

## 3.1.21 am

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Date: 03 January 2021

Preacher: Gordon MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, and I wish you all a happy new year. It's good to be able to come together and to worship God this morning.

Just one or two intimations before we start. The evening service will go online as usual just before six o'clock, and the preacher this evening is Mr John McSween.

The services during the week, the prayer meeting as usual on Wednesday evening, on Zoom at 7.30, and we pray God willing that that will indeed be a blessing to us throughout the week.

And services next Lord's Day will be taken by our own minister, who will be returning from holiday. That's all the intimations for this week. Let us begin our worship of God together.

And ENA will lead us in singing in Psalm 143. Psalm 143 from verse 6. Lord, do I stretch my hands to thee, my help alone, for thou wilt understand all my complaints and moan.

[ 1 : 07 ] My thirsting soul desires and longeth after thee, as thirsty ground requires, with rain refreshed to be. Down to the end of the psalm, and we'll sing to God's praise.

My hands to thee, I stretch my soul.

Thirst as dry land for thee. As Lord, to hear my spirit fails, hide not thy face from me.

Lest like to them, I do become, not garden to the dust.

At morn, let me thy kindness hear, for in thee do I trust.

[ 2 : 24 ] Teach me the way that I should walk. I lift my soul to thee.

Lord, free me from my foes. Because I flee to thee to cover me.

Because thou art my God to do, Thy will do me instruct.

Thy spirit is good. Me to the land of uprightness conduct.

Revive and quicken me, O Lord. Even for thine own name's sake, I'll do thou for thy righteousness.

[ 3 : 49 ] My soul from trouble take. And of thy mercy slay my foes.

Let all destroy it be. That do afflict my soul.

For I, a servant unto thee. Let us bow in prayer.

Let us pray. Our gracious and our blessed Lord, as we come into your presence this morning, we do indeed thank you that we can come before a God that hears and answers prayer.

That we can come before a God that loves us. That loves us so much that he sent his Son into this world to die for each and every one of us.

[ 5 : 05 ] And as we gather in your presence this morning, Heavenly Father, both here in the church and in our own homes, we pray that each one of us would indeed be in awe of your love for us.

We know that we love here on earth because you first loved us from heaven. And we pray, Heavenly Father, as we have thought in these past weeks of the gift of thy Son, Jesus, that as we enter this a new year, that each one of us, Heavenly Father, would come on bended knee before you.

that we would acknowledge the difficulties of our past year. That we would put our hand in yours.

And that, Heavenly Father, that we would trust you for the year ahead.

Knowing that you have promised us that you will never leave us, that you will never forsake us. You teach us, Heavenly Father, to be strong and to be courageous.

Not to fear. For, Heavenly Father, you are before us in all things. And we pray that as each one of us come before you this morning, that whatever our situation, in relation to our health, our happiness, our employment, that, Heavenly Father, these things that so often we seem to focus on, that we would trust them to you.

[ 6 : 39 ] Knowing that, Heavenly Father, if we put our trust in you, you have promised us that you have a plan. A plan to prosper us and not to harm us. A plan to give us a hope.

And to give us a future. We pray that each one of us, Heavenly Father, as we bow in the quietness of our own hearts, that we would indeed have our hope fully placed in you.

That as you have taken us here this morning, that you have, Heavenly Father, encouraged us to switch on our televisions. To listen in to this service.

That you have a purpose for each one of us. That your word, Heavenly Father, you have promised that as it is read, as it is proclaimed, that it will reach out and it will achieve all that you have predestined for it to achieve.

And we pray, Heavenly Father, that each one of us would listen to your word this morning. Whether it be a word of correction for us.

[ 7 : 47 ] A word of direction. A word of encouragement. A word of hope. And that we would apply it to our own hearts. You have taken us here, Heavenly Father.

May our hearts and our minds be open to hear your word and to receive what it has to say to us. Both in the hearer and in the preacher. For, Heavenly Father, your word speaks to us all.

As we gather here this morning, we pray, Heavenly Father, for those that in these past days have suffered loss. Those who at this time of year, Heavenly Father, remember anniversaries of those that are no longer with us.

