

28.2.21 am

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] and a warm welcome to the service this morning. Those who are watching online, those who may be tuning in on the telephone, it's good for us again to come together in this way and to worship God.

A couple of intimations to make. First of all, the evening service this week will go out just before six o'clock tonight. It's a Gaelic service and that will be conducted by Mr.

Farrakhar MacLeod. So that's just before six tonight. The Gaelic service will go out on the usual channel. On Wednesday, the Zoom prayer meeting will be at half seven as usual and on this evening at half past seven the YF will meet again on Zoom. One further thing is just to say that this coming Friday night we hope to have a congregational fellowship type meeting on Zoom. This would have been our communion weekend, not this weekend but next weekend.

And so just with that in mind, we'll meet together from seven till about half past eight on this coming Friday. And I'll give more details about that at the prayer meeting on Wednesday evening.

So these I think are all the intimations apart from one more thing actually. I have a jar of marmalade on the table here in case you're alarmed that I'm going to be preaching for so long we're going to need toast. It's just to say that a consignment of these jars of marmalade have come in. The proceeds go to Free Church Youth Camps.

[1 : 40] The price of a jar is two pounds as I suggested donation and I think we've got about 45 of these jars. So if anybody wants a few, please get in touch with me and I can arrange to have these put round to you in a COVID safe manner.

So these I think now are all the intimations. And we'll begin this time of worship. We'll sing to God's praise and we sing from Psalm 139 from verses 1 to verse 10.

O Lord, thou hast me searched and known, thou knowest my sitting down and rising up. Yea, all my thoughts afar to thee are known. My footsteps and my lying down, thou compassesest always.

Thou also most entirely art acquainted with all my ways. Down to the end of verse 10. Psalm 139 and E and E will sing the psalm to God's praise.

O Lord, thou hast me searched and known, thou knowest my sitting down And rising up, yea, all my thoughts afar to thee are known.

[3 : 06] My footsteps and my lying down, thou compassesest always.

Thou also most entirely art acquainted with all my ways.

For in my tongue before I speak not any word can be.

But all together, O Lord, it is well known to thee.

Behind before thou hast beset and laid on me thine hand Such knowledge is too strange for me.

[4 : 14] Too high to understand. From thy spirit wither shall I go, or from thy presence fly.

Ascend I am, Lord, thou art there, there if in hell I lie.

Take I the morning wings and dwell in utmost parts of sea.

In there, Lord, shall my hand be laid. Thy right hand hold shall me.

Let's unite our hearts now in prayer.

[5 : 22] Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the psalm that has been sung.

We thank you, Lord, for the revelation of who you are through Scripture and through that psalm in particular. You are the God whom we come before in prayer.

And you are the God who, as we come before you, looks upon us and searches us and knows us.

You know our minds and what's going through our minds. In the busyness of life, with the clutter that our minds so often can be filled with, you see it all.

Lord, you hear our words. Every word that is spoken. Every bad-tempered word that may be shouted.

[6 : 23] Every whisper under the breath. You hear it, Lord. You see our actions. The things that we do. The things that we leave undone.

They may be hidden from others, but you are the God who sees. And even our hearts. The place that only we know.

And perhaps we do not know in fullness our own hearts. And yet you are the God who searches us. And you see the motivation.

You see the state of each of our hearts. And as we think upon that, Lord, we must confess that we are sinners.

Sinners by practice. Sinners by nature. Sinners in what we do and what we leave undone. Sinners in what we say and what we fail to say.

[7 : 24] Sinners in our thoughts. Sinners in what we fail to say. Sinners in what we fail to say. And in the predisposition of our hearts. In the predisposition of our hearts. We are those who sin.

And we pray that you would forgive us. As we confess our sin. We thank you that we have the promise that we so often go to. That when we confess our sin, you are faithful and just.

