

23.5.21 am The Mission

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Well good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning. Those who are in the building, it's good to see a number of us in the building this morning and those who are tuning in the live stream. It's good for us once more to be able to come together and to worship God. There are some who are visiting with us as well and it's good to have you and some who perhaps have not been for a while and it's good to have everyone who's gathered this morning.

So intimations, just to remind you that the evening service will come online just before six and we'll also have the in-person service here at six o'clock and that will be taken by myself, God willing. We'll come to the end of the Psalter, Psalm 150, I think five years down the line, we come to the last Psalm. So that's this evening. So be encouraged to join in for that. The YF, I think, are still, they're not on tonight. They met on Friday night so there's no YF tonight but there is a prayer meeting on Wednesday on Zoom. So be encouraged to come along to that also, please.

These, I think, are all the intimations. So let's join together our hearts in worship of God. Cammie will sing in just a moment. We're not able to sing quite yet with him in the building here but we can follow on and praise God from our hearts. So it's Mission Praise 51, Mission Praise 51 and this well-known hymn which Cammie will sing.

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart, not be all else to me, save that thou art. Thou my best thought, by day or by night, waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart, not be all else to me, save that thou art.

[2 : 1 8] Be thou my best thought, by day or by night, waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, thou my true word. I ever wish, see thou with me, Lord.

Thou my great Father, I thy true Son. Thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

Be thou my battle shield, sword for the fight. Be thou my dignity, thou my delight.

Thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tower. Raise thou me heavenward, O power of my power.

[3 : 4 9] Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise. Thou mine inheritance now and always.

Thou and thou only first in my heart. High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, after victory won. May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun.

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall. Still be my vision, O ruler of all.

Let's unite our hearts now in prayer.

[5 : 0 8] Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day.

We thank you that once more you have given us the desire and the opportunity, the freedom to be able to come into this place and to be able to, in our own homes also, tune in and be able to unite our hearts together in worship and in prayer.

You are the God who is worthy of all our praises and all our worship. And we would seek this morning, on this year day, to come and be still and know that you are God and that you are with us.

We thank you for each person who is here this morning. We thank you for some who are here in the church building for the first time in over a year, I think, having been shielding and having been at home, as we were told to, for that long period.

We praise you, Lord, that we are able now to come back together bit by bit. And we ask, Lord, that you would continue to push back this virus and continue to guide us and lead us, give us patience and wisdom.

[6 : 31] And we ask that before long we would be able to come together as a whole congregation to sing praise from our hearts, with our lips, to the God who calls us to come.

And we ask, Lord, that in this service today we would have our eyes fixed upon Jesus, that he would indeed be our vision, that he would be the Lord of our heart.

Lord, that in this service today, we thank you for the truth of the hymn that we've sung and the encouragement that it brings to us as we meditate upon it. You are our saviour, Lord God.

We thank you that the Father so loved the world that he sent his son, Jesus, into this world to take the punishment from us on that cross.

So that as we trust in him, we can be forgiven. We can receive the eternal life that he alone can give to us. So make us, we pray, ever thankful for that.

[7 : 30] Give us eyes to see the cross. Give us ears that we would hear the call of Jesus, who says, Come to me, all who feel weary and burdened, laid down under a weight of sin, and I will give you rest.

Enable us, Lord, we pray, to know the presence of Jesus, the one who brings light into our lives, the one who guides us, the one who leads us, the one who protects us when we find ourselves at times on the battlefield with the spiritual warfare as a very real thing in our experience.

So help us, we pray, not just to sing these words or to listen to these words being sung, but enable us to know the truth of these words in our lives.

Enable us, we pray, each of us, to look to, to trust in, and to walk close to Jesus. We pray for any who may be here or who may be listening at a distance who have not yet trusted in Christ.

We ask that even today there might be someone, there might be some, who would respond to the call of Jesus to look to him and be saved. We pray for others, Lord, who may once have trusted you and walked close with you, but who may be some distance from you at this time.

[8 : 53] We thank you, Lord, that you are the one who calls the prodigals to return. And we ask, Lord, that if we've been drifting, whether for days or weeks or months or years, that you would draw us back into that close walk with God.