We pray in particular for the MacKinnon family that will gather here on Tuesday. Heavenly Father, as they mourn the loss of a brother and an uncle, we pray, Heavenly Father, that they would know your presence with them at this time.

as a God of refuge and a God of strength. That even through the valleys of the shadow of death that you are there and your rod and your staff they comfort.

[ 8 : 59 ] And we pray, Heavenly Father, for those that do indeed worry about health diagnosis at this time. For treatment that they may have to undertake.

That, Heavenly Father, that they would put their trust in you. That you indeed are the great physician. And you have a will and you have a plan and a purpose.

And that they would trust in you. And for those, Heavenly Father, family members that would seek to support them at this time. May they know your strength and your encouragement. We pray at this time, Heavenly Father, as we move into 2021.

And Heavenly Father, as we still have the virus of COVID amongst us. We pray, Heavenly Father, for those that continue to work on the front line.

Those within the NHS and the other emergency services. And Heavenly Father, that your hand of protection would be upon them. As they move into a new phase of tackling this virus.

[ 10 : 06 ] As vaccines are administered. As decisions are made, Heavenly Father, we pray that you would grant wisdom. And that, Heavenly Father, that while trust is put in this vaccine, we pray that people would look beyond the vaccine and see that you are in control.

And that they would put their trust in you. We have heard so much, Heavenly Father, about the wisdom of so many different people. Advisors and medics, Heavenly Father, that seek to advise those in government.

And we pray for them, that they would indeed have the wisdom that is needed to guide us through this pandemic at this time. And that, Heavenly Father, most of all, we pray that those that you have selected to be in power at this time would recognize that it is only through you that they have the authority they have.

So we commit these things to you, Heavenly Father. As we commit ourselves to you afresh this morning. That you would guide us. That you would direct us in our act of worship.

And that, most of all, that we would know your presence with us here. That as we rise from this place that we are able to say that it was good for us to have been here. That we saw the Lord.

[ 11 : 33 ] Oh, Heavenly Father, guide us, we pray thee at this time. And may your hand be stayed upon us. And may we know the forgiveness of our many, many sins. In Jesus' precious name.

Amen. Amen. Good morning, boys and girls. It's nice to see one or two of you here this morning. And I know there's one or two more watching on the screens.

I want to tell you about something that happened yesterday. Yesterday morning, our minister, David, asked if I wanted to go for a run.

It's a nice, fresh morning. Can't say I was so fresh. I wasn't long out of my bed. I was so fresh. And decided, okay, we'll go for a run.

So, with all the different restrictions, I took my car, he took his car, and we met out at Uriga and decided that we were going to run along the path at the side of the lochs there.

[ 12 : 39 ] Sun was high in the sky. It was a bit cold, but we decided, let's go for it. Set our watches and went out of the car park and you go down a steep embankment down the path.

Very quickly, what was started off as going to be a run became a bit like a ballet dance as we tried to negotiate down the path.

Now, you can imagine what it would look like, David and I, ballet dancing down this path as we'd kind of tiptoed from side to side, trying to avoid the patches of ice, trying to say, will we keep going? Will we turn back? Don't know if we're going to be able to manage this. This might look a wee bit dangerous. But then we looked ahead of us on the path and we could see that where we were, we were in the shade.

The sun hadn't reached the part of the path that we were on. But further up, we could see that there was water lying. There was no ice on the grass.

[ 13 : 46 ] So we kept on going. And once we came out of the shade and onto the grass where the sun had been, we could run. It was easy for us to run.

Now, why am I telling this story about David and I going running? It's not because we were trying to get fit. We were trying to lose a bit of weight after putting it on over Christmas and New Year. But we went for a run and after getting down the embankment and negotiating the ice, we were able to run quite freely because the sun had been on the path in front of us.

We've just come out of 2020, which was quite a challenging year for every one of us. We're going into 2021 and we're already told that you're not going to be able to go to school this week.

I'm not hearing anybody disappointed with that, apart from some of us as parents who are relishing the thought of homeschooling once again. But there's a wee bit of uncertainty as to what the year is going to bring for us.