To forgive us our sin. And to purify us from all unrighteousness. unrighteousness and as we think upon that our minds go from ourselves to the cross to our savior because we know that in your faithfulness and in your justice he stood he hung where we should have hung he is the one who was sinless and yet he is the one who agreed to pay the wages of sin on our behalf the wages of sin being death we thank you that he laid down his life so that we could be forgiven we thank you that in his taking up of his life once more we are given the promise of life that is eternal when we are in him because i live you shall live said jesus and we thank you lord that that is a truth that we can take hold of by faith we thank you for the comfort that that brings even as we think back over weeks and months and even years of those who have sat with us as part of the congregation as those who have been within our family circle and amongst our friends who have gone from time into eternity we thank you lord that as we think upon the the savior who who died and rose again we are given comfort when we know that there have been those who were trusting in christ so give to us that comfort we pray enable us not just to know these truths as as things that are out there in a sense but we pray that we would know these truths as truths as as truths which transform our lives and will transform eternity for us help us we pray to see jesus to confess our sin to take hold of the eternal life that he alone offers and to know the security and the joy of being in him the one who searches us who knows us who saves us and and who holds us help us to take comfort and and to be steadied by that also in a world that is so unsettled as in a world where we are so conscious of the unpredictability and the lack of control that we have help us to help us to think upon the fact that you're the god who holds us and we pray that we would that we would trust you in that and even when we find ourselves sometimes in circumstances that seem to be rocky that seem to be difficult even when we feel that we like peter are walking and the waves are crashing all around us help us not to take our eyes off christ but to know the the holding of us by your hand we ask that you would be near to us on this day we pray that we would uh that we would use this gift of your day as uh as the means whereby we we take time to be still and know that you are god we pray that as we open your word both now and in the course of the day that you would meet with us we pray that you would help us as we pray we pray lord that uh we would know your presence and that we would know your peace we pray for the congregations around us as they too open your word and meet and in these strange ways that have become normal for us in past months whatever the gospel is preached lord we pray that you would add your blessing and that you would build your church we pray for any who

who may in recent months have come to faith in christ we're conscious that this is the the weekend approaching that we would have sat around the lord's table and perhaps some would have come forward to profess faith in christ and for any who are believing we pray that uh even in these days that they would that they would step forward and and profess that their faith is in is in in jesus pray that we would hear and see of many uh in these times when we're not able to do much ourselves we pray that we would see that you are working and we pray that we would uh see and hear of those whose faith is in is in jesus pray for those who are sick and are struggling we ask that you would uh that you would hold them that they would know uh your your touch on their lives pray for those who are grieving asking that they would know your comfort we pray on for those who are lonely that they would know your presence with them we pray for our students at this time who are struggling with uh assessments and the prospect of exams in a in a a strange academic context where they're not quite sure what comes next we ask lord that you would help them and for some of our young people who are wondering what comes next where they may go what they may do in terms of career or university we pray for your guidance upon them we ask lord that you would lead them and guide them as we pray that you would lead us we pray for our leaders those you have allowed to be over us and we ask that you would humble them and that they would look to you that they would not lean on their own understanding as they so often do but we ask that they would look to you lord and we pray as part of a nation that has gone far astray that you would draw us back and give to us that spirit of repentance to hear our prayers continue with us lead us and guide us that we may be in the spirit on the lord's day and that we would know that you are close to us and we pray these things in jesus name amen boys and girls i hope that you are well i have got something to show you a few pictures so i'll stop talking just now and stewart will push the button and hopefully you'll see a few pictures and i want you to think about um when you look at these pictures what on earth is this thing so boys and girls hopefully you were able to see that any ideas what on earth was that thing stewart said it looked like a strange looking treadmill that's his guess it's uh it's the wrong guess i'd like to hear your guesses but obviously i can't but uh i expect that almost all of you will have no clue whatsoever what that thing was um i certainly didn't know either it's a carpet cleaner and mary borrowed it um this week passed from from kirsty at the hotel and uh i think it was on wednesday this week she she began pushing this big huge hoover of a thing

around some of the rooms and i didn't know what it was and i was saying to her what what is that thing and what are you doing with it and she says it's it's a carpet cleaner i got a shot of it from from kirsty i said why you why do you have a carpet cleaner the carpets are all clean as far as i could see they were clean there's no stains on them that i could see there was nothing that looked very dirty about any of the carpets but there there went mary charging through the house pushing this big bull of a thing around all the carpets but you know what after she was pushing this thing around for a minute or two the the thing uh it started to fill up with a dark kind of looking liquid and um once she stopped it and she took the this container of stuff that had been sucked up from the carpet through to the bathroom she poured it out and you know what color the the water was when she poured it out it was black absolutely black filthy i would never have believed it but it's true the carpets were absolutely needing a clean couldn't see it i wouldn't have believed it i wouldn't have certainly borrowed a carpet cleaner but your wife always knows best doesn't she now in the passage that we're reading this morning there's a group of people who were called the pharisees and uh if you were here you would tell me about the pharisees because i know you know a little about the pharisees they were very religious people uh they were very good at going to church they read the bible a lot they could say a lot of the bible they'd memorized huge chunks of the bible uh by heart they said very long prayers and everybody thought these pharisees they are very holy men uh they must have very clean hearts and the pharisees to tell you the truth they themselves thought that they were very holy men and they thought they had hearts that were much cleaner than anybody else but you know what they were like they were like our carpets they looked clean if you didn't look too closely but when jesus searched their hearts we were reading about that singing about that in that psalm psalm 139 jesus he he searches our hearts and when he searched the hearts of of these pharisees he could see that their hearts like all of our hearts are were full of sin they didn't like it when he said it see our hearts whether we are pharisees or not pharisees whoever we are wherever we are our hearts just like their hearts are full of sin and other people might not see that and we might not even really properly realize that ourselves but jesus searches our hearts and in the bible he tells us the truth about our hearts and that's maybe not the best news we would say to be told that we have hearts that are full of sin but there's good news coming and you know what the good news is the good news is that jesus although he tells us the truth about our our sinful hearts he promises he offers that he can wash our hearts and he can make our hearts clean so how can he do that well if you think about our carpets

