

1.1.23 am

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Date: 01 January 2023

Preacher: Gordon MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning, and happy new year. It's great to be able to come together and worship God at this, the start of a new year, and we pray that it will indeed be a blessing to each and every one of you, how you look back and see what's going to be past in 2022, and you look forward to 2023, we pray that we would look forward to it, seeking God's guidance and seeking God's blessing upon us.

The intimations have been rolling as you've been sitting. I'm conscious of the time. Come in, come in. And we'll begin our worship by singing God's praise in Psalm 1.

Psalm 1 of the Metrical Psalms, That man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray, in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinner's way, nor sitteth in the scorner's chair, but places his delight upon God's law, and meditates on his law day and night.

May that indeed be the prayer for each one of us, that as we go into 2023, that we would indeed be guided by God's word, and that it would be our meditation day and night. Let us stand and sing.

God, man, how perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray, in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinner's way, nor sitteth in the scorner's chair, but placeth his delight upon God's law, and meditates on his law day and night.

[2 : 14] He shall be like a tree that grows near, planted by a river, which in his season yields his fruit, and his leaf faded never.

And all he doth shall prosper well, the wicked are not so, but like they are unto the chap which wind drives to and fro.

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

For why the way of worldly men unto the Lord is known, whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown.

Let us bow before God in prayer. Let us pray. Our gracious and our blessed Lord, we thank you that this New Year's Day, that we can come into your presence, that we can come into your presence and that we can acknowledge that you are our Lord, that you are our God, that you are worthy of all glory, honour and praise, that as we come this morning, that our hearts would indeed be inclined unto you, that we would indeed, Heavenly Father, come and seek to worship you in spirit and in truth.

[4 : 41] We thank you for this new day. We recognise that it is indeed a new year. That, Heavenly Father, that as we move forward into 2023, that, Heavenly Father, that we see the opportunities that may be before us.

But we also recognise, Heavenly Father, what has happened in the past. As we look back on a year, Heavenly Father, that for many has been a year of difficulty, a year of trial, a year of challenge.

We pray, Heavenly Father, for those that have suffered bereavement, that, Heavenly Father, where the wounds are still so sore, we pray that your hand would be upon them, particularly at this time of year.

That, Heavenly Father, when so many families come together that they recognise an empty seat at the table, we pray that your hand would be upon them and that they would indeed know you as a God of refuge and a God of strength, a God of comfort at this time, that even as their earth may have been removed and shaken, that, Heavenly Father, that they know that they can trust in you.

So as we draw near to you this morning, we pray, Heavenly Father, that we would indeed know your presence with us. We pray for those that are sick. We recognise, Heavenly Father, that there are empty seats here again within our congregation.

[6 : 05] Those, Heavenly Father, that are unable to join with us as they recover from operations, as they wait, Heavenly Father, for diagnosis, and as having received diagnosis, that they seek, Heavenly Father, to come to terms with it.

We pray that you would be with them. You would be with those that care for them, that minister to them, our doctors and our nurses, our family members, those, Heavenly Father, in the care profession, that so diligently attend to them.

We uphold them before you at this time. We pray, Heavenly Father, for our emergency services at this time. We read to, Heavenly Father, with sadness, so many different things that are happening across the country.

where lives have been taken meaninglessly, Heavenly Father, and families are bereaved again. We pray for those, Heavenly Father, that are working on the front line in our police and ambulance and fire services.

As they work amongst communities, Heavenly Father, trying to meet the needs that are there. We recognise, Heavenly Father, as we come before you this morning, that the greatest need of all is that lives are changed for you.

[7 : 17] That, Heavenly Father, that those that drink at the broken cisterns would indeed come and that they would meet Jesus. And that, Heavenly Father, that their desire would be for him.

We pray, Heavenly Father, for Ukraine. We continue to remember that even in this last year, things have changed beyond all recognition for that country and for the countries round about that provide aid to them.

We pray, Heavenly Father, for families that are displaced. We pray for those families even within our own community here. That, Heavenly Father, that as homes are opened, that, Heavenly Father, hearts would be opened and changed.

So we commit these things to you, Heavenly Father, recognising that as we look back that we are not in control of everything that happens in our lives, but you are.

And your word teaches us that you have a plan. And as we go forward into this new year, we pray, Heavenly Father, that each one of us would put our trust in you.

