

## 12.3.22 Saturday evening Service

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 12 March 2022

Preacher: Reverend John Lachie Macleod

- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good evening and a warm welcome to the service tonight. Come in, come in. Those who are visiting from other congregations who are just arriving as well are very welcome.
- One or two notices just to remind you that the end of the service tonight and then tomorrow as well, the two services, there's a tie-in collection for the Blysewood Appeal.
- And that's the Blysewood Appeal helping the situation in Ukraine. So if you're able to give to that, please do so. Also to remind you as well that the session is still open.
- Last night we were delighted as a session to receive Alisane as she came forward and professed faith in Jesus and will come to the Lord's table for the first time tomorrow, God willing.
- So we rejoice in that, but we would say to those who know the Lord, who trust the Lord, but haven't yet come forward to profess faith, be encouraged to do so.
- [ 1 : 0 3 ]     It's a command. Jesus said, do this to remember my death. So that's what we do. We come forward acknowledging that we are sinners who are trusting in the death of Jesus in our place to be our saviour.
- Tomorrow, the service is at 11 and 6 and the fellowship after the evening service. Both these services will be taken by John again.
- And maybe just to say as well that tomorrow we'll go back to having the actual communion table. So we'll have the area which is for those who are taking communion marked separately, but we'll still have the individual cups.
- So it's a little bit more like what we were used to, but slightly different still. But be encouraged to come tomorrow to the services. And I think these are all the intimations.
- So John, once more, we're delighted to have you. And once more, we pray that we'll hear God speak through you. Thank you, David. And as I begin tonight, I want to thank everyone who was involved in the prayer meeting.
- [ 2 : 1 3 ]     It was a real blessing to be here just prior to this service for that time of prayer. So to those who shared in that, my sincere thanks. It was a blessing for me to be here with you.
- We're going to begin our service tonight singing in Gaelic. The first two verses of Psalm 32. The first two verses of Psalm 32 in Gaelic.
- Spianic. Spianic. Spianic. And do you know who you are? Na fjahke. Mahanas. Spianic. BEST. Ochgr %. No depth. Oh such a joyous tune, Are you  
 what you call ch?
- H grands nantes de mille indignes para que Civilidad para que expandir y volverá a las mindedas como Community Smart Gracias y responses de propone exposición.
- O-O-OBER national music is up to 10.
- [ 3 : 4 6 ]     Dance Orf Walow Oh Jake can you No no meeting par escolet
- For that's Don McSween to come and lead us in prayer.

Icarishro lju wha She■■■ Walked in they area on the street who is most loving on the street.

I hear a voice as ■■■■. Cause he, nothing, God, In addition to what? Through his■■■■ çevres.

I shine in the rain. Fever has sent my sules. I can't do everything in the earth. I feel like I just had ı even.

[ 7 : 0 6 ] I can't deny anyone. . .

. . .

. .

. . .

. .

[ 8 : 3 2 ] . . . . .

. . . . .

. . . . .

. . . . .

. . . . .

[ 1 0 : 0 2 ] . . . .

. . . . .

. . . . .

. He has to do that.

The potential of the Thompson is greater thanollen before the be we I I BI ■■■■ ■■■■ menteessä, Anakin and Jon Borgia, Hayab ambus ■■■■ C denen send hyphs are fro, Farwell Army Engineering School Committee

[ 1 2 : 2 6 ] The artists Sun synthetically school compete spring and This showed us the Bible with its written paper.

When the body was snapped we would write us. Because of the way, the body then left,■■■ ■■■■ .

So can you drive the thing? Now can you listen to anything? Well, today, I had my whole life.

Tatman. on and .

Their duh Recht to go close. That khi can make you accessible■. So nationhain akan edhe Chesbaedahan Chonok links.

[ 1 3 : 3 7 ] Good school you■ Next Wung's at home speed bow know. If you many social people don't have it anymore, but I don't have research into years and a truly familiarize what the Him.

want themcause of location in the fourth century as an individual land. Then be it to whom the Jews will find it. Hold her hand and said , and she now leads me to the vomit under the water and make it cry.