And just as there was a bit of uncertainty as to whether David and I were going to be able to get down the path and carry on running, what I want to give you just as you go forward into 2021, I want to give you a verse to try and remember that while there are going to be challenges in the year ahead, God has given us a promise and it comes in Deuteronomy 31 and verse 6 and it says, Be strong and courageous.

[ 15 : 29 ] Do not fear or be in dread of them for it is the Lord who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them. There are many things that are going to come into the lives of each and every one of you that you'll get anxious about, you might get worried about but God tells us that we're to be strong and we're to be courageous not in our own strength but because we know that God is with us and the final part of that is that he's promised that he will never leave us and he'll never forsake us.

So as you go forward into 2021 and you think back about the challenges that you've faced and the challenges that you might face in the year ahead put your trust in God and try and remember that verse we'll come back to it in the Sunday school and we'll maybe get you doing some videos reciting that verse so that each one of you will have that verse in your heart that you be strong and courageous you do not fear or be in dread for it is the Lord who goes with you he will never leave you nor forsake you and just before you go off to Sunday school have a word of prayer dear heavenly father we do indeed pray for our children and for the challenges and the uncertainty that they see before them as plans are made and then are changed the inability to be able to go and meet with friends the way they used to we pray heavenly father for their schooling we pray for them for their teachers and we pray for parents who do indeed face the challenges of homeschooling in the coming weeks but we thank you for your encouragement to us to each and every one of us that we have to be bold we have to be strong and we have to be courageous not in the strength that we have of ourselves but heavenly father in the strength that we have through you and we thank you for your promise to us that you have given that you will never leave us that you will never forsake us whatever this new year brings to us that heavenly father that you are there before us and you hold us by your right hand and we pray that each one of them as they go to

Sunday school or as they do Sunday school in their own homes this morning that they would indeed put their trust in you and we pray this in Jesus precious name Amen If you want to go off to Sunday school As the children head off to Sunday school if we can turn in our Bibles to 2nd Corinthians the book of 2nd Corinthians and to chapter 5 2nd Corinthians and chapter 5 and we'll read the whole

chapter chapter 5 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed we have a building from

God a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens for in this tent we groan longing to be put on longing to put on our heavenly dwelling if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked for while we are still in this tent we groan being burdened not that we would be unclothed but that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life he who has prepared for us this very thing is God who has given us the spirit as a guarantee so we are always of good courage we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord for we walk by faith not by sight yes we are of good courage and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord so whether we are at home or away we make it our aim to please him for we must all appear before the judgment seat of

[ 20 : 20 ] Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil therefore knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade others but what we are known to God and I hope it is also known to your conscience we are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart for if we are beside ourselves it is for God if we are in our right mind it is for you for the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this that one has died for all therefore all have died and he died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised from now on therefore we regard no one according to the flesh even though we once regarded

Christ according to the flesh we regard him thus no longer therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation the old has passed away behold the new has come all this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation that is in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation therefore we are ambassadors for Christ God making his appeal through us we implore you on Christ behalf be reconciled to God for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God Amen and we pray that God will bless that reading of his word to us this morning as again come before God in prayer dear heavenly father we thank you for your message to us this morning the word that has been given to us that heavenly father that as we read your word not just this morning but each and every day how it speaks to us and we pray heavenly father that as your son taught us that man cannot live by bread alone that each one of us would recognize the importance of living in your word each and every day heavenly father reading your word dwelling upon it meditating upon it and applying it to the lives that you have allowed us to live everything we we pray heavenly father that as each one of us comes this morning before you that we would recognize that you do indeed have a plan for our lives and the plan this morning is for us to be here listening to your word so heavenly father we pray that we would set our minds at rest that we would know what it is to be still and know you are God that the thoughts that so often come in and cloud our minds at this time, what we may be doing in the following week, what we did last night or the night before, we pray, Heavenly Father, that they would be taken from our mind and that we would focus on your word to us this morning, that word that teaches us, Heavenly Father, that your Son, who knew no sin, became sin for us, for each and every one of us gathered here, whether in the church or at home, the sins that we have committed, if we come in faith, that, Heavenly Father, our sins are indeed forgiven.