[19 : 54] we had to we had to push the thing around but you saw one picture of a big tub of stuff I think it was some kind of liquid soap when you poured it in and that was what went through the carpet to clean it and to make it to make it pure but for our hearts it's not soap we need is it it's the blood of jesus how can our hearts be made clean well not through anything we do but it's through everything that jesus did he went to the cross his blood was shed and his promise is that when we're trusting in him his blood washes our hearts clean and so boys and girls what I want to say to you and to all of us today is what I say so often be trusting in jesus he's the only one who can make our hearts clean and all of us need our hearts clean what can wash away my sin nothing but the blood of jesus what can make me whole again nothing but the blood of jesus we're going to sing about that in just a moment but we'll pray first of all our heavenly father we thank you that you love us enough to tell us the truth about our hearts we thank you that you shine the light of the bible into our lives and into our hearts and you tell us that there's none righteous not one all of us need our hearts cleaned all of us need the cleansing that only jesus can bring and so we pray that the boys and girls and that everybody who's watching and listening that we would be coming to you and asking that you would clean our hearts that you would save us from our sin that you would make us whole again as we trust in the lord jesus so help us lord we pray and give to us that faith that we would not just walk away now and do something else but that we would pray in our own hearts quietly lord jesus please forgive my sin wash me in your blood and make me your child and we pray these things in jesus name and for his sake amen we're going to hear now that hymn that i quoted there what can wash away my sin nothing but the blood of jesus what can wash away my sin nothing but the blood of jesus what can make me whole again nothing but the blood of jesus for my cleansing this i see nothing but the blood of jesus for my pardon this might be nothing but the

blood of jesus oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow no i find i know nothing but the blood of jesus nothing can for sin at all nothing but the blood of jesus not of good that i have done nothing but the blood of jesus oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow no other friend i know nothing but the blood of jesus this is all my hope and peace nothing but the blood of jesus this is all my righteousness nothing but the blood of jesus oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow no other plant i know nothing but the blood of jesus jesus oh precious is the flow of jesus oh now by this i'll overcome nothing but the blood of jesus now by this i'll call my home nothing but the blood oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow no other found i know nothing but the blood of jesus oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow as snow no other fount i know nothing but the blood of jesus well if you could turn now please to mark to luke's gospel and luke's gospel chapter 5 as we continue our studies luke's gospel and chapter 5 and we'll read from verse 33 we've just seen uh levi the tax collector being called and uh beginning to follow jesus and uh now we have a period here uh which picks up on what has gone previously where jesus encounters quite a lot of conflict uh with the pharisees pharisees so mark chapter 6 uh luke chapter 6 uh luke chapter 6 and at verse 33 uh they that's the pharisees and the teachers of the law said to him john's disciples often fast and pray and so do the disciples of the pharisees but yours go on eating and drinking

jesus answered can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them but the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them in those days they will fast he told him he told them this parable no one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one if he does he will have torn the new garment and the patch from the old one will not match the old and no one pours new wine into old wineskins if he does the new wine will burst the skins the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined no the new wine must be poured into new wineskins and no one after drinking old wine wants the new for he says the old is better one sabbath jesus was going through the cornfields and his disciples began to pick some ears of corn rub them in their hands and eat the grain some of the pharisees asked why are you doing what is unlawful on the sabbath jesus answered them have you never read what david did when he and his companions were hungry he entered the house of god and taking some taking the the consecrated bread he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat and he also gave some to his companions then jesus said to them the son of man is lord of the sabbath on another sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled the pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse jesus so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the sabbath but jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand get up and stand in front of everyone so he got up and stood there then jesus said to them i ask you which is lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do evil to save life or to destroy it he looked round at them all and then said to the man stretch out your hand he did so and his hand was completely restored but they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to jesus one of those days jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to god when morning came he called his disciples to him and chose 12 of them whom he also designated apostles simon whom he named peter his brother andrew james john philip bartholomew matthew thomas james son of alpheus simon who was called the zealot judas son of james and judas iscariot who became a traitor amen and may god bless that reading of his word to us we'll pray again as we turn back to scripture our heavenly father we thank you once more for your word that we are able to sing and able to read and able to meditate upon help us not to take that for granted we we think back even to midweek where we heard of your work across eastern europe and different parts of the world we're conscious that there are so many countries where your people would love to have a copy of the scriptures in their own tongue and have the freedom to be able to worship and we pray for them we ask that you would be with those who are seeking to translate scriptures and distribute them in countries where it is closed we pray for christians who are persecuted and who as they come together or as they meet even virtually do so with great risk even the risk of losing their lives we ask lord that you would be near to them that you would help them that you would