[8 : 24] That, Heavenly Father, that if we don't know you as Lord and as Saviour this morning, that while there is yet time, that we would call upon you and that we would know what it is to be saved.

And as we go forward into 2023, that we would put our hand in yours and ask you to lead us, to guide us, to keep us. And that all that we would seek to do would be in accordance with your will and for the furtherance of your kingdom here on earth.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Boys and girls, there's one or two here. I don't know if you want to come down to the front. You're more than welcome.

If not, I'll speak to you from where you are. There is Sunday school after the singing of the second hymn and anyone in primary school is more than welcome to go through to the Sunday school.

I just want to share with you why I chose the first psalm this morning. I said that as we move into 2023, there are many different challenges, many different opportunities that will come with us.

[9 : 35] but just young ones, when you go home, get the Bible out, look at Psalm 1, ask somebody to show you where it is and just ask them to read it to you because it gives us a plan for our lives.

It teaches us that if we stay close to God, if we walk close with God, that God will be with us and that God will bless us. It doesn't say that there won't be challenging times.

there will be challenging times in our life but if we stay close to God, He will be with us and He will feed us, He will support us and He will guide us in life.

So while you step into 2023 and you maybe wonder what's ahead of you, what's going to happen in school, what are the opportunities that are going to come your way, the greatest opportunity for each and every one of you is to know God and to walk with God all the days of your life.

There will be many different challenges, many different voices that you'll hear say, come this way, do this but the greatest voice that you need to listen to is the voice of God and you find that in your Bible.

[10 : 50] It teaches us to meditate on God's Word day and night. So when you get up in the morning, when you go to your bed at night, read something from God's Word and let it shape your life and may it guide your life so that you'll walk close with God each and every day.

I'll just pray for you. Dear Heavenly Father, we do indeed thank you for the gift of children. We recognise, Heavenly Father, the joy that they bring to us.

Each and every one of them in their own way brings us joy that we can celebrate. But we also recognise, Heavenly Father, that as parents, as grandparents, as aunts and as uncles, as members of this congregation, that we have a responsibility to teach them in your way.

And we pray, Heavenly Father, that as we sang in the psalm, as we've looked at the psalm, that, Heavenly Father, that each one of these young ones that we have prayed into this world that we have prayed for as they have grown in this world, that they would know that blessedness of walking close with you.

Our Heavenly Father, that as the different voices and different bright lights of this world seek to attract them, that they would be drawn close to you and that they would know the blessing of walking in your ways and walking close with you each and every day of their lives.

[12 : 25] So may they indeed know your blessing upon them and may they know your teaching and may you help us to teach them in Jesus' name. Amen.

I'm going to sing again to God's praise in Mission Praise 760. 760. And we'll stand again to sing.

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His word, what a glory He sheds on our way.

What a clue his good will. He abides with us still unto all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

[13 : 56] What a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies but a smile quickly drives it away.

Not a doubt nor a fear not a sigh nor a tear can abide while we trust and obey.

Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

Not a burden we bear nor a sorrow we share but our toil he doth richly repay.

Not a grief nor a loss not a frown nor a cross but is blessed if we trust and obey.

[15 : 05] Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

But we never can prove the delights of his love until all on the altar we lay.

for the favour he shows and the joy he bestows are for them who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

in fellowship sweet we will sit at his feet or we'll walk by his side in the way what he says
we will do where he sends we will go never fear only trust and obey trust and obey for
there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey as the children leave
please remember to pray for them as we'll hear later on in the sermon they certainly pray
for us when they meet on a Wednesday night as the children leave if we can turn to our
Bibles we're going to be reading in the

[17 : 12] New Testament and we're going to be reading in initially Philippians chapter 1 and we'll
read into chapter 2 Paul's letter to the Philippians at chapter 1 Paul and Timothy servants
of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and
deacons grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ I thank
my God in all my remembrance of you always in every prayer of mine for you all making
my prayer with joy because of your partnership and the gospel from the first day until now
and I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at
the day of Jesus Christ it is right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in
my heart for you are all partakers with me of grace both in my imprisonment and in the
defence and confirmation of the gospel for God is my witness

I will yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus and it is my prayer that your love
may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve
what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ filled with the fruit of
righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God I want you
to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel
so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that
my imprisonment is for Christ and most of the brothers have become confident in the Lord
by my imprisonment are much more bold to speak the word without fear some indeed
preach Christ from envy and rivalry but others from goodwill the latter do it out of love
knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel the former proclaim Christ out of
selfish ambition not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment what then only
that in every way whether in pretense or in truth

