitiless indifference. So is there any hope?

Well, I think in Christianity there is hope. There is hope beyond the grave. That is a hope that is contained within Christianity and intimately linked to the resurrection of Jesus.

[45 : 18] You see, the Christian hope of eternal life is not just wishful pie in the sky thinking, but it's built on a credible hope and the historical foundation of the resurrection of Jesus.

And so if you're here today and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, let me ask, have you ever wondered? Have you ever wondered if you were made for something more? Have you ever wondered if there is something beyond the grave?

Have you ever wondered where that internal yearning to push back death comes from? I think that we have credible hope in the cross.

And this is why Jesus came to die. Often when I share this and talk about that innate hope, people say, well, why did Jesus have to die? That to me doesn't make sense. Why the cross?

Let me give you just one illustration about that. In a moment, if I can find it, I will give you that illustration. There we go.

[46 : 20] There was a very famous artist. And he's walking down the street. And he's walking down the street of the town that he grew up in. And a little slower than he once was because he's gotten a little bit older than he once was.

And passing by the window of an antique store, he sees something familiar in the window. It's a painting. It's one of his. He just can't believe it. It's this painting, a masterpiece he did years ago before he was famous.

And he remembers how he'd done that and then gifted it to someone else all those years ago. But here it is in this antique shop as he's just passing by. And it's scratched and the frame is broken and dented.

The thing is dirty and it's ripped. And it's not what it once was. But it's his. And it's right there in that window. And he sees it. And he wants it. He wants so desperately to re-restore it back to what it once was.

But he can't just go into that shop and take it, can he? He can't just waltz in and grab it. If he wants it, he has to go in and he has to buy it back. Before he can fix the frame and mend the rips and clean it up and restore it to what it was supposed to be like, he has to buy it back.

[47 : 34] And this is just a picture of the Christian hope. And it says that God who made us and loves us and sees us in our broken state longs to have a restored relationship.

And he longs to restore us back to what we are supposed to be in relationship with him. And so that's where Jesus comes in. That is where Jesus, the Son of God, has stepped into this world and died in our place for our sins to buy us back.

That is the Christian hope. To pay the price for all of our brokenness and messed upness. That's what sin is. We don't do the things we know we should do and we keep doing the things that we know we shouldn't do.

And God pays that price to make a way for us to change. Makes a way for us to be restored. You see, the only hope of change in this world is if we as humans are first restored.

We see the chaos around us. We see all of the madness. And it starts with the human part. If we're going to be transformed from the inside to a new kind of life where we're freed from our continual brokenness and reunited with our Creator God.

[48 : 44] That is the Christian hope. And so that is exactly what Jesus came to do. He came to show us that eternal life is available and invite us into that by repenting.

That's simply turning from our old way and turning to follow Jesus. And he proved this by rising from the dead as he predicted that he would.

And so here are just three verses. I can read them for you. Jesus said, For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost.

And that's you and I. We're lost. We're broken. And Jesus came into this world to find us. That is a hope that we can take to our friends. Take to our family.

Take to those who are broken and just living in darkness and need the light of Christ. He said, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Jesus is narrow.

[49 : 44] The way is narrow. But it is also the broadest thing out there. Because he says, For God so loved the world. For God so loved the world. Every single person that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

But there's only one way to get there and that is through Jesus Christ. But the offer of grace is there for every single one of us. For every single person you know, you can take that hope to them.

And then the response to the resurrection. So in light of that, what do we do? If you're here and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, if you haven't put your faith in Jesus, I would simply ask, What are you waiting for?

What are you waiting for? God's invitation is there. It's a free gift. Would you choose it? Would you choose to accept it and bow the knee to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who knows you and who loves you?

That is something you can do right now, today. If you are a Christian, my question would simply be, How are you continually responding to this good news?

[50 : 55] It's not something you once believed and then you walk away and do something else. No, this is every day, the thing that infuses us. Look at the life of Paul. Everything he did was fueled by the gospel.