encourage them and protect them and we thank you lord that in these places where the the persecution is most acute very often we see uh the greatest gospel growth and so we we pray for our brothers and sisters in christ and we ask that wherever they are today that they may know your presence with them as we pray lord that we would know your presence with us now pour out your spirit upon us we pray that we may see and hear and understand all that you have to say uh to us we pray this in jesus name amen in our working uh lives uh there are parts of each job uh that we that we love and there are parts i think of every job uh that we struggle with but we still do the parts that we struggle with because we recognize that they're they're part of the job you can imagine a nurse or a doctor uh going to work in in a hospital and saying oh no i didn't i didn't expect to have to to see all these sick people all day it would be kind of ridiculous wouldn't it or imagine a mechanic saying i didn't realize i was going to have to get my hands dirty or a fisherman saying i wasn't expecting to be out in a boat in the freezing cold when i took this job well you'd be inclined to say to to these people well i don't know what you were expecting these things shouldn't surprise you uh they're just part of the job you know one thing that didn't surprise jesus that often surprises us problems disagreements with people like the the pharisees it was all part of ministry uh for jesus and as we see and hear jesus answer the the accusations of the pharisees and the teachers of the law and as we watch uh how jesus deals with problems we we learn more of the wonder of his wisdom and his grace and for us even as a kind of opening application here if we're christians if we are those who are who are following jesus yes there's blessing immense blessing eternal blessing but we have to expect in this world problems and mess we shouldn't be surprised by problems uh we shouldn't be overly disturbed by problems uh we certainly shouldn't become embittered because of them they're part of the christian life and god has purpose in the problems that he allows to come into our lives god uh so often uses problems problems more than peace to sanctify us to make us more like jesus and it's through problems people being unkind to us for example or uh people uh sometimes being unfair to us it's through these difficult experiences uh that we get the opportunity to show out something of the grace of jesus every problem that comes into our lives we we tend to want to to sweep it aside we wish we didn't have to deal with it but perhaps a better way for us to think about problems and struggles is here's an opportunity for us to show out something of the grace of jesus because you can only show grace to those who are not deserving of it first thing i want to note today is the problems that jesus faced

that's our first point the problems that Jesus faced and there are two problem areas that Jesus encounters in these wrangles with the Pharisees and the teachers of the law they have a problem with him concerning fasting that's the first thing and then they have a problem with Jesus concerning uh his uh his sabbath observance or his lack of it in their opinion so first of all we see uh the problem that Jesus faced uh concerning fasting and at verse 33 uh we we have this this question that's uh that's that's asked of Jesus they said to him John's disciples often fast and pray and so did the disciples of the Pharisees but yours go on eating and drinking it was a protest it was a question now fasting is a biblical thing uh remember in Matthew chapter 6 verse 16 Jesus uh says when you fast he teaches about fasting and he addresses Christians and he says when you fast not if you fast but when you fast so Jesus assumes that fasting and prayer will be part of the believer's life it's not that Jesus was against fasting he was for it but what annoyed the Pharisees was that he and his disciples didn't seem to do enough of it the Pharisees we know uh had rules they had many many rules they had uh traditions which had become in their eyes as important if not more important uh than the word of God and the biblical requirement strictly speaking for fasting was one day a year on the day of atonement you can go to Leviticus 16 and Leviticus 23 to get details on that but the Pharisees they fasted much more than the Bible actually required of a person the Pharisees fasted twice a week on a Monday and on a Thursday and on these days they would whiten their faces with some kind of makeup i expect uh they would make themselves look gaunt and pale so that everybody would know that they're fasting and so that everybody would then assume that they were very holy men because of how frequently they were fasting and clearly the Pharisees had been watching Jesus and his disciples on a Monday and a Thursday and they appeared not to be fasting they were perhaps out for lunch they have rosy cheeks not pale faces they looked well fed and this was a problem for the Pharisees so they challenged Jesus on this issue and they say to him why don't you do what we do why don't you fast as often as we fast don't you have a copy of our rule book don't you know how you should be living so that's the first problem area that they had a problem with Jesus uh regarding fasting and then they also had a problem with Jesus uh concerning sabbath observance chapter 6 verse 1 one sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain rub them in their hands and eat the kernels some of the Pharisees asked why are you doing what is unlawful on the sabbath we can imagine the long fingers pointing in the direction of Jesus and the disciples why are you doing what is unlawful on the sabbath now we ask the question in response to this what laws of God had Jesus broken or his disciples broken concerning the