And only thischa took over in the air and poured in water. He told her the snow in the wind was coming and he found chemical.

examining what is also a beautiful■■■ in Ye Carol In He ■'s fields largely pole He bled He bled National Anth dokumentation.

And the guys, the fire.

[ 16 : 11 ] That really positive Was astrayrans■resV a Jackie Amen.

Let's sing again to God's praise, this time singing the great old hymn, O for a thousand tongues to sing, my great Redeemer's praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace.

O for a thousand tongues to sing, my great Redeemer's praise, my great Redeemer's praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of His grace.

The triumphs of His grace. The triumphs of His grace. The triumphs of His grace.

Jesus, the name that charms our fears, that bates our sorrows cease, that bates our sorrows cease, tis music in the sinner's years.

[ 18 : 23 ] He breaks the power of counsel sin, he sets the prisoner free, tis life and health and peace.

his life and health and peace. He breaks the power of counsel sin.

He sets the prisoner free. He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean.

His blood availed for me. His blood availed for me. His blood availed for me.

His blood availed for me. He speaks unlistening to his voice.

[ 19 : 34 ] You life the dead receive. You life the dead receive. The mournful broken hearts reside.

The humble poor believe. The humble poor believe. The humble poor believe.

The humble poor believe. Hear him, ye death. His praise ye come.

Hear, listen, tongues and ploy. Hear, listen, tongues and ploy.

Ye blind behold. Your Savior come. And leap ye lame for joy.

[ 20 : 40 ] And leap ye lame for joy. And leap ye lame for joy. And leap ye lame for joy.

My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim.

Assist me to proclaim. Assist me to proclaim. Assist me to proclaim. To spread through all the earth abroad.

The honours. The honours of thy name. Amen. The honours of thy name. The honours of thy name.

The honours of thy name. Well, turning to God's word, I want us to turn to John's gospel, to John chapter 11.

[ 21 : 48 ] And we're going to read from the beginning of the chapter. Our hymn writer celebrated the fact that new life the dead receive.

And one of the great demonstrations of Christ's power to do that was seen in the way that he dealt with the death of his friend Lazarus.

We're going to read, I think initially I thought I'd read to verse 27. We might read some more. But we'll read anyway from the beginning of John chapter 11 at verse 1.

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.

So the sister sent word to Jesus. Lord, the one you love is sick. When he heard this, Jesus said, this sickness will not end in death.

[ 22 : 53 ] No, it is for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. And then he said to his disciples, let us go back to Judea.

But Rabbi, they said, a short while ago, the Jews there would try to stone you and yet you are going back. Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours of daylight?

Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.

After he said this, he went on to tell them, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I'm going there to wake him up. His disciples replied, Lord, if he sleeps, he'll get better.

[ 23 : 50 ] Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So when he told them plainly, Lazarus is dead, and for your sake, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe, but let us go to him.

Then Thomas, also known as Didymus, said to the rest of the disciples, let's also go, that we may die with him. On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

Lord, Martha said to Jesus, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that even now, God will give you whatever you ask.

Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again. Martha said, I know, he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. And Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.

[ 25 : 05 ] The one who believes in me will live even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this? Yes, Lord, she replied.

I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world. After she said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. The teacher is here, she said, and he's asking for you.

When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews, who had been with Mary in the house comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

Where have you laid him, he asked. Come and see, Lord, they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, see how he loved them.

[ 26 : 25 ] But some of them said, could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying. Amen. We thank God that we have his word to turn to.

Let's turn to him again in prayer. Let us pray. Father in heaven, we do thank you for the opportunity to be gathered again on this Saturday evening as we prepare hearts and minds for the gathering of your people on the Lord's Day, if it be permitted to us, with the specific purpose of gathering around a table that has been instituted for us by our Lord himself, with its specific intent and purpose to remember him.

And Father, as we will remember him in the symbols that signify his death, we recognise that in that death is the power of eternal life. And so this evening, as we read these words, when Jesus confronted the reality of our mortality in this world, so we pray, God, that as we come in a few moments to look in more depth in these words, that we might be conscious of the life-giving voice of the Lord, our God, our eternal Saviour.

We thank you, Lord, earlier this evening we read of the one who was blind by the roadside in our time of prayer and he cried out as you were passing by.