Everything he did was fueled by the resurrection of Jesus, even when it brought hard times and persecution. So are you hearing the words of our Lord Jesus when he commissions us to take this good news to the world?

When he said in Matthew 28 verses 19 and 20, Jesus speaking, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

He says, Go, go into the nations, share this light that you have, share this amazing good news. If we believe this, how could we just keep it to ourselves? How could we not want to share this with every single person we come into contact with?

That's the challenge, but it's built on this amazing hope. I think we have good reason to believe that the resurrection is true. It makes the most sense of life. And we get to choose how we respond to that as Christians every single day.

[52 : 11] Why don't you bow your heads and pray together as I close. Lord, we thank you that your gospel is for each one of us.

We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have had your eye on every single one of us and you have come to find us. And that you are good to your word, Lord. That you are the way, the truth and the life.

And when we put our faith in you, we have put our faith in a secure foundation. That your love for us is not wavering. It's not based on how good we are, how well we do. But it is based on your finished work at the cross where you separated our sin from us.

As far as the east is from the west, you have separated from us. And that is the reality of the life we live in. And so we thank you for your grace, Lord Jesus.

I pray for everyone here, Lord, that you would help us to just sit in that and enjoy that and worship you. And be mindful of that fact, Lord, that we live in that place.

[53 : 17] I pray that you would give us boldness as we reflect on these things. As we reflect on the words of Paul in this passage. As we reflect on your word as it calls us to share this good news.

And that you would help us, you would fill us with your spirit and give us boldness and wisdom. But also love and gentleness as we go out to shine this light to a dark world that so desperately needs it.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, Steve. I'm probably going to call you to stand back up.

But any questions for Steve? This is what he loves to do, answer questions. So he will be around. He's going to speak to the YF at half past seven.

So he'll be around for a bit. But any questions just now for him for those? Up you come, Steve. I knew Maria would ask a question. It's not a question as much as thank you very much for that.

[54 : 20] Pleasure. I think it's very relevant for all of us here in the Christian church to be able to answer and reply to people who have got the gift of the rhetoric persuasion.

And they will come with so various ways of confronting us, especially our young people going out to universities now, and especially this day and age.

And asking them about their Christianity. And you brought it into context here with your talking about the resurrection and Mary going to the tomb.

I'm glad you brought that up. I'm glad you brought that up. The second time over Easter I heard about Mary. And all of that was thought about a woman.

And the very fact that was her that brought Christianity through going and telling the disciples about Jesus had risen.

[55 : 32] Yeah, it's amazing. Thank you. Thank you for that observation. I think for me it's so true. There's just so much out there. And especially as people leave high school and go off to universities, the challenges are intense.

And as you say, there's so many people who are very antagonistic. And their aim would be to break down people's faith and come with all sorts of philosophies and things.

But I love the words of Paul in, I think it's, oh, where is it? 2 Corinthians 10, 5, where he says we tear down every thought, every philosophy that sets itself up against Christ, taking those thoughts captive to him.

And that is exactly what we should be doing. But it's tough because that means we have to actually know what's going on there around us. And so, yeah, for me the encouragement would be, I went on this journey and I discovered that there are such good answers out there for all of the big questions.

And I think that's the starting point. So we don't need to be scared of these things. And Christianity is true. If Jesus did rise from the dead, then that will stand up to any test that someone can bring, any stones that they'll throw at it, it will stand the test.

[56 : 46] And so we should be seekers of truth, as I think Jesus would compel us to be. Thanks for that observation. Very good. Any other questions? Do you want to tell us a wee bit about Stornoway on Friday and any things that you wanted to share that maybe you could pray into just in terms of the local language?

Absolutely. Yeah, yeah. So I was so encouraged on Friday night with the turnout that we had there. The place was just packed and it was such a great atmosphere having all the young people together there.