Christ is proclaimed and in that I rejoice yes and I will rejoice for I know that through your
prayers and the help of the spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance as it is
my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed but that with full courage
now as always Christ will be honoured in my body whether by life or by death for me to
live is Christ and to die is gain if I am to live in the flesh that means fruitful labour for me
yet which I shall choose I cannot tell I am hard pressed between the two my desire is to
depart and be with Christ for that is far better but to remain in the flesh is more necessary
on your account convinced of this I know that I will remain and continue with you all for
your progress and joy in the faith so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in

Christ Jesus because of my coming to you again only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or I'm absent I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and not frightened in anything by your opponents this is a clear sign to them of their destruction but of your salvation and that from God for it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have and into chapter 2 so if there is any encouragement in Christ any comfort from love any participation in the spirit any affection and sympathy complete my joy by being of the same mind having the same love being in full accord and of one mind do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others have this in mind among you which is yours in

Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by 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 therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father Amen and may God add his blessing to the reading of his holy word again come before we pray dear Heavenly Father we thank you for your word we thank you this morning that we can come and we can read it that it has been provided for us

[23 : 02] Heavenly Father as the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever and as we come and as we read your word this morning Heavenly Father as we gather as a body of your people we are indeed thankful that we have the freedom in which to do this we recognize Heavenly Father that there are many countries that brothers and sisters this morning are indeed persecuted for their faith we thank you Heavenly Father that at this time within our land that we have the freedom to come and to gather that you have granted us this opportunity and we pray indeed that at every opportunity we have to come into your presence to come and share together around your word singing your praise that we would indeed seize that opportunity that Heavenly Father that we would encourage one another in the world one another Heavenly

Father we do not take our freedoms for granted we recognize as a community of the incident that happened over a hundred years ago that those Heavenly Father so close to home so close to the shores were lost Heavenly Father many families changed forever many lives taken so early and we pray Heavenly Father for those that still remember that tragedy those families Heavenly Father that still feel affected by it we pray Heavenly Father there is a community that while we mourn and while we remember that we would indeed Heavenly Father remember that there is a greater shore for us to come to and we pray that we would not be lost that Heavenly Father that having come so far to read your word to understand your word that we would fail to call upon you as Lord and as

Saviour we pray Heavenly Father that while we look back on our past that we would indeed remember from it that Heavenly Father that we would look to you look to you for guidance for direction look to you for hope look to you Heavenly Father for the future knowing that we do not know what the future holds for each one of us many of us this time Heavenly Father recognise that our future may look bleak our future may look challenging but Heavenly Father you have promised us that if we put our trust in you if we read your word if we meditate upon your word if we do all that is contained within your word that you will indeed prosper us but most importantly no matter what that means for us Heavenly Father you have promised that you will never leave us that you will never forsake us so we pray for each one represented here those that listen in on live stream that

Heavenly Father that our trust would be in you and that we would know and claim that promise for us that no matter where we go no matter what we may face that you as our Lord and as our God the creator of the heavens and the earth have given us that promise that you will never leave us that you will never forsake us may that indeed be our guide and our comfort on this day in Jesus precious name amen going again to God's praise we're going to sing in Gaelic and remain seated for singing and we're going to sing in Psalm 32 in verses 7 and 8 in Gaelic I'll just read them in English thou art my hiding place thou shalt from trouble keep me free thou with songs of deliverance about shall compass me I will instruct thee and they teach the way that thou shalt go and with mine eye upon thee set

I will direction show and apost out of hast night list and All in fact, please give up thy father toonie.

[28 : 25] All in his influence, soon and soonPress. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

I'd like to ask you to turn in your Bibles to another portion in the New Testament in Galatians chapter 6. And just a few verses at verse 6. Galatians chapter 6 from verse 6.

[30 : 44] Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived.

Let us do good to everyone and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Let us pray.

Let him hear. Let us pray.

Let us pray. Take away the tiredness that we feel. And that Heavenly Father that we would focus clearly on you. That we would be still before you. And know that you are God.

And that those that trust in you are blessed. Amen. How many of you this morning read the Bible.com app?

[32 : 52] God. Whether it be on your phone or on some other device that you have. It comes from 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 17.