We ask, Lord, that you would minister to those who are struggling in different ways. We are conscious once more of the reality of grief and loss. We think of Annie, who passed from time into eternity this week, and we commit the family to you.

We pray for Jeanette and for Chris and for the boys, for the extended family, Lord, that you would comfort them. As we continue to pray for Shona and as we continue to pray for Kirstie and the family, we ask, Lord, that in our grief, with that sense of loss that we feel, we pray that we would know your comfort, that we would know your strength, that we would find refuge in the everlasting arms of God.

Pray for those who are anxious today. Think especially of our young people who are going through assessments and exams, some who are in university, some in school, some who are in different phases of assessment within their work context.

And we know the stresses that that can bring. We thank you that we can bring all our problems, all our stresses, all our worries and concerns and anxieties to the Lord Jesus in prayer, knowing that you are the God who understands, you are the God who helps us.

[10 : 30] So for those who are feeling the stress of life at this time, we pray that these worries would not choke us, but that we would be driven more and more to lean upon the Lord Jesus and put our faith in him.

We pray, Father, for those who are struggling with addictions, we ask that you would give them that power that comes from you, that they would be enabled to break the addictions that they struggle with.

We know that every addiction finds its root in sin. We are all addicted to sin and to different things in our lives. And we pray that you would enable us to repent each day, to look to Jesus for the grace and for the strength that he alone can give.

We pray for our young people, the children. We think of the kids clubs that we hope to start again soon. We ask that you would be preparing the hearts of the young ones.

We thank you for how they used to run around in the building here, looking back a year. And we ask that once more we would see them enjoying themselves in your house and listening to the gospel and responding to the simple truth of the news of Jesus and his love.

[11 : 53] And we thank you again that we have young ones here today and we ask that you would bless them. From the very youngest to those who are going up into secondary school and thinking about the prospect of going from here to university, we commit each one to you.

As we commit the older ones to you as well, we pray for those in homes, those in Harris House, those who are housebound and find it hard to get out of their house at this time.

We ask, Lord, that you would minister to each one. So hear our prayers. Take away our sin. Keep us looking to Jesus, we pray. And we ask all this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Boys and girls, good to see a few of you here today. Some visitors as well, although they're visitors that we know.

Now, I've got a picture that I'm going to show you and hopefully it will go on the screen here. And I know, I think it will go on the screen. If you can't see that screen there, just creep around a little bit.

[13 : 01] There you go. Can you see that? Do you recognize where that is? Any guesses?

Does anyone recognize? Shawnee, you should know where that is. Where's that? There's a second picture as well. You might see it better from the second one. Do you recognize that? John Rory, do you recognize it?

Michael, John? Any hands up? Lois, you know where it is. Where's that? That's from up the hill, but it's looking down into Tarbert.

Christy, are you going to tell me? Is it Luskintyre Beach? It's not Luskintyre Beach. But I'll tell you what it is. See, when you go to your granny's house, your Shennar's house, you're sitting beside you.

You know, there's a big loch in front of the house, or a wee loch in front of the house. That's it there. That's the loch there. That's taken from the top of the hill, and when you look at it from the top of the hill, it just looks like a wee puddle.

[14 : 17] Doesn't it? It just looks like a wee puddle. It's not a big loch. We drive past it, we hardly notice it. It's just a... I don't know how big it is, in terms of the length and the breadth of it, but it's not very big at all.

But the question I want to ask you, and I want you to try and guess this. You know, sometimes you get asked to guess things. You might have a big box of sweeties, and you pay ten pence, and you guess how many sweets there are, and then the winner gets it.

I want you to guess... I want you to guess... that wee loch, how deep do you think it is? Let's have some guesses as to how deep that loch is.

Do you think if you stood in it, it would go up to your waist? It would go up to your neck? Do you think it would come up to your nose? You think it would come all the way up to the top of your head?

What do you think? Do you know the answer, Loch? No? Okay. Have a guess. Pardon? It was... That's right. That's the first right answer.

[15 : 28] It will go above your head. So if you step into that loch, don't do it. But if you were to step into that loch, it would be higher than your head. But I want a bit more accuracy here.

So how deep do you think it is? How many... Who's good with dimensions? How tall would you say this building is, somebody? 20 foot? About that?

About 20 foot? So just to give you a guide, boys and girls, if you look at the roof there, that's about 20 foot. So, let's hear your guesses.