And I believe that there were several young people there who aren't Christians. And I think for me that is the point. That is the point of the ministry that I've been involved in. We want to be getting people to think, to think about these big questions.

And so to see that response and those people coming out, the way that it was done was just fantastic. I think it's Marianne from the church up there just set it up so well.

So I was just really encouraged that this work is being done, that this is on the radar, that this needs to be something that is happening regularly to rich people. So that for me was great. Great engagement with the questions.

[58 : 06] Some really hard questions as well. I mean, I'm happy to stand in front of, you know, 500 people aged 40 and up. Put me in front of 10 teenagers and I tremble because they have really difficult questions.

But it's awesome because it means that they're thinking through these things. And that means the opportunity to share the gospel is there. And so I love that. And then we did our Confident Christianity conference on Saturday.

And again, just so wonderful to see the turnout to that and be able to answer questions and just really creating a, I think it's a culture of evangelism, culture where part of us being disciples of Jesus is actually thinking and then telling people about our faith.

Often we can think of discipleship as something that, you know, it's just very personal, something that we just do on our own. But part of being a disciple is actually following and living out that great commission that Jesus gives us, which is going to tell the world about it.

So fantastic turnout there. And yeah, just a great event yesterday evening as well. Andy spoke and Andy's always great. You can throw any question at him and he'll have an answer.

[59 : 22] So often he'll, there'll be a question that's asked and I'll just kind of step back and look over to Andy and he just rattles it off. So yeah, it was fantastic. We've had such a great time and we will definitely be back.

If not for the scenery alone, I will be back. But yeah. Congrats. Just for clarification, did you say Hallis scenery was more better than that? Yes, you can put that on record.

I'll happily hear it. Sorry, sorry. I'll have to find another way home. Thank you. Good feedback from the youngsters. Great. Fantastic. Yeah, I had so much fun.

Do you have a pamphlet? Not on me. No, but do you have pamphlets? Yeah, we do indeed. Yes, I can get you some of those if you, we'll chat you afterwards and exchange details.

Okay. I'd love to. Last question, any? No? No. I'll ask the last question. Good. Well, for anybody, I think all of us feel the challenge and conviction of we're called to speak about Jesus.

[60 : 29] And as you kind of mentioned in your talk, it's increasingly difficult to do that in the culture that we're in. The person who's saying, how on earth do I do that?

What's your, what's your kind of, what's your two minute advice? Two minute advice. Very good. So as I mentioned, I don't at all consider myself a natural evangelist. So first thing would, first observation is that I learned how to do it through practice, through stumbling through it.

And so you don't have to feel that you're someone who's just naturally gifted to be able to do this. We're all called to do it. And I believe God will give us what we need in the moment. And we can rely on him, rely on his Holy Spirit to be the one who actually will bring people to faith.

We are just a tool that he uses in his sovereignty somehow. And so it's, it's God's work and we get, we're called to be part of this amazing thing. But practically, for me, it was learning.

I don't have to have all the answers, but what I can do is have good questions. So if you're speaking to someone, and that's where at Solus we're passionate about this idea of persuasive conversational evangelism.

[61 : 38] Getting to know someone, getting to know what, what they believe and the questions that they have, and then actually asking good questions to move the conversation deeper and keep the conversation going instead of just shutting it down.

So three questions that you can ask very quickly. Andy did a talk on this a couple of months ago when he was out here. The first question would be if someone brings a tough question to you, like, you know, well, God doesn't exist.

What, I mean, what do you say to get the conversation going instead of being like, oh, what do I do? Do I just throw a bunch of evidence at them or how do I answer this? You could say, well, what do you mean? What do you mean by that, that God doesn't exist?

What, what, what do you believe about God? What, what God is it that you don't believe in? What, what do you mean? And then what happens is, uh, firstly, for me, when I use that, I get to step back and just breathe and collect my thoughts because I'm not as quick as I'd like to be.

Um, but also it means they need to start unpacking what they mean because they may very well mean something like Thor or Zeus. And I also don't believe in those gods. So I can just go, oh, that's not what Christians believe.

