

11.7.21 am

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Date: 11 July 2021

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] I think that's us all in. So let me say good morning. You can say good morning back if you want. And a warm welcome to the service this morning, those here in the church building, and also those who are online.

There's always one or two last-minute stragglers coming in. For those online, that's my family. So a warm welcome to the service this morning.

One or two intimations before we begin. First of all, to say that the evening service will be at 6, and there will be an in-service, in-person service here, and also broadcast online.

This evening we will hear testimony from David Cameron, so be encouraged to come in to that service, to tune in to that service. The Wednesday prayer meeting will be on Zoom at half past seven, and I think this Wednesday Anthony Latham will be sharing a word at the prayer meeting.

I hope to be on holiday from tomorrow morning for the next three weeks, so you will get a bit of variety. You've had to listen to my voice and look at my face for a long time without a break.

[1 : 2 0] So for the next three weeks I hope to be on holiday from the end of today. And the prayer meeting will be covered by Anthony on Wednesday. The service is next Sunday.

Gerald White, the Reverend Gerald White, who I haven't met and you haven't met, is going to be taking the service next Sunday morning. My contact with him is through Anna McRae of 20 Schemes, and so he's going to be staying in the mans for a week and take the service next Sunday morning.

And then on Sunday evening, Scott McLeod or Scott Nommie, as you'll be known to some folks, will be taking the evening service, and you'll get told the preachers for the week after that next week.

But whilst I'm away, if anybody needs to speak to a minister, if there are any pastoral issues, speak to one of the elders in the first instance, and there's three ministers actually on standby in case there's anything that comes up.

So there will be no shortage of people to speak to if there's a need. These, I think, are all the intimations. So let's begin this time of worship.

[2 : 3 1] We'll sing to God's praise. The words are on the screen. We don't have them in a book. But it's the hymn, Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul.

Worship his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Sing what ever before, O my soul.

All the Lord, O my soul. All the Lord, O my soul. The sun comes on the hills.

The many things that you sing to us all. Thank you.

[4 : 0 7] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Let's unite our hearts in prayer.

[6 : 04] Let's pray together. Amen. Thank you. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that at the beginning of a new week, we can bow in your presence and come together in this place to worship your holy name.

And we thank you for the gift of this, your day. We thank you for this day that has been set aside by you, our God, our creator, our designer, the one who knows our makeup and the one who knows what we need.

And we thank you, Lord, that you've told us that on this day we are to stop work and we are to find rest in you. And we thank you, Lord, for the privilege of that.

We think back over, for some of us, perhaps a furious, busy few days. We think of the places that we have left behind in work.

We think of situations we've been involved with. We think of the many tasks that come to us, the responsibilities that we're involved with in life.

[7 : 26] And we thank you that you give us strength day by day to work, to do all things as unto the Lord. But we thank you that you have given us this day and you have called us to stop work and to come apart from the things of this world, the things that we're in normal routine.

And to be still and know that you are God and that you are with us. So help us, Lord, we pray in this hour to know that you are God and that you are with us.

If you're not present with us, what we do is futile. But we thank you, Lord, that you have promised that where even just a few of us meet in your name, you will come near to us.

We thank you that you have promised us and we come to this promise so often that those who seek to draw near to God in the name of Jesus will find that God draws near to us.

We thank you as we sing in the psalm that those who wait upon the Lord shall find that our strength is renewed and that our souls are refreshed and that we are given all that we need to persevere and keep on.

[8 : 48] So, Lord, we trust you, we worship you, we bow before you, and we pray that you would reveal yourself to us in your word as we study it.

We pray that you would inhabit the praises of your people, that we would be truly singing from our hearts and making a joyful noise unto the Lord.

We pray for each of us here. You know our needs, you know our situations, you know the things that may worry us or cause us anxiety. We pray for those who are not here but who are online, who are at a distance.

We think of those who are away from us at this time, who are on holiday. And as we, in our minds, go to different people, as faces come to our minds' eye, we pray for each other.

And we ask, Lord, that you would help us, that you would meet us, each of us at the point of our need. And we pray that you would encourage us as we come together, as we are in the habit of doing.