And we pray that as we come, Heavenly Father, that we would recognise that in coming before you, that what we have here as a temporal body will one day pass away.

[ 24 : 54 ] And if we walk with you and walk in you, our bodies will be transformed and we will become the righteousness of God. So guide us this morning.

Help us to focus on your message to us and forgive us for our many, many sins. In Jesus' name, Amen. As we turn back to the passage we read, in particular, I want to focus during the service this morning on the last two verses.

Verse 20 and 21. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5, 20, 21. Just before we start studying this passage, it might be worth asking the question, what is an ambassador?

[ 26 : 19 ] Cambridge Dictionary gives the following definitions. An ambassador is a government official, an important official, who works in a foreign country, representing his or her own country there, and who is officially accepted in this position by that country.

Or one, maybe, that we're more aware of nowadays. A person who represents, speaks for, or advertises a particular group, organisation, people, activity, or brand.

An ambassador. Interestingly, when I was looking at that, there was a legal dictionary alongside this on Google, and it gives the following legal definition of what an ambassador is.

A public minister sent abroad by some sovereign state or prince with a legal commission and authority to transact business on behalf of his country with the government to which he is sent.

He is a minister of the highest rank and represents the person of his sovereign. Then goes on and states, Ambassadors are ordinary or extraordinary.

[ 27 : 40 ] The former designation is exclusively applied to those sent on permanent missions, the latter to those employed on particular or extraordinary occasions or residing at a foreign court for an intermediate period.

I'll come back to these definitions later. I just want us to consider, as we look at these verses, that if you're not an ambassador for Christ, who or what are you an ambassador for?

Now, while I know most of you here in the church this morning, fair idea of who's watching on the screen, I don't know everything about you all.

For those gathered here, I can see you sitting in your family bubbles. I can see what family name you represent. Some of you I know as Christians, others I don't know where you take your stand at this time.

Just because Paul was writing to the Corinthians here and he says we are ambassadors for Christ, what I don't want you to do is think, well, I'm not a Christian, so this doesn't apply to me.

[ 28 : 57 ] What I want you to think about is that if you're not an ambassador for Christ, who are you an ambassador for? As we read in the definitions above, basically, an ambassador is a representative, whether it be a foreign ambassador who represents their government in another country or a brand ambassador who promotes a particular company or a product.

Each of us have our own favourite products that we buy, we trust in them, and some people might say that we're an ambassador, or I think the more common term nowadays is that you're an influencer for that particular product.

But what we've seen and we see in the news almost on a daily basis at times is that an ambassador, their conduct has a real impact, not just on the country, but on the product, on the profit of a company.

We've seen ambassadors removed from post, we've seen big-name sports personalities lose lucrative sporting contracts with well-known brands because of their conduct or because of something they've said.

that the company feels has a negative impact on the reputation of their brand or, in the case of a foreign ambassador, on the country.

[ 30 : 36 ] As I mentioned earlier on, we're all members of families. We all bear a family name. When we're out in public, we represent the homes that we come from.

If we're in employment, we represent the company that we work for while we're at work. And because of that, we're given uniforms, we're given T-shirts that carry the logo of the company that we work for.

Our children go to school, they wear a uniform, and they are representatives or ambassadors for the schools when they're wearing that uniform. How many of you, growing up, heard it said, or maybe even have said it yourselves to your own children?

As you headed out the door, or as your children head out the door, remember who you are.

Basically meaning, remember when you go out of the house here that you're representing the name of this household when you go out.

So we're all ambassadors. I go back to the question, who are we ambassadors for? Which brings us to our first point. As Paul says in verse 20, we are ambassadors for Christ.

[ 32 : 07 ] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. God making his appeal through us. What does it mean for us as Christians? Those of us that are gathered or listening, that are Christians here.

What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ? You can read in Matthew 28, verses 19 and 20, where it says what's commonly referred to as the Great Commission, go therefore and make

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Again, that promise that we even read with the children this morning, I am with you always to the end of the age.