[62 : 45] We don't believe in like a Thor or Zeus. The God we believe in is presented in the Bible as this and this and this. So that gets the conversation moving. Um, another question you could ask is, well, why do you believe that?

So the first is, um, what do you mean? And then is what, uh, why, why do you believe that? So if someone says, well, um, the Bible is not trustworthy. We say, well, instead of trying to scramble and, and, and have all the answers and try and make a case, well, let's unpack it.

Let's step back. Let's get them talking more and hear what they think. Um, they may something say something like, well, because it's, um, you know, just broken telephone. We have no idea what it originally said. It's been used and twisted and corrupted for people to have power and dominion over people.

Okay. Well, that's really interesting. Have you ever considered X, Y, and Z? And then you can start sharing some thoughts about why you believe that the Bible is reliable. Um, so that'd be, um, what do you mean by that?

Why do you think that? Um, and then the third one is, have you ever wondered? So that book that I mentioned is called that and has, I think around about 30 years. I think around about 30 chapters of these wondering questions. Uh, there are many, many things in culture that people are really passionate about, but they don't really have an understanding of why they are.

[63 : 58] They don't have a good grounding for it. So take, for example, justice. You'll have many people who don't believe in God, but they are passionate about justice. I'd say to them, well, have you ever wondered, you know, that you get them sharing and they'll, you say, you know, what do you, what things are you passionate about?

You know, I see you put some stuff on Facebook, um, about this cause that you're very passionate about. Seems, seems you concerned about justice in the world. Oh, yes, yes, I am. I am. I said, well, have you ever wondered where this deep sense of justice comes from?

Have you ever wondered why that's this universal human thing that we have? Um, and then they could give some kind of explanation. And then you say, well, you know, if there is no God, you know, I don't really see why we should be concerned with justice.

If all we are is the product of blind random chance and you're just a bag of chemicals and I'm just a bag of chemicals. Well, then where does justice come from? Have you ever wondered where, what it's based in?

Um, and now you're getting that person thinking, but still you're just asking questions. Um, and then they may say, well, and you can say, well, I do believe in justice. And I say, well, why do you believe in justice? Well, I believe in justice because, um, I believe the Bible teaches that all humans are made in the image of God.

[65 : 14] And that means we have value and worth and dignity. And therefore it's unjust to kill innocent people, you know, something, something like that. So questions, have you ever wondered why do you think that?

Um, and what do you mean? So that'd be a start. Excellent. Thank you. Very good. Do you have the book with you? I don't, sadly. We ran out of copies. We made it, we made it down here to Harris too slow. Okay.

Next time we start here. Well, we can get the book though. So if anybody wants to come and speak to. Yes. Come speak to me. Thank you very much again for coming and speaking with us. And we will continue to pray for you as you go around Scotland and also as you tremble in front of 10 teenagers in Harris.

I have passed seven. We're going to sing to bring the service to conclusion for Mission Praise 1209. The words on the screen, my heart is filled with thankfulness.

To him who bore my name. Who loved the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again.

[66 : 15] Who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with its might and gave me life again. And rose my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with its might and rose my heart. My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who bore my name. Who bore my name. Who loved the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again. Who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with its might and rose his love of righteousness with love upon my heart.

Who loved the depths of my heart. Who loved the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again. Who loved the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again. Who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with its might and rose his love of righteousness with love upon my heart.

Who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with its might and rose his love of righteousness with blood upon my heart. My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who wants beside me. Who floods my weakness as to his strength and causes fears to die. Who floods my weakness as to his strength and causes fears to die.

My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who reigns upon. Whose wisdom is my perfect peace which every thought is wrong.

[67 : 51] For every day I am honored as given by the King. So I will live my life my all to love and fall.

[67 : 51] For every day I am honored as given by the King. So I will live my life my all to love and fall.

Well, thank you
forNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNING

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