And we're conscious, O God, that we are a people whose voices need to cry to you as we recognised in so much of our praise we've been gifted the opportunity from the depth of our hearts to call out to the God who created us and who fashioned us.

[ 28 : 15 ] And Lord, we're thankful that we are able to call on you, but we recognise that our call to you is our response to the call that is on us, the call of your grace, the call of your love, the call of salvation, the voice that speaks and wakes the dead, the voice that stirs in the depth of our souls, the voice that gives us no rest till we respond and find the rest that is offered to us in Jesus Christ.

And so on this Saturday evening we're asking God to hear your voice speak to our souls. And for those of us who wrestle and struggle with understanding our life and understanding what's going on in this world, for these moments that we are together, grant us simply a clarity on the person of Christ and a clarity on the issues of life and death, the things that you have brought to light in the gospel of Jesus Christ, your son.

In these moments, our God, that we are gathered, would you enable us to fix our thoughts and our minds and our hearts on you? You know the busyness of the life that we live.

You know the distractions that come to us constantly. You know the worries that plague us, the fears that beset us. You know, Lord, what it is as we live in a world where warfare and the travesty of what's happening in Ukraine can prey upon us and concern us.

We simply ask, Lord, in this evening hour for your peace to prevail upon us. As we think upon the God whom we worship in the greatness of your glory, may there be a response of reverence within our hearts.

[ 29 : 52 ] As we recognize the beauty and the power of your holiness, O Lord, make us truly penitent. As we sang earlier and as we celebrated in prayer earlier, what a blessing, what a power, what a wonder is offered to the person whose sins are pardoned, whose iniquities are forgiven, whose transgressions are washed away.

And therefore, God, we would pray that this evening we would be able to be fixed on your love and find in our hearts the gratitude that you deserve, the thankfulness that you are worthy of.

Help us, Lord, to be deepened in our knowledge of Christ, to be stirred in our love for him. And we pray, Lord, that you would give to us strength to live more close to you as we are, because you are the God who has come close to us.

You are the God who is very near to us. You are the God in whom we live, move, and have our being. But, Father, this night, we don't just want to know you by reputation.

We want to know you through the wonder of salvation, through the wonder of your presence, through the wonder of the love that unites us to you eternally in Jesus Christ, your Son.

[ 31 : 08 ] So bless us in his name and speak to us, we pray, all for your glory's sake. Amen. Well, just before we turn to John 11, let's sing again from Mission Praise 4, 5, 8, Man of Sorrows, what a name for the Son of God who came.

Man of Sorrows, what a name for the Son of God who came.

Ruined sinners to me, hallelujah, what a sinner.

What a sinner. What a sinner. What a sinner. What a sinner. God, scoffing mood. God, scoffing mood. In my place condemned, he stood.

Sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah, what a sinner.

[ 32 : 38 ] God, scoffing mood. Amen. Amen. God, scoffing mood. Amen. Lookless we, spotless Lamb of God was he.

Full atonement can it be. Hallelujah, what a Savior.

Lifted up was he to die. It is finished was his cry.

Now in heaven exalted high. Hallelujah, what a Savior.

When he comes a glorious King. All his ransom come to bring.

[ 33 : 47 ] Then I knew his song we'll sing. Hallelujah, what a Savior.

When our world was invaded by the coronavirus or pervaded by the coronavirus at the beginning of 2020, there were all kinds of contemplations about what the meaning of all this was and what would the impact be.

And one of the themes that kept recurring, and I think there was a degree of sincerity in it, was that here was something that was reminding 21st century world of the reality of our mortality.

We live in a world where we're always improving our health and bettering our health. We have a pill or an operation for just about anything and everything that comes away.

And here was something that reminded us that life really is a gift and it's something that we don't have the grasp of and the control of that we sometimes think we have.

[ 35 : 09 ] And there are so many illustrations in our own personal experiences in life and in the realities of what happens in the wider world. And here was something that came into human experience to remind us of how frail we were and how fragile life could be and how suddenly it could be gone.

Just the other day, there was an illustration in the sporting world. I used a football illustration last night, so for balance, I'll go to the world of cricket tonight.