[10 : 02] We pray for the children, we thank you for them, we thank you for little Joseph and Cresc, and we pray that you would bless them. And we think of many little ones around this area who may not be in any church this morning, and we commit them to you.

We ask, Lord, that as they grow up, they would grow up knowing that the church is a place where they are welcomed and where they are safe. We pray that they would grow up to know that Jesus loves them and that Jesus calls them to come to him.

We pray for the children who are on holiday at this time, and we pray that you would keep them safe in the holiday period. And we ask that in this time, where they maybe have time to think, that they would pray, that they would read their Bibles, and that they would come to know you better.

And we pray for those who are elderly, those who are housebound, and those who would desire to be here, but can't be here. And we ask, Lord, that you would bless them, that in their homes, that they would know that they are not alone, but that you are with them.

And we pray for those who are healthy, who are fit, who are in want of nothing, but have no desire to come into your house, and no desire to come to you.

[11 : 27] And we know, Lord, that's the way that we were at once, so we don't look down on anyone in that condition, but we cry out to you, and we ask that you would awaken their souls, and that you would cause them to come to you.

To hear our prayers, bless this time of worship, we pray. Speak to us, we ask. Draw near to us, we ask.

We pray for those who are struggling with grief. We pray at this time for Kathy Ann, who lost her sister on Friday night, Myra. We pray that you would comfort her, and we pray for Mardo, Farrakhar, and Craig and Rachel and the wider family, and we commit them to you as they make preparations, and as they grieve, and as they look to you.

And we pray for the family of the late Kirsty Kathy, who gathered yesterday to worship you, and to pay last respects, and to mourn.

We thank you that those in Christ mourn, but mourn as those who have hope. And we pray that that sense of hope may be a blessing to the whole family.

[12 : 41] So we commit them to you, and we think especially of Katie, who we see here often. We pray for her, and for Roddy, and for Lorna, and Catherine, and Dahl, and the wider family, Lord.

We pray for each of them, and we ask that we would know your comfort and your strength. And we pray now that you would go before us. We confess, Lord, that we are sinners, and we ask that you would cleanse us afresh in the blood of Christ.

And we confess that we are those who are prone to wander. And so we pray that you would draw our minds back to focus on Jesus, that you would soften our hearts, that they may be burning within them as we hear the word of God read.

And all these things we pray in the name of Jesus, our Saviour. Amen. Boys and girls, how are you today? All good? All good, yeah?

Well, I've got a few things to show you, hopefully in a minute or two. But I'll tell you why I'm showing you these things. First of all, it was maybe two or three weeks back, and there was one day, and Murdo, who's over there, Murdo McSween, Murdo Ferry, he came over to the manse, and he was helping us paint a wall.

[14 : 03] When I say he was helping us paint a wall, he was painting the wall on that day. I was being of no help. And then he was out with a power washer, and he was blasting the ground around the manse with a power washer, and he was washing the walls and all that kind of thing as well.

And when I was out at one point, he turned to me as he was blasting the ground, and he says, these weeds, he says, these weeds, they'll grow anywhere. There was weeds coming out of concrete, and there was weeds growing out of walls and all kinds of things.

And you know, I never thought about it too much before that, but ever since you said that, Murdo, I see them everywhere, all the time. Even looking out this window just now, through the chips, I'm seeing them coming up.

And so, I was walking on Thursday, out with Shoros, and I thought, I'm going to take my phone with me, and I'm going to take a photograph of every strange weed or plant or flower, I'm not very sure which is which, that's growing in funny places.

So, we're going to see a few pictures just now. Can you see them? So, if you can't see clearly, you can maybe just stretch your neck. So, there's one there, I think that's on our drive. Can you see it?

[15:17] Big prickly thistle. Where is it growing? Is it growing in nice soil? Where is it growing? It's growing right through the tarmac.

Right through the tarmac. Okay, next one. Now, this one is going down the call. We can see the distillery there. And there's a fence post that's been rotting over the years.

And can you see, growing out of the top of the fence post is a big clump of heather. Next one. Does anyone recognize this one? Is Finley here today?

No. Finley, I'm a swing. No, he's not. Probably just as well. This is Finley's chimney pot. Tober and Mary. And I was noticing this one.