[40 : 13] sabbath and the answer is as you would expect no laws of god and jesus makes that plain in verses three and four he quotes scripture to back up his position jesus answers them have you never read what david did when he and his companions were hungry he entered the house of god and taking the consecrated bread he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat and he also gave some to his companions so jesus responds to the pharisees with their accusation the laws that jesus had broken were not biblical laws the laws that jesus disciples had had broken according to the pharisees they were not laws that were grounded in scripture they were man-made laws see the law of god said that one was not to work on the sabbath that's exodus 20 10 but the pharisees added to that they began to define what was work and what was not work and according to them jesus disciples were guilty of working on four counts by picking the the heads of grain they were guilty according to the pharisee of reaping and by rubbing them in their hands they were guilty of what the pharisee called threshing and by throwing the husks away they were guilty of winnowing and by eating the kernels they were demonstrating the fact that they had broken the law of preparing food on the sabbath day so they were thoroughly quadruply guilty in the eyes of the pharisees that's the disciples but not only were the disciples guilty the pharisees were brave enough to come to jesus and say you also are guilty because jesus was guilty of breaking the sabbath when he performed an illegal healing in the eyes of the pharisees verse 6 on another sabbath jesus went into the synagogue and was teaching and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled the pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse jesus so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the sabbath now again as you would expect the pharisees had strict rules on what kind of medical treatment could be administered on the sabbath and only if life was in danger was treatment allowed and the nature of the medical intervention that the pharisees said was permissible on the sabbath day was one was allowed to to do something that would stop the condition that the person the patient was struggling with getting worse but you weren't allowed to do anything that would bring improvement so for example if somebody came with a head wound one could within the law of the sabbath apply a bandage to the head to stop the blood from flowing but you couldn't put any kind of ointment on the wound because that would bring healing and you might say well where does it say that in the bible and the answer is it says that nowhere in the bible this was again something that came out of the pharisees own man-made rule book and as we look at verses 8 to 10 we see jesus who knows fine well what they're thinking he doesn't go off to a corner and decide he's going to show compassion to this man by healing his hand no jesus defies the pharisees openly he disregards their rule book and he heals the

man jesus knew what they were thinking were say and said to the man with a shriveled hand get up and stand in front of everyone make sure everybody can see this so he got up and stood there then jesus said to them i ask you which is lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do evil to save life or to destroy it no answer he looked around at them all you can imagine him making eye contact with all those who were so against him and he said to the man stretch out your hand he did so and his hand was completely restored what was this well it was another miracle wasn't it it was another piece of evidence that hopefully would help the pharisees to see that jesus actually was the messiah but even at this point the pharisees had so hardened their hearts that they would not see verse 11 the pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious there's no consideration of the the power of the miracle there's no consideration of what do we do with this because this is clear evidence of this the power of the miracle there's no evidence of the power in christ no they were just furious and they began to discuss with one another what they might do to jesus see the pharisees and the teachers of the law they didn't want to believe they had a huge problem with jesus wonder do any of us have a problem with jesus this morning we might think that the people with with problems with jesus are not tuning in they're not in churches that they're way out there some are doing bad things but no the people who had the biggest problems with jesus those were most against jesus that were actually in worship on this day so do we have a problem with with jesus you know lots of people do some have a problem with with jesus concerning his identity they say he's a he's a good teacher certainly uh he's he's a kind healer he's an excellent preacher but son of god your savior of sinners lord of all lord of my life well i'm not so sure about that they have a bit of a problem with with the demands that jesus makes uh in terms of the identity he proclaims to be uh the god man the savior lord of all and there are others who have problems with jesus regarding the things that he said i mean think about john 14 6 for example jesus says i am the way the way singular the truth the life no one comes to the father except through me jesus teaches crystal clearly that he's the only way to heaven other religions are a dead end our own good works are not good enough to to gain us access into heaven the only way that we can get into heaven is by trusting in christ and some people say i have a problem with that kind of thing that offends me what jesus says about dismissing other religions that offends me that jesus would look at my life and say it's not good enough i don't like the exclusivity of what jesus says i have a problem with that