And I don't know if any of the names I'm about to use will mean anything. It doesn't really matter. But what happened is significant. Just a few days ago, a famous Australian cricketer, Rod Marsh, died.

And tributes started flowing in. And one of the sweetest and most sincere tributes was written by probably the most famous Australian cricketer, Shane Warne.

And he posted on social media, as what people do nowadays, within 12 hours of posting his tribute to his idol and one of his mentors in the cricketing world, within 12 hours of posting his glowing tribute, Shane Warne himself died.

[ 36 : 28 ] 52 years old, sudden heart attack. He was gone. There was confusion for a while. Because people were posting, Shane Warne's dead and said, no, it's not him that died. He was writing about somebody else.

No, he's gone. The reality of the suddenness and the pain of death and the fact that we have no control over it.

It's the great issue that still faces humanity. It's the problem we all try and conquer. It's the issue that so many of the great minds of this world wish they could resolve.

It's the issue that has plagued us since relationship with God was broken in the Garden of Eden. It's the thing that is explained to us as the ultimate cost for rebelling against God.

The death that has happened spiritually in that relationship with our Heavenly Father has died. And the way that that is then manifested in creation as we physically reflect the truth of our spirituality.

[ 37 : 34 ] And death prevails and death comes and death conquers. Death is the great enemy. Death is the opponent that we cannot conquer in our own strength.

And as John shares the story and testimony of Jesus, we know that in this great miracle story that he shares, he is showing to us the greatness of the power of Jesus over the one thing we can never conquer.

And yes, the issue that needs to be conquered is not just death itself, but the sin that has led to death. But as he goes on to show us, it is in Jesus Christ that these forces and that these powers are dealt with for us.

He shows us in this recorded miracle that Jesus has the power, Jesus has the strength, Jesus has the authority to conquer that which has a powerful grasp over every single human being.

John is very specific in the miracles that he shares throughout the gospel. He only shares seven what we call miracle signs, beginning way back in the fourth chapter, where Jesus turns water into wine at the wedding in Cain of Galilee.

[ 38 : 54 ] And this is a miracle testifying to the reality of the new kingdom life that has come in Jesus Christ, that the ceremonial water that was at the heart of Jewish religion has now been transformed with the life-giving celebratory wine of life that is found in Jesus Christ.

He has come to transform ceremonial religion and ritual into real covenant love and grace in relationship with God and the unending celebration of the Lord and his purposes in the midst of his people.

I can't help think that with coronavirus we've become a bit like people going to the temple as we cleanse our hands, coming and going on our services.

But we remember that in Jesus the reality of the cleansing was coming. All that ceremonial water that they poured over and they would have to pour it again because the water and the symbolism and the religion was never powerful enough to clean them.

Now in Jesus Christ the power has come. He turns water into wine, but ultimately the wine that will be used tomorrow to remember his blood that was shed for the power to cleanse us from every sin.

[ 40 : 12 ] And now in the final miracle that he records, we find Jesus addressing the dead corpse of his friend Lazarus in order to reveal that his power is truly over everything that will afflict us and destroy us.

He demonstrates the power and authority he has to deal with the things that take us away from God. He is the God of restoration.

He is the God of reconciliation. He is the God who has come to bring back to his heavenly father that which is far off from his heavenly father.

And we know that ultimately his resurrection is the great miracle sign that gives hope to us all. Because he lives, we will live also. Because he was raised, we will be raised also.

But in what he does with Lazarus, he gives an illustration of that power and a demonstration of it so that the people in his generation would tell the story and testify to the fact, if you believe in Jesus, you will never die.

[ 41 : 25 ] Or your physical body might stop working and one day your physical body will give way. But you, the person that you are, will never die.

There will not be a place of darkness for you. There will not be a place of suffering and decay for you. You, the person who you really are, will live. Because Jesus died and lived.

And he demonstrated this, a foretaste of it, in this wonderful miracle in dealing with Lazarus. And I really just want to make some observations at the start of the miracle and maybe then refer to some of the things at the end.

We'll see how we go. But I think one of the great lessons that comes out of this miracle, more before we even reach the death itself, one of the key things to learn from John chapter 11 is this.