A nice tree or a nice bush. And it's growing right out of the chimney pot. And somebody said to me, A.D. Monroe's shop with another tree growing out of the chimney pot. I haven't managed to see that one yet.

[16:12] So, that's another one. Let's keep going. That's the wall. Over that way. And just at the corner between the wall and the pavement.

More of these weeds, standy lines, is it? That's growing there. Keep going. Another one on the top of the wall. That one looks a bit nicer. Not sure what it is. But I'm pretty sure nobody planted it on the top of the wall.

Next one. Another one on the pavement. Again, that looks like a plant of some kind. I don't know anything about these things, but you can tell me at the door afterwards. Growing between the pavement and the wall.

Another one there. A bit of grass as well coming through. And there's some reeds. And that's the wall along the road there. I think that's the one at the surgery, is it?

I think these doctors should make sure that's weeded promptly. So there's more and there's more fern growing out of the wall there as well. Is that the last one? Another wee one there.

[17:15] Any more? Another one. I was carried away. Okay. That's another one. Same. More of the same. Yeah. Through the tarmac. Okay. Keep going.

Is that us at the end? That's us at the end. So, you saw all these flowers, weeds, plants not growing in a lovely flower bed, but growing through chips and growing in walls and growing through fence posts and growing in chimney pots.

And you might be thinking, why on earth is he showing me this? And the reason I'm showing you this is because if we're Christians, God wants us to be like that.

God wants us to grow. You know, sometimes we think that we come to church, we go to Sunday school, we read the Bible, we hear God speak to us, and he calls us to trust him, and once we trust him, that's the end.

That's just the beginning. Once we trust Jesus, once we ask him to come into our lives, he wants us to grow.

[18:28] to grow up as Christians, to grow in faith, so we believe more and more strongly in who he is and what he's done for us.

He wants us to grow in wisdom so that we know the right way to grow when we've got decisions to make about different things that we can and can't do. He wants us to grow closer to him.

Because when we trust Jesus, we're just getting to know him. But he wants us to walk close with him, to know him closely, to be able to say, he's a friend who's even closer to me than a brother.

He wants us to grow steadier in our walk with him. You know, sometimes we sing that hymn that says, prone to wonder. And we can drift this way and we can drift that way as Christians.

But God wants us not to do that. He wants us to walk steady and to become more and more bright so that people see more and more of Jesus in us.

[19 : 47] And you know, sometimes we might say, well, that's okay to say, but you know, it's not very easy for me to grow. It's okay for some people to grow, but it's not very easy for me to grow.

You know, I've got this problem and I've got that problem and it's hard to manage. Or you might say, it's very hard to be a Christian and grow as a Christian in my class because there's no other Christians in my class in the school.

don't have any other Christian friends, you might say, so it's hard to grow. You might say, if I was in another place at another time, then I would grow big and strong as a Christian, but just now it's just difficult.

Adults were very good at saying that. If this was different, if that was different, if the next thing was different, then I would really get going in the Christian life, but just now I'm busy with work, I'm busy with this, I'm busy with that, I'm busy with the next thing.

It's just complicated. But boys and girls, little and big ones, God has put us at where we are at this particular time and he wants us to trust him where we are and he wants us to grow where we are.

[21 : 13] So, when we're walking through the village and when we're looking in our gardens and when we see weeds and plants growing in all kinds of strange, unusual places, I want you and me to look at these things and think, I need to be like that.

I need to grow and you're going to tell me, how do we grow? What does the song say? How do we grow, grow, grow?

What is this? Lost? Read the Bible, pray every day and you'll grow, grow, grow.

And how is it that we grow when we read the Bible and pray every day? Well, it's because when we read the Bible and when we pray, God comes close to us and it's only as he comes close to us that he makes us grow.

So, let's ask God to make us grow as we pray and as we open our Bibles day by day and we'll sing about that in just a second but first of all, we'll pray.

[22 : 28] Lord God, we thank you that you love us, we thank you that you call us to trust you. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have done everything possible and everything that was needed to save us.