or take my mark 9 for example as another uh illustration uh take a read uh towards the end of that chapter of what jesus teaches about hell it's very stark it's very clear it's very hard hitting and some will say i have a problem with that kind of talk i don't like hearing any of that stuff happy to listen to to what jesus has to say about heaven happy to listen to what he says about some of the the more innocuous moral teachings but i have a problem with jesus when he starts talking about hell there's lots more we could give many more examples we could think about what jesus says about sin and the definition of it we could think about what jesus teaches about sexuality and and marriage between one man and one woman and some will say today many will say today i have a problem with with all that kind of stuff doesn't jesus know that we are far more liberal in our outlook today than we were back then doesn't jesus know about multi-faith doesn't jesus know and isn't he on board with the whole transgender and lgbt movement and the answer is no he's not jesus is not one who will compromise and dilute what he says and what he teaches to accommodate and fit our culture what he says is true what he says stands forever and many people as cultures change and as the bible clashes with the cultures have a problem with jesus because of that so we see first of all here the the pharisees and the clashes with jesus we we see the the problems that jesus faced in that culture back then secondly we uh listen to the parables that jesus told and notice that the location of the parables that jesus uh tells they're located in between the two problems there's the problem of fasting in chapter 5 verse 33 and there's the problem of uh the sabbath in chapter 6 verses 1 to 11 and in between that in chapter 5 verses 34 to 39 jesus tells these parables these stories with underlying meanings that connect with both problems and if we cut to the chase here and i need to looking at time what was the big problem that the pharisees had with with jesus what were they saying through these criticisms well essentially what they were saying to jesus was we want you to fit into the the framework of our religion we want you to to do what we tell you to do whether it's fasting or feasting or sabbath or whatever we want you to toe the line jesus and through the parables that jesus told in uh verses 34 to 39 of chapter 5 jesus says it's not going to happen he says to the father he says i didn't come to this world to give approval to your strange religious ideas there's a time for fasting says jesus yes but not when i the bridegroom i'm here with you verse 34 but when i'm taken away from my disciples verse 35

when i go to the cross to suffer and die because that's what jesus is focusing on even at this early point he says that's the time to fast and pray and yes says jesus on many occasions the sabbath is to be observed jesus never disputed that but it's god's day not yours mr pharisee you don't get to lord over me with your sabbath rule book rather says jesus in chapter 6 verse 5 the son of man i am lord of the sabbath and then jesus paints some more pictures and he says you don't tear up a new garment and use a patch from the new garment to fix up an old garment verse 36 that would be ridiculous if you do that you've ruined the new garment and the new patch won't match the old phara jeans anyway he says in verse 37 you don't put new wine into old brittle wineskins because if you do the new wine will burst these skins and everything will be ruined so what was jesus saying through these parables well he was saying in essence my gospel and your legalistic religion are not compatible my grace and your man-made laws don't mix i haven't come says jesus to to approve and enforce your rule book i've come to do something quite different quite new you're fixated on the on the old covenant mr pharisee and your misunderstandings of it but i have come says jesus to bring into effect a new covenant which will be sealed by my blood again think of the words that we heard sang what can wash away my sin nothing but the blood of jesus what can make me whole again nothing but the blood of jesus nothing can my sin raise nothing but the blood of jesus not of works it's all of grace nothing but the blood of jesus nothing can my sin atone nothing but the blood of jesus not of works that I have done nothing but the blood of Jesus that's the message of the gospel that's the message that was flying in the face of the Pharisees extensive rule book that's the message that was flying in the face of the Pharisees works righteousness and that was the message that they needed to hear and to believe if they were to be saved and it's still the message that we need to hear and believe if we are to be saved forgiveness of sin salvation eternal life it's found only in and through believing in Jesus it's received only through the free gift of his grace not the labor of our hands not the extensiveness of our religious practices it's grace it's in and through Christ in Christ alone my hope is found so we have the problems that Jesus faced we have the parables that Jesus told the third thing we see here

as we move to verse 12 is the prayer that Jesus prioritized one of those days Jesus went up to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying and spent the night praying to God and we're moving now towards Jesus' choosing of the disciples we glance back at the Pharisees they were those who were assumed to be God's disciples but the reality was that they certainly were not Jesus now is moving towards choosing calling the disciples who would form the foundation of the church of Christ the New Testament church and Jesus in advance of that he prays so there's the prayer that Jesus prioritized we see him in verse 12 staying up all night to pray I wonder when we last stayed up all night it's not something we often do is it we only stay up all night if there's really something critical and important to be done you know for a student they may have a hand in at 9 o'clock in the morning and they're not ready so they stay up all night to just get the piece ready to submit or you see in construction jobs they come to a critical point and they have guys working all night to try and hit that deadline so these are the kind of situations that all all-nighters are required for what's Jesus doing all night?