And then again in Acts chapter 1 and at verse 8, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

As ambassadors for Christ, as Christians, we're called to be witnesses for Christ and to go and make disciples. Remember that legal definition that we read earlier on?

[ 33 : 30 ] Public ministers sent abroad by some sovereign state or prince with a legal commission and the authority to transact business on behalf of this country with the government to which he is sent.

He is a minister of the highest rank and represents the person of his sovereign. As Christians, our sovereign is Christ. And we've been given a commission to go and transact business to go and make disciples.

Are we in an extraordinary mission? We read earlier on ambassadors are ordinary or extraordinary. Former designation is exclusively applied to those sent on permanent missions, the latter to those employed on a particular or extraordinary occasions, residing at a foreign court for an indeterminate period.

Not one of us knows how long we will be here for. Are we using our time here effectively as ambassadors for Christ?

[ 34 : 41 ] As Christians, you know, Paul makes his initial statement that we are ambassadors for Christ.

But the second part of that is the part that really compels us. God making his appeal through us. the way we conduct ourselves, God is making his appeal through us.

Are we ambassadors for Christ? Is the appeal that God is making through us an effective appeal?

When I was in the police service, if I can be personal for a few minutes, you were on duty or you were off duty, but you were always a police officer.

You always had the authority to act as a police officer because of the warrant that was given to you when you took the oath to become a police officer.

If you got into trouble, the first question that was asked was, were you on duty or were you off duty?

There was a difference made in terms of how you were then dealt with, whether it was on duty conduct or whether it was off duty conduct.

[ 36 : 17 ] As a Christian, you are never on duty or off duty. You are always on duty. And your conduct as an ambassador for Christ is watched by everybody.

God is making his appeal through you. How is that appeal read by others that see it? we spoke about reputational damage and how people were removed from contracts if there was reputational damage.

As our witness, as an ambassador for Christ, causing reputational damage for the cause of Christ.

Christ. In the New Year's Day service, David spoke about Noah and how all the time Noah was building the ark and when the eyes of the world were upon him, he was faithful in his witness.

Faithful in his witness telling why he was building the ark, what was coming, that there was a flood and that if people didn't repent, that the flood would come and take them.

He was faithful all the time he built that ark, for over a hundred years. And the trials passed and he was alone with his family, alone in his tent, and then he was found drunk by his sons.

[ 38 : 01 ] And he then had to come and confess before God. Very often when we're in the eye of the storm, it's easy to stand firm when we put our trust in God. And after we've been through trials, we think the pressure's off.

As I said earlier on, there's no on-duty, off-duty, for those that walk with Christ, or conduct all the time, reflects the cause of Christ.

We can't afford to compartmentalise our lives, thinking I can behave one way when I'm at work, one way when I'm at home, and one way when I'm at church. The way that we conduct ourselves in each of these places.

If we go back to the verse that we read, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

That message was given in the book of Acts. Jerusalem was the home of most of the people that were there. Judea was the surrounding area where they would have socialised, where they would have gone to work.

[ 39 : 15 ] Samaria was the next district. Their witness in each of these places is the same as our witness at our home, whether it's in school, or in our places of work, or wider.

Are we ambassadors for Christ everywhere that we go? In verses 6 to 9 it says, so we are always of good courage.

We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. Whether we are away from Christ, in that we're here on earth, or whether we're at home with him, our aim is to please Christ and to please God each and every day.

We make it our aim to please him. And why do we make it our aim to please him? Now when we read this, some of you might have thought this was a text that was going to be taken.

[ 40 : 34 ] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one of us may receive what is due, what we have done in the body, whether good or evil.

evil. It's a solemn thought that each one of us have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We can meet him as our judge, we can meet him as our saviour, but we will receive what is due for us, what we have done in the body, whether good or evil.

what is the appeal that God is making? The appeal that God is making is that we will come to him, that we will know him, we will ask forgiveness of our sins, but when people look at our life as Christians, is that appeal being made effectively?

we're not doing it, as it says in verse 12, we are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you cause to boast about us. I don't stand here to commend my own life, the life I have is given to me through Christ, and what I would want you to boast about is that you see, and my prayer would be that you see, that each one of us as Christians walking close with Christ, making that appeal to each and every one of you, that we're not seeking to upbuild ourselves, but what we seek to do is to point each and every one of you to Christ.