We know that we have sins that have to be taken away and we thank you that the Lord Jesus went to the cross to take our sins away so that we could be saved. And we pray that each of us, young and old, would be saved, that we would ask Jesus to take our sins away but we thank you that when you come into our lives, Lord Jesus, you want to grow within us.

You want us to grow up as Christians. and we pray that you would help us to grow, to grow big and to grow strong, to grow steady and to grow bright.

God bless you. So, Lord Jesus, be at work in us, we pray. Forgive us for the times that we make excuses. Forgive us for the times that we say, well, if I was somewhere else and if this wasn't happening and that wasn't happening, then things would be okay.

Help us, we pray, where we are today to trust you and to ask that you would continue the work that you begin in us. And we pray all these things in Jesus' name.

[23 : 52] Amen. We're going to sing now and we're going to sing the first psalm, psalm number one and it's a psalm about growing as a believer in God.

That man has perfect blessedness who walks 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.

He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river. And so it goes on. And the whole message, the words are a bit complicated for the young people maybe, but it's about not going away from God but staying close to God.

And as we do that, he helps us to grow. So we'll stand to sing to God's praise. Lord, GREEN LI ■■■ engorst, O God, tyres 101 Mountniej hir el■mbara matters in Senhor's way Nor siteth in the sky's chair a place that fails behind.

Upon those love and legends on His low day and night.

[25 : 40] He shall be high now to the cross, near planted by the earth.

Within His Caesar yields His fruit and His leadeth never.

And all He does shall prosper, the wicked arm of soul.

But all that they are long to the child, which when drives to and for.

In judgment therefore shall not stand, such as the glory of.

[26 : 48] No only assembly of the just shall wicked men appear.

For by the way of godly men unto the Lord is known.

Where the way of wicked men shall white the overthrown.

Amen. Okay boys and girls, if you head to Sunday school now. And we'll turn our Bibles to Luke chapter 12 please.

Luke chapter 12.

[28 : 12] And we'll read from verse 13 down to verse 34. This is God's word. Someone in the crowd said to him, that's Jesus.

Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. Jesus replied, man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you? Then he said to them, watch out.

Be in your guard against all kinds of greed. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. And he told them this parable. The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop.

He thought to himself, what shall I do? I have no place to store my crops. Then he said, this is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones.

And there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, you have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy. Eat, drink and be merry.

[29 : 15] But God said to him, you fool. This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food and the body more than clothes.

Consider the ravens. They do not sow or reap. They have no storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds. Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin, yet I tell you, not even Solomon.

And all his splendor was dressed like one of these. That is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today. And tomorrow is thrown into the fire. How much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith?

[30 : 22] And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. For the pagan world run after such things, and your father knows that you need them.

But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock. For your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor.

Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out. A treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted. Where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We're going to sing again now to God's praise.

This is Mission Praise 494. 494 in Mission Praise. A hymn where we pray and we ask for that closer walk with God.

[31 : 25] So we'll stand to sing this hymn in just a moment. O Father, close and warmly God.

Join yourself, perhaps, from nearly full. O God, you are the same. Weren't you fouble this way. O God, He shall never want me.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[34 : 08] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. If you could turn back in your Bibles, please, to Luke chapter 12.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Let's pray for a moment as we go back there. Amen.

Lord, we pray for your help as we gather around your word. We pray that the Holy Spirit would be our teacher. We pray for understanding because without the help of the Holy Spirit, we have not.

We pray for ourselves. We pray for the children in Sunday school. We pray for those who are at home. We pray for the churches around us and different denominations.

[35 : 49] We pray for the persecuted church where it's hard to grow. It's hard to meet and to come together and worship. And yet we see such determination and such life and such growth in these places.

We pray for them in places like Colombia and China and Pakistan and Afghanistan and North Korea. And we pray for your people whom we haven't met and likely in this world never will.

But we ask that as they gather around your word, that they and we would know your help and your blessing. And we pray this in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. Amen. I wonder if you ever find yourself in church listening to a sermon, but you're not actually listening to the sermon.

You're minus somewhere else. I'll start and put you at ease by saying I find myself in that situation many times. We can be sitting in a chair.

[36 : 58] We can be sitting in a pew. And we're aware of the noise. But maybe our minds are out at sea planning where to put the creos next week.