[58 : 03] he's praying why? because it's the most important thing that we can do we were reminded of that on Wednesday evening with Derek Maxwell from Slavic Gospel he spoke about how how some people especially as the years go on and they're not able to do so much physically they'll say all I can do now is pray and he would say never say that it's never just all we can do is pray the most important thing we can do the most effective thing we can do is to pray and we find Jesus here praying all night at this particular time so why does he do that at this juncture?

well let me give you three three reasons not exhaustive but three reasons three R's the first reason is recovery we scan back from verse 17 of chapter 5 right through to verse 11 of chapter 6 it's full of conflict it's full of opposition none of that came as a surprise to Jesus but that doesn't mean that these conflicts didn't take a lot out of Jesus when we know what it's like when we when we when we clash with someone it's stressful it's draining you're exhausted after it and Jesus was fully human and so these conflicts would have left him exhausted would have left him drained of strength so where can he go to recover?

where can he find that his strength which has been depleted physically will be renewed again? well he'll find that as he goes to the place of prayer and waits upon his father in prayer Isaiah 40 verse 31 says they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength and we see a picture of that here a picture that we're to keep in our minds for our strength levels to be maintained for us to have spiritual resilience for us to be able to recover after a period of struggling we need to wait upon the Lord in prayer the second reason that we could say that Jesus is in this in this place of prayer all night is because of the relationship that's the second thing the relationship that he enjoyed with his father why did he pray?

well because he loved to pray he loved and he needed to speak to his father and prayer was the the means of that and as we see Jesus in prayer there's a picture of intimacy here there's a snapshot in the moment of there's a snapshot that's given to us of a moment in time in the perfect relationship as God the father and God the son speak to each other and linger in each other's presence in that place of prayer Jesus is up praying all night because of the relationship that he enjoys with his father and that's in stark contrast to everything that we see in the Pharisees the Pharisees are all about protocol religious protocol Jesus is all about prayer the Pharisees are fixated on religion Jesus is focused on his relationship with his father and that's a focus that we must we must maintain isn't it an amazing thing that we can have a personal relationship with the God of heaven and earth isn't it an amazing thing that we can hear him speak to us as we open the scriptures isn't it an amazing thing that as we pray we're able to speak to him and we know because we have the promise he listens to us and he will answer our prayers as we pray in faith in accordance with his will and in a way that will bring glory to his name and goodness to us see our

Christian lives lose reality and we lose assurance and we lose our spark when we neglect our relationship with God and the first sign of neglect is a failure or a reluctance to pray Jesus is up praying all night he's praying all night because he needs that time to recover in his father's presence after all these clashes he's praying all night because he loves to be in this relationship with his father where he's speaking and he's listening he's spending time with the father and the spirit and the third thing here is that Jesus he's in prayer because he is he's reflecting it's the third hour is reflection see in the morning

[64 : 03] Jesus has a big decision to make he has to choose twelve disciples and these disciples would be the foundation of the New Testament church so Jesus doesn't rush into that decision he reflected on it at length and he did that in the presence of his father in the context of prayer Thomas Manton the Puritan said the church of Jesus Christ was created out of the prayers of its head and we see that here as Jesus spends time reflecting on this decision in the presence of his father he is guided he is led he's given reassurance perhaps in this decision that he makes in the morning now we often want specific guidance from God on various things don't we how do we get it we kind of wish we could just push a button and we get the we'd get the guidance just coming out of a machine or we sometimes wish that the guidance would just come it would be like writing on the wall but that's not how God's guidance works where do we get

God's guidance on particular issues we get it by being with him we don't get guidance apart from him but we get guidance from God on specific situations and circumstances as we bring them to him in prayer and lay them out before him and reflect on them with our Bibles open asking that he will guide us so there's the priority that Jesus had here prayer that Jesus prioritized and finally and very briefly there's the peculiar disciples that Jesus chose when morning came verse 13 he called his disciples to him and chose 12 of them whom he also designated apostles now when you set out on an important project whether it's a new business or a construction job or whatever the people you have around you are the critical thing it's so important that the right people are around you and so these decisions when you start a new project they must be very well considered and here

Jesus chooses the 12 to be his disciples so first what was a disciple well a disciple was first of all a follower of Jesus he called his disciples he chose 12 of them it says in verse 13 and they followed and we saw that in the lives of Simon and James and John Jesus chose them he called them they followed we saw that in the life of Levi last week his new name is Matthew and Jesus met him in the tax booth Jesus chose him Jesus called him and he follows and here just a little further down the road these men are still following Jesus and that's what a disciple does they follow Jesus a Christian is not someone who has a spiritual experience and then gets on with life apart from