Being loved by God does not protect you from life's difficulties. Being loved by God does not preserve us or make us immune from the difficulties and challenges of life.

- [ 42 : 40 ] It's astonishing that there are many who believe that somehow their Christian faith gives them the right to avoid any kind of challenge and difficulty when they think that the one that they say they trust in is the one who said, in this world you shall have tribulation.
- But sadly there are some who believe that somehow, because they've trusted the Lord, they should never struggle, they should never suffer, even though their saviour is the one we sing of as the man of sorrows, the one who was familiar with grief.
- Sadly there are some who teach that if you come to Christ, you will be miraculous preserved from every disaster that befalls mankind. But that doesn't add up to what Jesus taught.
- And it certainly doesn't add up to what happened in this situation, as we read this interaction between Jesus and a family who were special to him.
- And everything tells us that there was something unexpected about this death of Lazarus as he got ill. It wasn't somebody dying of old age, there was something that troubled people and bothered them.
- [ 43 : 49 ] The comfort that came, the shock that there was, the desperation that they demonstrated. And here we see that these were people that were loved by God.
- You know sadly some people when their troubles come into their life, they think to themselves, you know maybe I didn't love God faithfully enough, maybe I wasn't strong enough in my love.
- And the truth is friends, none of us love him faithfully enough. None of us love him as much and as perfectly and as faithfully and as completely as we ought. But the wonder of this story is that John doesn't even mention how much they loved him.
- He mentions how much Jesus loved them. It's the one that you love that is sick. Notice how often that is said. Notice how often it was mentioned when the word came to him.
- Send word to Jesus, Lord the one you love is sick. And in verse 5, John the gospel writer emphasizes it's not that Martha was being big headed or anything, because in verse 5 John himself reminds them, no Jesus loved Martha and he loved Mary and he loved Lazarus.
- [ 45 : 07 ] In fact it's one of these moments in reading the story that there's an element of surprise, because in verse 5 you read, he loved Martha, he loved Mary, he loved Jesus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, well you'd say, well when he heard he loved them, he heard he was sick, he rushed to Lazarus' door.
- No, he stayed where he was two more days. And we'll come back to that in a moment. But I think it's just important to note that here is the word of God telling us that Jesus truly loved these people.
- He loved them in relationship, he'd been in their home, he loved them in this life. The emphasis is not on how much they loved him. We're told yes, Mary later would anoint his feet with perfume and they definitely loved him.
- But the thing that matters most in this story is that Jesus loved them. And Christian friend, that is the most important thing in your life and in mine.
- Our love can waver, our love can grow hot or cold, our love can be influenced and impacted by things. But the wonder of the power that saves us and that keeps us is the direct intensity, the unfailing perfection of the love of Christ towards us.
- [ 46 : 27 ] He's never in a mood with us, he doesn't feel differently from one day to the next about us, from everlasting to everlasting. He has loved us.
- Before we ever knew him, he loved us. And the strength of our salvation is in the perfection of his love for us and not our imperfect love towards him.

But the remarkable thing, as we see that in the scripture, that even though this emphasis is on Jesus' love for them, it didn't save them from heartbreak.

It didn't save them from the soreness of death and the soreness of illness and the soreness of bad experiences and bitter moments in their journey in this life.

I'm certain none of us would question the reality or the sincerity of Jesus' love towards this family because the Bible tells us he loved them and yet Lazarus gets sick, really sick, and he dies.

[ 47 : 28 ] Jesus loved him. Jesus loved this family. But Lazarus suffered and Lazarus died. You can be dearly loved by God and still suffer greatly.

In fact, sometimes when we read through Christian biography and when we read in Christian history and we read some of the situations in the Bible, it's almost as if some of the people who are most dearly loved are some of the ones who endure some of the greatest suffering.

And indeed, the greatest example is the Lord Jesus himself. Nobody ever entered the pages of human history who was loved by God as Jesus the Son was loved.

And nobody ever entered into human history who suffered as much as Jesus suffered in all that he would endure for our salvation.

Being loved by God does not preserve us from life's difficulties. Salvation and grace does not bring an immunity from illness or disease or divorce or disappointment or abuse or struggle or poverty or insecurity.