Or maybe our minds are in the classroom or the hospital ward or the office. Thinking about all the jobs that never got done last week that need to be done tomorrow morning first thing. Maybe our minds are on the football pitch thinking about that goal we should have scored.

But we don't. Or maybe our minds are at the dinner table. Thinking about that roast that's going to be overcooked if he doesn't make a better time this week.

You know, we know what it's like to be aware that a sermon has been preached whilst our minds have drifted somewhere far away. And that was the situation here in Luke 12.

Now very often when our minds drift it's because of the poor quality of the preaching. I'm first to admit that. But on this occasion the preacher was Jesus.

[38 : 03] It's God the Son who was preaching. So there was nothing wrong with the preaching on this particular day. But there was a man in the congregation and it seems he couldn't wait for Jesus to stop talking.

Because his mind was not on the sermon. His mind was on a family dispute and he wanted Jesus to settle it. And so in verse 13 we read someone in the crowd said to Jesus, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

And that's all we know about the situation. We don't know the background to what was going on. But this outburst that Jesus has to deal with, it sets the scene for Jesus to teach on the foolishness of focusing on this world and this world's riches whilst forgetting about eternity.

So that's the kind of overarching theme within this section that we read. And there's four lessons that we'll hopefully come to in the time that we have. And the first thing we see here is that there's a lesson about greed and conflict.

Now when we think about conflict in this world, most of it is driven by greed. When you think about conflict between countries, that leads to wars.

[39 : 34] It's usually over control of land. And very often the land that's in dispute is lucrative land. There might be oil under the surface. And so there's a clash over who's going to have control of this land because people want control of the money.

It's driven by greed. And then there can be conflict within cities. We read about it every day in the newspapers. And so much of the conflict in cities, so much of the violence, it comes back to drugs.

Why are you interested in drugs? Because there's big money in drugs. And there's a crazed greed to get the money. And then even within rural communities, there's so much trouble over where that fence should be.

And who gets that plot. And who gets the fish, whichever waters. And so much of the conflict is caused by greed.

Not always, but much of it is. And this man who had the outburst, he seems on first hearing to be asking for justice.

[40 : 47] Sometimes rabbis, teachers in that day would be asked to adjudicate, to give a ruling and a family dispute to try to settle things.

And so it wasn't unusual for a rabbi to be asked the question like this. But this man, who has this outburst, he's not so much asking Jesus for an opinion, he's telling Jesus to agree with him.

He's telling Jesus to give a ruling that will be in his legal favor. And Jesus refuses to do that.

So we see in verse 14, Jesus replied, man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you? Now we might ask the question, well, why does Jesus refuse to get involved here?

I think there's a few reasons. The first reason was there were people, there were authorities who were charged to deal with this and Jesus was going to let them do their job, perhaps.

[41 : 50] The second reason is, that's not why Jesus came. Jesus didn't come to sort out squabbles within families about money.

So he says, I'm not going to get involved in that. I've come for a bigger reason than that. I've come to preach the gospel. I've come for salvation's sake. I'm not coming to sort out disputes over cash.

But I think the main reason that Jesus doesn't get involved with this and doesn't support this man is because he knows the heart of this man.

He can see into the heart of this man and perhaps he can also, well, of course he can see into the heart of everyone. But he can see in this man there is a desire not for justice, but this is driven by greed.

And so Jesus uses this man's greed as a teaching point for all of the crowd. And then he said to them, verse 15, watch out, be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

[43 : 04] A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. So Jesus gives this lesson about greed and conflict.

The greed that was in this man's heart and the conflict that that was causing in the family. And it's a lesson that comes to us all. It's why he turned to all the crowd and said this is not just about them, this is about all of us.

And it's not an application, if we try to apply this to our own situation, it's not that having possessions is wrong in itself. The Lord may allow us to have various things and he's allowed all of us to have an abundance of things in the place that we live.

We can have these things and as long as we hold these things loosely, that's okay. But when we find that our grip on our possessions is tightening, when we find that there's a tug of war in our lives over possessions, over things, we hear the words of Jesus coming through this chapter, speaking into our lives, saying, watch out, be on your guard, because the sin of greed may be crouching at your door.