That is what we've been asked to do, that's why we are ambassadors, that God can make that appeal through us. And why is he making that appeal?

[ 42 : 47 ] He's making that appeal because it needs to be made. And that takes us to our second point. And if you switched off for the first point, please switch on for the second.

And the second point is be reconciled to God. Be reconciled to God.

Why do we need to be reconciled to God? If we fall out with somebody, we want to amend that relationship. We might need to go to counselling for it.

We might need to sit down and have a very hard discussion. But there needs to be some give and take for that relationship to be mended.

Our relationship with God is broken because of sin. David's been taking us through Genesis, the fall of man.

[ 43 : 56 ] We've seen what happened when sin came into the world. And when sin came into the world, it affected each and every one of us. And God making his appeal through us as ambassadors for Christ, our appeal to you, as it says here, we implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

God. If you're not reconciled to God, you're in a relationship that is broken. And the stumbling block is sin.

You may ask the question, why do I need to be reconciled to God? why do I need to be reconciled to God? Because if we're not reconciled to God, one thing that we're promised is death, we're then promised a lost eternity outside of Christ.

And I said if we're a broken relationship, there had to be a decision made to sit down and talk, there had to be give and take, recompense may have to be made depending on what the circumstances are.

The exact same in terms of being reconciled with God. We have to come to God and we have to ask for forgiveness.

[ 45 : 48 ] But a price has already been paid. There's nothing that we can do in and of ourselves other than come and ask forgiveness. and have faith.

We read there we walk by faith, not by sight. We have to have faith in God and in all that he has done for us.

We're taught as children that Jesus came at Christmas. We're taught at Easter that he died on the cross that he rose again for each and every one of us.

On a Wednesday evening before the main prayer meeting, we have a meeting with some of the children in the Sunday school.

from primary three to primary seven, some of them in first year. We ask them for points for prayer. Pray for those that don't have Bibles, those that don't have homes, those that don't have any toys around Christmas, those that don't have a warm bed to sleep in.

[ 47 : 07 ] every week there is one of the children that will ask for us to pray for those of their friends that don't know Jesus as their saviour.

The children recognise the importance of being reconciled to Christ. My prayer and the prayer of each and every Christian here this morning is that everyone here in the church, everyone listening, on the camera, through the camera, would indeed know what it is to be reconciled to Christ and reconciled to God.

The price has been paid by Christ on the cross. But what we need to remember when I speak to everybody, it's not just a one-off event in coming, and being reconciled to God.

We need to come each and every day. It doesn't mean that when we become Christians we don't commit sin anymore. We're told that we're born in sin.

Sin is ever before us. Our thoughts, our actions, our inactions cause us to sin. sin. But each and every one of us must come.

[ 48 : 39 ] Calvin says that it's not a one-off event in coming to be reconciled with God. We must come each and every day. Often heard it said that we must keep short accounts with God.

We teach our children the Lord's Prayer, to take it each and every day. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Don't think it's just a prayer for children to recite and to remember. That's a prayer for each and every one of us. That we should be coming each and every day before God, acknowledging that we are sinners and that we need to be forgiven.

It says, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. And all this is from God, who through Christ reconciled him to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

[ 49 : 53 ] That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

reconciliation. That comes to the point that we are ambassadors for Christ and that we have been trusted with the message of reconciliation.

reconciliation. But it goes on and at the end of the passage that we read, verse 21, for our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin.

Christ came, as we have remembered in these past weeks, as a babe in Bethlehem. He came and he lived the perfect life, the only person that lived the perfect life.

but at the end of his life, he became sin for us, so that we may have reconciliation with God.

[ 51 : 11 ] As Paul implored the people of Corinth to be reconciled to God, may I implore this morning, the people of Tarbert or wherever you are listening this morning, that you be reconciled to God.

And why do I make that plea before you this morning? Now, right back at the beginning of chapter five, and this takes us to our third point, we become the righteousness of God.