[ 48 : 44 ] And friends, if your life is troubled with any of these things, it doesn't mean that Jesus doesn't love you and it doesn't mean that there's something far wrong with you.

It's the reality of a fallen life. It's the reality of a fallen world and God's love is still towards you and that should not stop you from following him or professing him.

The perfection of the love that we find in Christ does not preserve us from the hardships and the difficulties of things in this fallen world. The second thing to note is that God's delays should not be understood as God's rejection.

God's delays should not be understood as God's rejection. I noted that just a few moments ago in verse 5 we read how much he loved them and in verse 6 when he heard that Lazarus was sick he stayed where he was two more days.

It almost doesn't make sense to our natural thinking. It seems so strange. Jesus has received news that demands urgent attention and he remains where he was, we're hearing horror stories in Glasgow just now of people phoning medical attention and they're waiting hours one lady in her congregation phoned 11 o'clock at night 6 o'clock in the morning the ambulance came waiting these hours for the attention and that's where we sense that disconnect if there's something urgent Jesus why didn't you go straight away because the news you've heard is demanding that you should move quickly and one of the things that can frustrate us as Christians but it's part of our learning and training progress is that our Lord and Saviour is never in a hurry his timing is always perfect and here was a situation where God our Lord in his response to the news appears to delay in his action but that delay should not be understood as rejection when God isn't answering your prayers as quickly as you want him to answer them when he isn't coming through for you as quickly as you thought he would come through for you when your hopes aren't being fulfilled in the way and the manner that you thought that they would be fulfilled it does not mean that God is rejecting you it does not mean that God is denying you it means that in whatever you're going through

[ 51 : 23 ] God has something greater than just for you that's what this family would discover we know from the unfolding of the drama that Lazarus died sometime between the messenger arriving and Jesus leaving to go Jesus delayed he doesn't tell us immediately why he delayed and there are times where there is a silence from God there are times where he delays not because he's denying or rejecting but because he's working to a greater and a better agenda and in these moments it can be some of the most testing times for God's people it can be some of the most difficult times for Christians to follow on but as someone said God is to be worshipped not used and sometimes in our desperate situations we lose sight of that and we just want to use God as it were to find the resolution for our problems but God is to be worshipped God is to be turned to with thankfulness and praise even when he's not moving or acting or doing as we think he should here was

Lazarus very sick the news comes and Jesus delays and then after two days he says to his disciples let's go back to Judea and then when he says this the disciples are confused by what he's doing here was a situation where they thought that maybe Jesus wasn't going because he'd had trouble in Judea before and maybe he was now avoiding the potential challenge of going there but rather Jesus was delaying because he had a greater purpose in mind Jesus' delay did not mean he had stopped loving or stopped caring for Lazarus or his family don't let the hard experiences of life make hard hearted people out of us don't let the difficult situations in life turn us into bitter people I remember visiting a lady one time when I went to my first church and I'd been asked to visit her because she had stopped coming for some time

I had to go back to the elder and ask him the next time you use the phrase some time would you give it some definition I didn't realise it had been over 20 years since she had come near the church and I remember asking her why don't you go anymore she says well the last time I went I had a bad experience I said so did I and I'll be there on Sunday don't let the bad experiences and the hard difficulties and the delays in answer to prayer turned us into bitter and hard hearted people here was a situation and we see the desperation and Martha and me Lord if you'd been here my brother wouldn't have died there are situations in life where I'm sure we can often feel and think the same way but you see Jesus was forsaken so that we would never have to be and here was a situation where he was delaying not because he didn't care but because he cared so much because it means so much more to him for Mary and Martha and Lazarus it means so much more to him that they have a good life in this world no he wants them and their community to be blessed and prepared for eternity he wants them to know the glories of the resurrection life and the power of what it is to believe in him the

Messiah he has a greater goal in mind for them than simply a physical restoration that's all that they want if you'd been here well he says you're going to see something for the glory of God and for you and for me friends so often we're so bound up by the things of time and by the physical things of life we sometimes just want these things sorted and the Lord reminds us of our mortality and says you know you could get that fixed you could have that pain removed you could have that healed but you know you're only going to have a few more years I speak to you and prepare you and deal with you in such a way that you are best prepared for the resurrection life for the eternal life our lives serve a greater purpose than just the immediacy of our existence in this world and friends here was a situation where the personal suffering of one family was actually going to be an enlightenment to a whole community of the glory of the grace of