Therefore if anyone is in Christ. He is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold. The new has come.

Great verse to start the new year. The old has passed away. The new has come. And we can focus very much on the second part of that verse this morning.

And think. Yeah. 2022 has passed us. We're moving into 2023. A new year. New opportunities for us.

We've got the great quote that the Queen had that one year was an Annas Heraldus for her. And many might think that 2022 was the same for them.

[33 : 55] Different challenges that each and every one of us has had to face and go through. But we stand on the cusp of a new year. But let's not just forget what that verse actually says.

And think about this as we go through the rest of the sermon. We could just take it as the old is gone. Behold all things have become new. But there are two very important words in the first part of that verse.

Two words that come together and say. Therefore. If. These words weren't there. That would just read. Anyone. Is in Christ.

He's a new creation. And we know that Christ is a new creation. We've just spent a period of time celebrating. Christ's birth. But with these words inserted.

Therefore. If. Therefore. If anyone. Anyone. Anyone in here this morning. Is in Christ. You. Are a new creation.

[35 : 09] My question to you would be is. Are you in Christ? Are you in Christ? We could take out. The word anyone.

And insert our own name. Therefore. If Gordon. If Kenny. If John. Is in Christ. He is a new creation.

Can we put our own name. In there. And say that we are a new creation. In Christ. We read two readings.

One from Philippians. One from Galatians. You might be sitting there thinking. Why did we do. Have two readings this morning. You might have thought. They're not particularly well connected.

Philippians. The introduction tells us. In Philippians. It was written. A.D. 60. 60 years. After Christ was born.

[36 : 11] And where was it written from? It's written from a prison cell. And why was it written from a prison cell? Because it was opposition to the gospel. Paul.

Who had previously been a persecutor himself. Of the gospel. Was now in prison. For his own faith. And he was writing. To the Philippians.

To encourage them. And he said. I want you to know brothers. That what has happened to me. Has really served to advance the gospel. His head wasn't down. We'd seen that before with Paul.

When he was in prison. When he was in Philippi. In prison. He sang praise to God. And we know very well. The conversion. Of the Philippian jailer.

But here he's saying. I want you to know brothers. That what has happened to me. Has really served to advance the gospel. So that it has become known. Throughout the whole. Imperial guard. And to the rest.

[37 : 07] That my imprisonment. Is for Christ. And most of the brothers. Having become confident. In the Lord. By my imprisonment. Are much more bold. To speak the word. Without fear.

The persecution. Of the church. Isn't a new thing. It was happening. From more or less. The time. That Jesus was born. As we move into.

2022. Sorry. As we move into 2023. Need to get into the habit of saying it. And we look back. On 2022. There'll be mixed emotions.

For everybody. Personally. As a congregation. As a community. We had the joy. Of coming out of lockdown. As soon as we came out of lockdown.

It was in a war in Ukraine. As the war in Ukraine. Progressed. With the end of an economic crisis. Still going on. It was the death of the Queen.

[38 : 10] The appointment of a new King. And a year. Anyone looking in. Would say politics. Went absolutely mad. But in amongst. Everything. That was happening.

Those two things. That have happened. In the last couple of months. That made news. For a period of time. But probably the gravity. Of what the. Impact.

Of these things. Isn't really. Going to come to fruition. Until. Later on. Two legislative changes. That came about.

One here in Scotland. And one in America. And as we know. What happens in America. Very soon happens here.

The gender recognition. Reform Scotland bill. Many of us. We are aware. We'll have seen the news. We'll have read. The Christian Institute's. Material on it. On the impact.