And when greed begins to dominate in our lives, we actually find that we no longer possess things, but they possess us.

[44 : 54] And when greed gets a grip, we find that we can no longer hold things, because these things actually have a hold over us.

They become ultimate things. And so Jesus warns us about this. He warns us about greed. He warns us about the conflict that it causes with the Spirit of God in us and the people that are around us.

So, as we ask God to show us our hearts in a measure that we can bear, when we see greed, we're to be alert to it, we're to be on guard concerning it, we're to repent of it.

So that's the first thing, a lesson about greed and conflict. The second point is a lesson about gain and cataracts, which is a strange point, but it came to my mind just because of conversations I was having in the course of the week.

And Jesus here, he's still teaching on the theme of greed, greed, but there's a different spin in this. In the last section, a sermon is ongoing and there's a pause and then there's an outburst and we hear this man who is greedy for what he wants but doesn't yet have and he says, Jesus, I want you to help me get it.

[46 : 28] But in this section, we hear the musings of a man who has everything. He's not lacking anything, he has everything financially, but he wants to keep it all for himself.

And Jesus told him this parable, verse 16, the ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. So we're introduced in this parable to a businessman, not a small-scale crofter.

This was the type of character in that place at that time. It was a businessman. This was an entrepreneur. This was a farmer on a large scale. And he's had a bumper year.

He's planted the seed. And there seems there'll be no losses in this year, but there's a huge gain in terms of the harvest. Now the underlying question here is who makes the crops grow?

Who makes the sunshine? Who makes the rain fall? Who makes the conditions optimal so that there can be a gain, so that there can be a harvest?

[47 : 41] And the answer is God. Clearly. So this rich man with his bumper crop should have been at this point in his experience thanking God for what he's received.

seed. But that's not what we hear in the thoughts that this man shares through the parable. What we hear is just me, me, me. I think in verses 17 to verse 19 we hear the words I and my twelve times in three verses.

So let's just scan these verses. Here's the thoughts of this man. He thought to himself verse 17, what shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.

Then he said, this is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, you have plenty of good things laid up for many years.

Take life easy. eat, drink and be merry. And so we have a man here who has no thought of God and he has no thought of anyone else.

[49 : 11] He has no inclination to thank God for what he's received. He has no thought of giving away a portion of this bumper crop to those who are poor. All he can see is himself.

My comfort, my security, my easy life now. Which he assumes will be a long life of verse 19 many years.

So what's this man's problem? Well, he has spiritual cataracts. He's had a huge gain in terms of his harvest.

He's got plenty of cash in the bank. But he has spiritual cataracts. The NHS website says, cataracts are when the lens, a small transparent disc inside your eye, develops cloudy patches.

Over time, these patches usually become bigger, causing blurry, misty vision and eventually blindness. And spiritually, that's where this man was.

[50 : 22] He, he can't see anything but himself. And his stuff. And his barn plans. And his long and his luxurious retirement.

He can't see that he's got no continuing city here. He can't see the moths and the vermin that can get at his crops. He can't see the depreciation.

He can't see the market crashes. He can't see the global pandemics that can cause his riches to dissolve in a moment. He can't see any of that. All he can see is himself and his stuff.

And the end of this story for the man, which comes much quicker than he expected, is grim. verse 20, but God said to him, you fool, this very night your life will be demanded from you.

Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? And then Jesus says, this is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God.

[51 : 40] One of our congregation, the reason I'm on cataracts is one of our congregation was telling me that they're off to get cataracts done in the course of the next few days.

And when you get the cataracts done, I believe you go from very cloudy vision to just crystal clarity. And that's what Jesus offers us to this parable.

He offers to peel off the cataracts that blur and distort our vision so that we can only see this. And he offers to give us this fresh, sharp vision of eternity.

So can I ask the question of myself and all of us, can we see eternity?

Or do we just see this world? And when our minds go to eternity in our thinking, what do we think of?

[53 : 00] Because there's only two ways. There's only two possibilities. You know, for those who live like the rich fool, there may be ample swirly gain.