God you know one of the most wonderful things I read from a church in Ukraine one of the first churches that was communicating about what their intentions were and they said we're going to stay here and minister to the broken and in fact this was a church where they were training their elders and members how to administer first aid and stem bleeding and do all these kind of things because they were going to be there and they said this deliberately he says we're going to stay here so that when this is all over our community will know that Christ never forsook them that Christ never abandoned they were going to do something they're doing something today and tonight in the midst of seven they could escape they could find a path out but no they're choosing to stay in the suffering so that in the suffering in the pain in the darkness the glory of Christ will be revealed a greater purpose than just escaping a war the purpose of bringing the victory of the eternal battle between light and darkness to bear on the human souls of their community our life serves a greater purpose when through our sorrows the grace and love love of God is magnified and glorified one of the hardest things at times for us to realize and to accept is that we don't exist just for our own purpose or for our own you are not your own the apostle would tell the church you're not your own we live in such an individualistic world and where there's such an emphasis on the individual we forget one of the great bible truths we are not our own masters we do not belong to ourselves we do not control our destiny we have been bought at a price we live for the glory of the one who made us and who loved us and our appreciation of life is enhanced not diminished when we come to understand this and the tragedy of Lazarus' passing was going to be used to enhance and strengthen the faith of the disciples and to radiate the hope of eternal life to the community of

[ 58 : 16 ] Bethany has been wonderfully said there's many a time where we trust God's purposes even when we can't make sense of his providences and that's what we see in this story God's delays should not be understood as God's rejection for God is working to a greater plan God's love towards us does not save us from life's difficulties for God is preparing us for a wonderful destination not just preserving us from every bump in the journey and finally I want us to see that God's son is worthy of our commitment even when we don't understand him even when we don't understand him one of the things I love about the disciples in the gospels is how often they just don't have a clue what's going on gives me hope as we minister from week to week often not having a clue what's going on but they were clinging to Jesus and they were following

Christ and holding on to Thomas we read in verse 16 speaks and he's actually completely misunderstood what's happening he thinks now that because they're going to go to Judea that they're all going to die with Jesus and it's amazing he says well let's go with him let's go and we'll die with him and he was ready to do that and they show throughout this incident that they're just not on the same wavelength as Jesus at all at all they thought when Jesus spoke about Lazarus sleeping they thought that he was going through some kind of convalescing when he was actually dead they thought that Jesus was avoiding Judea because of the opposition when he was actually delaying his travel for other purposes they thought that this trip would lead to their own death even though in verse 9 Jesus assured them that the light of God's hour was still on them the hour of darkness had not come they were so confused they didn't understand everything but they were still with Jesus and they saw

Jesus' power and they witnessed Jesus' glory in the light of what they thought was happening Thomas' commitment was undoubtedly one of courage and resolve thinking he was going to die because the opposition to Jesus was so rife but rather than going to die he goes to see a demonstration of just how great his life is going to be because in Jesus Christ he's going to have the life that never ends and friends it's a challenge to us when we feel in the circumstances of life just confused about everyone in our faith maybe you're here tonight and you just wish things were a bit clearer for you before you professed your faith in Christ what I think what happened at the tomb and the build up to the tomb of Lazarus is a challenge to us that we are to trust the Lord even when we feel confused about some of what's going on we often get asked in these days what's the

Lord saying with this war in Ukraine and it would be easy to try and come up with an answer what's the Lord saying in the midst of the coronavirus what's the Lord saying in the midst of the rising living costs for the world what's the Lord saying in the midst of all the disruption in our earth what's the Lord saying to people in Myanmar whose lives are being blighted by warfare and in Yemen and many other places I think he is saying to us all that he's the only one worthy of our wholehearted commitment because he's the only one who really knows what's going on these disciples inadvertently I think in this instance are a great example to us because they showed to us that they didn't understand everything that was happening but they went with him and they stuck with him and they witnessed from him his power and authority over death and they saw him called the man whose body should have been decaying from the tomb they saw him restore