The beginning of the chapter, it says, for we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heaven.

That doesn't refer to the fact that we live in a tent, physically, here on earth. A tent is a temporary structure, there's no foundation, can be easily blown, and it's not capable of withstanding storms, unless it's within a shelter.

Commentators believe that what has been referred to here is not a physical dwelling, but it is our bodies. The bodies that we have, they will be destroyed.

[ 52 : 52 ] As we said, each one of us will face death, but if we are reconciled to God, we have the promise that we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

And the current body that we have, as it goes on, for in this tent we groan being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

He who has prepared us for this is God, who has given us the spirit as a guarantee.

Bodies we have are temporal. How often do we groan and complain about our aches and our pains? But if our trust is in Christ, if we are reconciled to God, we have the promise that this body will be made new, not made with hands as we know dwellings here, but made eternal in the heavens, prepared for us by God, who has given us the spirit as a guarantee.

I will never leave you, I will never forsake you. We have been given the spirit of God to be with us as a comforter each and every day.

[ 54 : 49 ] So my prayer, for those of you who are Christians, be ambassadors for Christ so that God can make his appeal to the unsaved through you.

If you're unsaved this morning, I implore you, be reconciled to God because he made a son who had no sin to be sin for each and every one of us, so that in due time we will become the righteousness of God.

There will be new creations. The old will have passed away. Everything will become new. Said with the children, 2020 was a difficult year.

We enter 2021 with a great deal of uncertainty. While we have hope and vaccines coming, our true hope is in God.

We do long for the day where the church will be filled again. How long that will be, we don't know. But the one thing that we do know, as the family gather here on Tuesday, we will all face death at some point.

[ 56 : 19 ] Will we face that reconciled to God so that in due season we become the righteousness of God. Amen.

Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, as we bow before you this morning, as we recognise the seriousness of your word to us, as it was delivered through Paul all these years ago, we know that it is still fresh for each one of us.

And Heavenly Father, as Christians, we must be ambassadors for you. We must continue to witness for you. And Heavenly Father, that those that are unsaved at this time would see their need to call upon you as Lord and as Saviour.

that they would know the joy of being reconciled to you, that the chasm that there is because of sin would indeed be crossed, Heavenly Father, through the boshing of our sins through your son's death, but most of all, Heavenly Father, through his resurrection, that as he sits at your right hand and intercedes on behalf of each one of us, that Heavenly Father, our groanings, our utterings, that so often are incomprehensible, are taken to you in our prayers.

Guide us this morning before we leave this place, Heavenly Father, may we indeed consider our stand with you.

[ 58 : 11 ] Are we ambassadors for Christ? are we prepared to walk away and continue walking in the world, having short-term glories and short-term happiness in what we see round about us?

And, Heavenly Father, we pray that each one of us would turn to you, would recognize our need for reconciliation, that in due season we may indeed become and receive the righteousness that is promised to us, in and through your Son.

Amen. close our service this morning, singing, short-town end version of Psalm 23.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me to lie in pastures green. He leads me by the still, still waters. His goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in you alone, for your endless mercy follows me. Your goodness will lead me home.

And pray that that would be the prayer of each and every one of us, to know the Lord as our shepherd, and to walk close with him, and to trust in him, each and every day.

[ 59 : 45 ] You need to lead us in the singing. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

He makes me lie in pastures green. He leads me by the still, still waters.

His goodness restores my soul, and I will trust in you alone, alone.

And I will trust in you alone, for your endless mercy follows me.

Your goodness will lead me home. He guides my ways in righteousness, and he anoints my head with oil, and my cup, it overflows with joy.

[ 61 : 13 ] I feast on his pure delights, and I will trust in you alone, and I will trust in you alone, for your endless mercy follows me.

Your goodness will lead me home. Though I walk the darkest path, I will not fear the evil one, for you are with me, and your rod and staff, are the comfort I need to know, and I will trust in you alone, and I will trust in you alone, for your endless mercy follows me, your goodness will lead me home. I stand for the benediction. Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to God our Saviour, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and evermore.  
Amen.