- [39 : 08] That that is. Going to have. The changes. That it's going to make. And the other one. Maybe less known. By people. Is the signing. Of the Respect for Marriage Act.
- That took place. Recently in America. Wikipedia tells us. That the Respect for Marriage Act. Is a landmark. United States. Federal law.
- Passed by the. 117th. United State Congress. And signed into law. By President Joe Biden. It repeals. The defense of marriage act. Requires. The US federal government.
- And all US states. And territories. To recognize. The validity. Of same-sex. And interracial. Civil marriages. In the United States. And protects.
- Religious liberty. So what's the significance. Of these two. Changes. In legislation. I'm not here. To make any political statements.
- [40 : 02] It's just to raise awareness. That these things have happened. The gender. Reform Act. Came in. To repeal legislation. That was passed.
- In 2004. The defense of marriage act. Repealed. Legislation. That was put in place. In 1998. We live in an age.
- Where people. Are not happy. If they're not happy. With current legislation. Lobby. To get it changed. I recognize. That it's not just as straightforward. That that was a whole process.
- That needs to be gone through. But if people aren't happy. They want things to change. So that their life. Appears better. My point is.
- It's the speed. At which these changes. Are happening. And sometimes happening. Without us recognizing. That they're actually. Happening. But the key thing about it is.
- [40 : 57] That each one of these changes. Is undermining. Scripture. People aren't happy. With what the Bible. Teaches. We learn.
- That as children. That God's word. Is given to us. As the only rule. To direct us. On how we may glorify. And enjoy God forever. The legislation.
- Can be changed. That impacts. The lives. Of everybody. We don't face persecution. For our faith.
- Now. But as we see. Laws changing. As we see. A rise. Against. The Bible. Many of you.
- Have seen the figures. And seen on the news. The fact that for the first time ever. Census figures show. That England. Is less than 50%. 50%.
- [41 : 52] Or people will profess. Less than 50%. To be Christian. It was debated one night. On question time. And a woman spoke up.
- And says. I don't think it's right. That we should be. Classed as a Christian community. And why are we trying to. Indoctrinate children. By telling them. About Christ.
- In schools. And the sad thing about it was. Not that it was said. But that she got a round of applause for it. The reality is. That society is moving further.
- And further away. From God. A long introduction. To take us to our text. But it sets the scene. For the world.
- In which we're living in. And the changes. That are coming about. Galatians. Chapter 6. A particular focus.
- [42 : 46] In verse 10. So then. As we have opportunity. Let us do good to everyone. And especially to those. Who are of the household of faith.
- As we have opportunity. 2023 lies before each one of us. A new year. Are we going to wait.

For the opportunities to arise. Before us. Or are we going to seize the opportunities. That God presents. To each and every one of us. In particular.

Are we going to sow to the spirit. Or are we going to sow to the flesh. Are you going to sow for yourself. Or are you going to sow. For the glory of God.

Sowing to the spirit. Is doing work. For the kingdom. We pray. We pray. That God's kingdom. We pray. That God's kingdom. Would be advanced. Here on earth. Are we actively engaged in it.

[43 : 47] Now you might be sitting there this morning. Saying well I'm not a Christian. So this doesn't apply for me. As we have opportunity. As we have opportunity. And each and every one of you. Sitting here this morning.

Have the opportunity. To respond to Christ. That opportunity. Might not be there tomorrow. The Bible quite clearly teaches us. That our life is like a mist.

It is here for a moment. And then it vanishes. As we have opportunity. Are we actually going to take that opportunity. And ask Christ into our lives.

Just share something with you. I spoke about it briefly. As the kids were. Leaving. For Sunday school. During lockdown. There wasn't the same opportunity. For.

Minister. David. To be able to interact. With the young people. So we had a prayer. Meeting on Wednesday night. So we decided. That we would open. The prayer meeting early. For the young people.

[44 : 48] To come. And to speak with David. Share prayer points. With David. And then to have an opportunity. To pray together. That prayer meeting. Has been running. Now for over two years.

Just want to share with you. Two prayers. Not going to name. The individuals. That made them. But just to. Give you an insight. Into. The minds. And the hearts.

Of the young people. Within this congregation. And be thankful for them. There's one. Prayer. A week passed. On Wednesday.

And. I have to say. I've never been so much moved. By the prayer. Of one of the young ones. Probably never been so much moved. In prayer. I have to say. By somebody else's prayer. To hear.

To hear. To hear. To hear. This young one. Praying. For David. For me. And for the rest. Of the congregation. To be bold.

[45 : 44] In sharing the gospel. As a 10 year old child. That recognizes. The importance. Of sharing the gospel. In this day and age. And praying.

That we as Christians. Would be bold. To do that. On Wednesday night. Wasn't a big number. In the prayer meeting. But one of the young ones. That prayed.

Praying that those. That don't know Jesus. That seeds. Would be sown. Into their lives. So if you're not a Christian. Here this morning. Be assured. That the children.

In the Sunday school. Are praying for you. That you will be saved. And if you are a Christian. Here this morning. Our young ones. Expect us. To be bold. For Christ. They expect us.

To be sharing Christ. And if you take. Nothing else. From the service. This morning. May that be a challenge. To you. That our young ones. Are seeking us.