But Jesus warns us in the Gospels repeatedly of eternal loss, which is hell. That's the warning.

about eternity. But the promise is that those who look to Jesus, those who trust in Jesus, those who follow Jesus, we might not get much in terms of this world's riches, but we are promised treasures in heaven, verse 20, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Perhaps the best commentary on this section is found in Mark 8:36, where Jesus says, for what shall it profit a man or a woman or a boy or a girl if they gain the whole world lose their soul.

A lesson about gain and cataracts, a lesson where we're called to focus on eternity, and that's what our hope is today as well.

[54 : 41] we think of some who even in the last week have gone from time into eternity, unexpectedly.

But when they're in Christ, the promise is eternal gain. There's great comfort and hope in that. what would happen tonight if your soul and mine was demanded from us?

It's the last thing this man expected. I think it's probably the last thing any of us in this room expect. But what if tonight your soul was demanded from you?

Would it be gain? Heaven? Or would it be loss? Hell? Third point, a lesson about godliness and contentment.

And that takes us through from verse 22 to verse 31. I remember one place that I used to regularly preach in, I won't mention the name of the place, but when I would preach an evangelistic sermon, the kind of sermon, you know, look to Jesus and be saved, you must be born again.

[56 : 12] The Christians, they would love it. They would absolutely love it and they would tell me at the door how much they loved it. But I think the reason they loved it was they felt comfortable whilst it was being preached because they would be saying, well, that's not for us.

That's for those who are lost. We already have looked to Jesus, we already are saved so we can have a snooze for the next 20 minutes. And it might have been that the disciples, as they were listening to this parable that Jesus was telling, they might have been thinking, this is not for us.

You know, we're believers, that's for unbelievers. But Jesus makes clear that the teaching from that parable was for the disciples of Jesus also.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, verse 22, note that, Jesus said to his disciples, not the big crowd, but to his disciples, therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear.

Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Why did Jesus say that the disciples don't worry? Because he knew their hearts, and he knew they were worried.

[57 : 34] So let me hit pause for a second, and offer a word of encouragement to the worriers, to those who battle with anxiety and stress and worry.

And very often it's totally unseen to most of us, but it's going on in the heart. So if you're someone who battles with worry, then the word of encouragement that comes to this is you're not alone.

You're not on your own in this. Because the disciples of Jesus had the same struggles, and Jesus knew that, and so he gave them, and he gives us, some words of teaching and encouragement from verse 24 to verse 31.

And this is designed for us to deal with our worries. And Jesus says in verse 24, first of all, look at the ravens. Consider the ravens, they don't sow or reap, they have no store in their barn, yet God feeds them, and how much more valuable are you than the birds?

And so Jesus says, and for paraphrase here, Jesus says, worrying is needless. You don't need to worry.

[58 : 59] God cares for the ravens, the unclean birds, that no one really likes very much. So how much more does he care for you, says Jesus to his disciples back then and still today.

And then Jesus says, worry is pointless. It doesn't achieve anything. You put a whole lot of energy into it and it bears no fruit. Who of you, verse 25, says Jesus, by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

Corrie Ten Boom, who had a very trying life in terms of circumstances, said, worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow.

but it empties today of its strength. And so Jesus says, worrying is pointless.

You can't add a single hour to your life by worrying, but you can probably take days and months and years off your life by worrying. And he says in verse 26, since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

[60 : 12] And then Jesus repeats the lesson he's given. He first of all points to the ravens, then he looks around at all the flowers and he says, consider how the lilies grow, they don't labor or spin, yet I tell you not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

things. We'll maybe think about that a lot more tonight. But Jesus looks around him. He says, look at these visual aids, look at these markers in creation.

They're there to help you and I not to worry. Weerspey says, worry blinds us to the world around us and the way God cares for his creation.

And Jesus says, open your eyes and see. then stop stressing. You know, the life of the disciple, the life of a child of God, it's a simple life.

Where we trust God our Father to give us what we need and to withhold from us what we don't need.

[61 : 26] I think the thing that we struggle most with is our estimation of what we do and don't need. You know, we see our neighbours and they might have more money than us and they might have nicer clothes than us and they might be able to go out and eat in fancier restaurants than us and we say, I don't have these things.

And if we lose sight of our Heavenly Father, we become discontent with the things that we don't have. And then we become disgruntled by the things that we do have.