Jesus a Christian is a follower of Jesus a lifelong into eternity long follower of Jesus and the fact that we're following him is the evidence that we're his the so-called Christian who is away from the Lord can have no assurance that they are truly his and the case in point here is iscariot at this point he looks like a disciple he walks like a disciple he talks like a disciple but in the end he stopped following and he was lost and that's an unnerving thing for us to think about but sometimes it's necessary for you and I to be unnerved in order that we will keep on keeping on following the Lord disciples are followers of Jesus they're secondly here friends of

Jesus he called his disciples to him and there's an intimacy there Mark actually underlines it more so in Mark 3 14 Mark makes the point that Jesus appointed 12 that they might be with him Barclay the commentator says it is amazing that Jesus needed human friendship and that's a that's a quote that I kind of chewed over for a wee while I wasn't sure I agreed with it that Jesus needed human friendship but I think it's true if Jesus didn't need human friendship he wouldn't be fully human and so we see here that Jesus calls these 12 to be disciples to be to be with him he calls them to him and later in the gospels he says I've called you friends and we see that as the gospel progresses as they were with him he taught them and he encouraged them and he fed them and he filled them with the gospel and then he sent them out as field workers for

[70 : 26] Jesus that's the third thing about disciple disciple as a follower of Jesus a disciple as a friend of Jesus a disciple as a field worker for Jesus he also designated apostles apostle means very simply sent one and that's what Jesus did he called the disciples to him and then he sent them out as apostles he calls them to him as disciples he sends them out as apostles Barclay the commentator says Jesus chose these men that he might write his message upon them they were to be his living books they were to company with him that they might someday take his message to all men that's the movements of a disciple we come to Jesus so that we may know him and then we are sent out by Jesus in order that we will make him known we're field workers for Jesus that we have a mission we have a job to do and the final thing we see about these disciples is that they are fools in the eyes of the world we have the list of the disciples there in verses 14 to 16 there's the team that Jesus picks now some of you will have watched match of the day last night and if you watch match of the day you see the games but it's always interesting to listen to what the pundits have to say and they usually have at least one team where they're criticising the team selection the manager's team selection and we can imagine the religious pundits of that day discussing the team selection of Jesus and saying what's he thinking about none of these disciples have any theological training they don't have good reputations in fact some of them have terrible reputations and yet

Jesus called them Barclay says they were very ordinary men there was not a wealthy not a famous nor an influential man amongst them they had no special education they were men of the most common folk Malcolm Maclean says they were ordinary men some were fishermen one was a tax man one was a former zealot and we don't know about the others they were imperfect men Peter was impetuous James and John were a bit wild Jesus did call them the sons of thunder Thomas could see everything in a negative way and no doubt the others had their failings and we can imagine those in the world looking in on the team of people that Jesus called around them and saying that's a foolish selection that's a strange bunch of people that Jesus has chosen and yet so often that's how

Jesus works Paul reminds the Corinthian church of that in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 26 to verse 29 he says brothers and sisters think of what you were when you were called not many of you were wise by human standards not many were influential not many were of noble birth but God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are so that no one may boast before him and with all that in mind I want us to consider this as we finish is Jesus calling you to him we look at a strange bunch of people that Jesus calls to him back then is Jesus calling you today we may feel ourselves to be a bit peculiar many may agree we may feel ourselves to be not very good disciple material we may feel very foolish compared to so many others but that's no barrier to Jesus he's looking for disciples he's still looking for disciples those who will trust him as saviour and those who will follow him as lord and if you're still hearing this after 40 minutes he's calling you we'll pray heavenly father we pray that you would take your word and you would bring it in the power of your spirit to impact our lives as we hear you call help us to follow and we pray this in Jesus name amen we'll conclude by hearing the hymn son from mission praise the hymn 1209 my heart is filled with thankfulness to him who bore my pain who plumbed the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with his light who wrote the law his law of righteousness with power upon my heart and the verse finishes in verse three my heart is filled with thankfulness to him who reigns above whose wisdom is my perfect peace and every thought is love for every day I have on earth is given by the king so I will give my life my all to love and follow him so may we be able to sing these words sincerely as a response to the

Lord who calls us my heart is filled with thankfulness to him who bore my pain who plumbed the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with his light and wrote his law of righteousness with power upon my heart my heart is filled with thankfulness to him who walks beside who floods my weaknesses with strength and causes fears to fly whose every promise is enough for every step

I take sustaining me with arms of love and crowning me with grace my heart is filled with thankfulness to him who reigns above whose wisdom is my perfect peace whose every thought is love for every day I have on earth is given by the king so I will give my life my all to love and follow him and I may the grace of our

[78 : 58] Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forever more Amen