[46 : 40] To be living witnesses. In everything. That we do. Be thankful for them. Pray for them. That they will not. Lose that vision. And to come along.

To jam. Connect. And rooted. That they will grow. And they will indeed. Be rooted. In God's word. If our young ones.

Understand it. My question. To each one of you. Here is. Do you understand it? Do you understand. The importance. Of praying. For the unconverted.

Do you understand. Do you understand. The importance. Of sowing seeds. Into their lives. It's not about you. Making them a Christian. It's about sowing seeds.

Whether through what you say. Or what you do. And that God would use that. And bless that. How do young ones see it? Do we? I was away on holiday.

[47 : 40] With family. Beginning of December. One morning. I went out for a walk. And. I checked the map. Before I went out. To see if there was a walk.

That I could do. With the dogs. And it was shown. This route. On the map. That. So I set out. And I was walking along the road.

And I could see the sign. That showed me where the path was. But I couldn't see the path. But the path was taking me through a farmer's field. And I thought.

Well. I don't really want to walk through the farmer's field. But the map. That I had looked at. Before I left. Showed me that there was an entry point. And there was an exit point.

So I thought. Well. I can see the sign. But I can't see the path. I'll try and see if I can find. The other point. So I decided to walk along.

[48 : 38] The road. We're staying in a village. The walk took me outside the village. Speed limit changed. From 30 mile an hour. To 60 mile an hour. There was a footpath.

Along the side of the road. And there was a small. Grass verge. Separating me from the other cars. So while it was safe. There was still a danger to it. Cars were flying past.

It was a good road surface. But the cars were flying past. At 60 mile an hour. Plus. Dogs were pulling in the lead. At times I had to stop. And let other people past.

But eventually. I could see this sign. And as I approached the sign. I could see there was another sign. Written underneath it. When I caught to the sign.

I could see the path. But I read the other sign. And the other sign said to me. Walk at the edge of the field. Stay close to the fence. So okay.

[49 : 35] Went into the field. Field had been ploughed. Field had been seeded. I understand why. I need to. Walk at the side of the field. So I walked along.

The path. At the side of the field. Walked around the field. Had to hold on to the fence. At times. Because the path. Wasn't that great. All the debris. That had been. Ploughed to the side.

Was lying there. So you had to be careful. Where you were walking. Had to go down an embankment. At one stage. Edge. And then down. Into a lower part. Of the field. And when I was walking.

Along the side. One of the. The fence. Then stopped. Because there was no need. For a fence. Because it was a river. But what I noticed was.

That the farmer. Had ploughed the field. Right to the very edge. Even into the flood plain. Of the river. And I thought. Why on earth. Did he do that? I would have probably.

[50 : 33] Looked there. And thought. Well that part. Is going to get flooded. There's no point. In me. Putting any seed down there. But as I walked along. You could see. Where the water. Had come up. You could see. The plastic bags.

In some of the trees. Where the water. Had been running up. But the water. Had come into the field. Put fresh soil on top. And then. Went back out. And you could see.

That the shoots. Were coming through. Even where. The flood. Had been. The farmer. Had taken the opportunity.

Although he knew. That that field. Would flood. At certain parts. He took the opportunity. To sow seed. Even in the dangerous point. We very often.

See the opportunity. And then turn away from it. Thinking there's no point. I've spoken to that individual. Before. They're never going to listen. To what I'm going to say. Or.

[51 : 31] We might even. I don't know if that's somebody. That I want to come to my church. And we turn away. From the opportunity. Who are we. To make the judgment. All we are asked to do.

Is to sow seeds. And then to water them. With prayer. And ask. That God. Will indeed. Give the increase. That farmer.

Could have decided. I'm not going to. Sow this field. Or I'm certainly not going to. Sow that part of the field. But in due season. He will reap the harvest. As to where he has planted.

The word teaches us. That there will indeed. Be a harvest coming. Are we labourers.

In that harvest. Or are we deciding. That while the opportunity. Is there. We're going to let the opportunity. Pass us by. How often do we pray.

[52 : 30] That God would give us. An opportunity. To speak to somebody. And the opportunity. Comes along. And we let it slide. What will happen.

On the day. When we are called home. And we see those. That we worked with. We neighboured with.

We shopped with. Passing down into hell. And they turn to us. And say. You never told me. It would be like this. We are moving into 2023.