We become covetous even. But when we remember that we have a Heavenly Father who sees us and who loves us and who promises to care for us and give us what we need and what we don't need, not what we don't need, we can be content.

And when we remember in this short world that this is not all there is, but there's an eternity to gain, and this world is not about getting more things, but seeking his kingdom, we can be content, even if we don't have as many things as the person next to us.

the Apostle Paul learned that lesson, he knew what it was to have plenty, he knew what it was to be in need, but he says, I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

[63 : 07] It's Philippians 4.12. And what was the secret? It was having a close walk with God. Godliness.

1 Timothy 6.6-10 But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it.

But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. For those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money, not money, notice that, often that's misquoted. People say money is the root of all evil. Money is not the root of all evil, it's just currency. It's the love of money.

That's the root of all kinds of evil. So Jesus warns us of that. He gives us this lesson about godliness and contentment.

[64 : 13] The final thing, very, very briefly, is a lesson about gratitude and confidence. That's where Jesus finishes this little section.

And I notice he's still teaching his disciples, he's speaking to the little flock. He's not speaking to the big crowd, he's speaking to the little flock.

And essentially what he says to his disciples as he brings us to a close, is you are to live lives which show gratitude to God and you're to live lives which show confidence in God.

Jesus keeps saying this, saying the same thing, you don't need to worry, you don't need to be afraid, you don't need to be anxious, because God is your father.

to just the verse 32. And then in verses 33 and verse 34, Jesus says, you don't need to hang on to your stuff so tightly.

[65 : 21] There was a song that came into my mind when I was preparing this. It was a song by a guy called Ian Brown who was in the Stone Roses in the 1990s or something.

And the title of the song is Keep What You've Got by giving it all away. Keep what you've got by giving it all away.

And that's what Jesus says. You want treasure, lasting treasure. Don't hang on to your stuff for dear life. You can let it go, because your security is not in it.

It's not a real treasure. God's love. So Jesus gives them a lesson in putting our confidence in God and being grateful to God, our Father.

So as we finish, are we grateful to God today? Is there confidence in the Lord? Or are we scouring through pension funds, making sure that everything is going to be fine and checking bank balances and stressing about this venture and that venture?

[66 : 43] Is there confidence in the Lord? Maybe it should be. We have enough in the teaching of these verses to persuade us that our confidence, our trust should be in our Heavenly Father.

But if we're struggling still, fast forward just a wee bit, and we're taken to the place that the disciples could not yet see.

We're taken to a cross. And at that cross, we see how much God the Father loves us and cared for us.

We see how much God the Son would do, how far he would go to save our souls. And when we see the cross, surely if we're not persuaded by these verses, we're persuaded by that to be grateful to God, the one who loves us.

But if we're still dithering, fast forward just a wee bit more, and we see that the cross is empty. we see that the tomb where Jesus' body was placed, the stone is rolled away.

[68 : 07] That too is empty. Because Jesus, who died for our sins, rose from the dead. He lives.

And he promises his resurrection life to all who believe. God's love. So surely that will give us confidence for time and for eternity.

we'll leave it there. I'm in danger now at this time of people drifting off and thinking about roast chickens that are ruined in the oven.

Let's pray. Our heavenly father, we pray that you would take your word and it wouldn't be snatched away, but it would be pressed in by the holy spirit.

in such a way that we would see more than this world, that we would see eternity, that we would see the cross, that we would see the open tomb, and that we would know and believe that Jesus lives, and that we live because we are trusting in him.

[69 : 26] we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to conclude Mission Praise 755.

It takes our focus to the cross as we conclude the service. When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and poor contempt on all my pride.

We'll sing the whole of this hymn to God's praise. God's praise.

Prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but lost and poor contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, my love. I should pause, stay in the death of Christ my Lord.

[71 : 08] O love, in face, thy charming host, my sacred eyes love.

He spread to his blood. He brought his pain, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love, though he long down.

down. He has such love and sorrow be for thorns come hold, so rich a crown.

he has my soul come to the earth and love.

He has been to the soul and the soul amazing so divine he has my soul my life my own.

[72 : 36] And I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more. Amen.