Lazarus to life as a visual demonstration of the power he has to give resurrection life to all who trust in him the son of God is worthy of our commitment even if we're confused by what's going on in our world and in our lives he is the one who knows all things he is the one who's behind us before us above beneath and all around us he is worthy of our commitment because he has authority over all the issues in our life and in this world and he has the authority over the issues of life and death I used to say to our congregation when coronavirus was at its height and people were so afraid what a wonderful opportunity for the church of Jesus Christ to show the world that we know how to die we haven't always been the greatest example of showing them how to live but we could be a great example of showing them how to die with that rest and with that trust in our Lord and Saviour

[ 63 : 41 ] Jesus Christ who said I am the resurrection and the life the one who believes in me will live even though they die and whoever lives by believing in me will never die do you believe this when I was a parish minister in Ayrshire I had to do many funerals of people who had absolutely no church connection whatsoever and you would go and speak with them and I lost count friends of the amount of times when you were talking to people about mortality and death and they would say to me oh well sonny nobody ever came back to tell us what a gift for evangelism that was well I said the heart of the gospel is that somebody did come back to tell us that somebody did conquer the grave and conquer the tomb and conquer sin and conquer darkness and he showed us all along his life's journey that it was his death that would bring us life and friends wherever you are tonight whatever's going on in your world whatever worries you have about what's going on in the world death is not the worst thing that can happen dying without

Jesus is the worst thing that can happen and he came and demonstrated his power so that you and I can believe in him and know the peace of his victory as we journey through this world do you believe this Martha I pray that we can all say yes Lord I believe that you are the Messiah the Son of God who is to come into the world Father in heaven as we come to pray now in the light of your word to us we want to respond with worshipful believing hearts praying oh Lord that we would know that peace that passeth understanding it's not because we have everything perfectly worked out it's not because we have a perfect and complete knowledge of all that will happen individually or of all that will happen in the unfolding of history in this world but simply because we can say with those of other times I know in whom I have believed and I'm persuaded that he is able it's your power and your authority that we're trusting in

Lord Jesus to give us peace in the light of our mortality and to give us hope love in the light of eternity because you are the resurrection you are the life and you ask us to believe in you and so I would pray Lord for any heart that may become in unbelieving that by the word of your grace by the power of your spirit they may see Jesus tonight and see their salvation in him and I pray for any heart that wants to profess but feels caught up in the confusion of life and the disappointment of life and the unfulfilled dreams and unanswered prayers of life that they would still realise that despite the disappointments and in the midst of the confusions you are still the one we trust the one we turn to and put our hope in and the one we should gladly profess as our only hope in life and death so Lord

Jesus bless us we pray for the honour of your name Amen so let's close by singing together what love can remember no wrongs we have done omniscient all knowing he counts their sum our sins they are many but his mercy is more love could remember no wrongs we have we have done omniscient all knowing he counts not their sum thrown into our sea without bottom or shore our sins they are many his mercy is more praise the

Lord his mercy is more is more stronger than darkness new every morn our sins they are many his mercy is more boss praise the the poor. Our sins, they are many, his mercy is more. Praise the Lord, his mercy is more.

[ 69 : 24 ] Stronger than darkness, new every morn, our sins, they are many, his mercy is more. What riches of kindness he lavished on us, his blood was the payment, his life was the cause.

We stood neath a debt we could never afford, our sins, they are many, his mercy is more.

Praise the Lord, his mercy is more. Stronger than darkness, new every morn, our sins, they are many, his mercy is more.

Lord, his mercy is more. Stronger than darkness, new every morn, our sins, they are many, his mercy is more.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

[ 70 : 56 ] And so grant it, Lord, that we would be delivered from laboring for the wages that lead not just to a physical demise, but to an eternal separation from the glory of your presence.

But grant it in the glory of your grace and mercy. We may each this night know that we receive from your benevolent heart and your eternal hand, the glory of the gift that is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

May your blessing descend and remain with each one of us, that we might live and die to the glory of our eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to whom belongs all the praise and honour forever.

Amen.