The past is behind us. The opportunities are before us. The opportunities for us to sow. Seeds into the lives. Of those that we come into contact with.

Each and every day. Are we going to take these opportunities. The farmer's field said. Walk at the side of the field. Near to the fence.

[53 : 32] The danger of walking close to the fence. In the Christian life. Is that one. Okay. You're in the field. But if you stay too close to the fence. You're attracted to what's on the other side of the fence.

And sometimes you might even want to hold on to the fence. And think that it's safer to walk on the other side of the fence. And because you're looking at what's on the other side of the fence. Your focus isn't on God.

If you've made a commitment to get into the field. Get into the field. Don't walk on the edge. Get in and sow and plough. Because God will give the increase.

And why do I say that? Why do I warn us about that? Well as I said about the legislation that's changing. We don't know where that is going to lead to. We don't know what next legislation might change.

And what impact that will have. On us as Christians. To be able to come together. To worship together. Father. As we have opportunity. As you have opportunity to receive Christ.

[54 : 38] Receive him. As you have opportunity. To share Christ. Share him. Don't let the opportunities pass us by. Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father. We thank you for your word to us. We thank you that it guides us. That it directs us. We thank you that it challenges us.

And Heavenly Father. As we sit here this morning. As we listen to your word. As we soak it in. We may Heavenly Father. Try and appease our own minds.

Thinking that I'm doing okay. And I'm walking close with you. But Heavenly Father. We have to ask ourselves. Are we getting our hands dirty for you? Are we in the midst of the field.

Laboring for you? Are we seeing the opportunities. And are we taking them? Because as your word teaches us. Heavenly Father. While we may deceive ourselves.

[55 : 43] You are not deceived. And you will not be mocked. We pray Heavenly Father. That while we have opportunity. That we would call upon you.

That we would indeed draw close to you. And that Heavenly Father. While we have opportunity. That we would share you. That the seeds that we have been given.

That have borne fruit. Would continue to bear fruit. And that Heavenly Father. That we would cast these seeds further afield. Recognizing. That there is work to be done.

And Heavenly Father. Heavenly Father. Your word also teaches us. That the fields are white unto harvest. And the prayer is that there would be laborers in that field.

So we pray Heavenly Father. That you would call each one of us. Maybe not into ministry. But Heavenly Father. That you would call us closer to you.

[56 : 40] And that you would equip us. In the different roles that we have. Whether in the home. Whether in the workplace. And Heavenly Father.

That we would be living witnesses for you. Not for our glory. But for yours. That we would indeed sow to the spirit. And not to the flesh.

That we would see a harvest. That that day when the sheaves are brought in. And Heavenly Father. That they would indeed be rejoicing in heaven. Guide us.

Teach us. Lead us. And forgive us for our shortcomings. In Jesus' precious name. Amen. We'll sing in conclusion.

Mission Praise 494. Mission Praise 494. Oh for a closer walk with God. A calm and heavenly frame. A light to shine upon the road.

[57 : 37] That leads me to the Lamb. That we would each know. That close walk with God. That we would know what it is. To have a calm and heavenly frame. And that we would walk in the light.

That we would be guided by the light. And that each one of us here would be led. By the Lamb. And to the Lamb. Let us stand and sing. Let us now.

Let us know. Let us know. Thank you. Let us know.

Oh God. Be safe. Walken humphly.

A heavenly frame, a light to shine upon the road that leads me to the land.

[58 : 38] Where is the blessedness I knew when I first saw the Lord?

Where is the soul refreshing view of Jesus and His Word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed, how sweet their memory still.

But they have left an aching void the world can never fill.

Return, O Holy Doe, return, sweet messenger of rest.

[59 : 57] I hate the sins that made Thee mourn and drove Thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known, what e'er the time dull be.

Help me to tear it from Thy throne and worship only Thee.

So shall my walk be close with God Come answer in my frame So pure a light Shall mark the road That leads me to the land Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your goodness to us.

We thank you for the blessing of being able to come together. We thank you, Heavenly Father, for the many visitors that we have with us here this morning. As we gather for tea and coffee afterwards, we pray for your blessing upon what we will partake of and bless our time together.

[61 : 39] And we ask all this, Heavenly Father, as we come before Him who is able to keep us from stumbling and who is able to present us before His glorious presence without spot and with great joy to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages now and evermore.

Amen.