How deep is the loch? Is it as high as that roof? Would this be like you, standing at the bottom of the loch, looking up and that's where the water is? The swans are just...

You're seeing the swans backside, swimming over your head. You think it's that deep? 20 foot? I'll go Michael first, and then I'll go John Roddy second.

[16 : 25] You think, Michael, it's going to be up to the trusses there. That would be about... Maybe about... 12 feet? Right about that?

So that's your guess, Michael. No, it's deeper. John Roddy? Four times what? Four times the size of this?

You're almost right. You think it's twice as high as the ceiling, Christy? That's not high enough. John Roddy?

That's a wee bit too high. Johnny? No, that's a wee bit too much. What? Three times.

It's between three times and four times. What were you going to say to John? You were going to say the right answer, yeah. It's according to John Struthers, and he's a fisherman, and so he knows.

[17 : 29] He says, that little puddle of a loch, he called it, he says, it's actually one of the deepest lochs in all of Harris. Doesn't look very deep, he says, but it's about 80 feet deep, he thinks.

60 to 80 feet deep, which is about three to four times the height of that ceiling. So that's a loch you've got to be very careful in.

I said, is there any fish in that loch? He says, fish, there's loads of fish in that loch. I said, any big ones? He says, there's very big things in that loch. There's big fish. He says, there's probably big cars at the bottom of that loch.

That's how deep it is. So the point is, it looks just like a little loch. And you might think, oh, I could go and paddle it and that and it wouldn't even go up to my knees.

But it's very, very deep. Much deeper than we think. And do you know what that loch reminds me of? Guess.

[18 : 33] Do you know? Pardon? God's love. Now that's another children's talk that might have been better than the one I was going to give. That loch.

Yeah, that's a good children's talk, do you know? Because the Bible tells us about the deepness of God's love. Sometimes we think God loves me maybe a little bit and we do bad things and we think, does he still love me?

But he does. His love is so, so deep. And we see how deep God's love is when we look at the cross. But what I was going to actually say is that little loch reminds me of the Bible.

Because there's lots of people who say, oh, the Bible, it's got a black cover. Some Bibles are just tiny little books. And you'll say, you should read the Bible.

And they'll say, oh, well, you know, I'd rather read a comic or a book with lots of pictures. There's going to be nothing much for me in the Bible. That's what people will say. But the Bible is about like that loch.

[19 : 40] It's deep. It's full of treasure. And the more we dig into the Bible, the more we see about who God is, how amazing he is, and how much he loves us.

And the more we see about ourselves and how much we need God. So, when you're driving along the road and you see that wee loch, I want you to think, boys and girls, about the Bible.

This is God's word. And it's for you and it's for me. And sometimes we can read a passage in the Bible and we think, oh, I know this one. I don't need to, I don't need to really look at this one anymore because I know this one.

But then when you read it, maybe for the millionth time, you think, oh, I never saw that book before. It goes deep. It goes right down deep in our lives.

So what I want to say to you, boys and girls, and older boys and girls, is read your Bibles and ask that God, the Holy Spirit, will help us to see and hear the person and the voice of Jesus.

[20 : 57] Ask that he'll speak to us because that's what he wants to do as we open his word. So let's pray about that now. Lord God, we thank you for your word.

We thank you that you haven't left us this morning or any morning to think our own thoughts and to exchange our own ideas. We know that our own ideas don't go very deep.

They can be very shallow. But we thank you that your words are deep. And we thank you that your words, like the disciples said, are the words of everlasting life.

We thank you that as we open the Bible, we learn more about who you are and how much you love us, the depth of your love. We thank you that as we open the Bible, we see ourselves as like a mirror.

and we see how bad we can be and how much you love us anyway and how much you have done, Lord Jesus, to save us.

[21 : 58] We thank you that you went to a cross, Lord Jesus, to take our sin away when we ask you to. And we thank you that you promise in your word that when we trust you and when we ask you to come into our lives, you'll come in.

And once you come in, you never leave. So help us to be in our Bibles, we pray. Help us, Lord, to hear your voice, to see your face and to be trusting you.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, boys and girls, for listening. We're going to go to God's word now and you guys are going to take a tour through to Sunday school.

So if you head through to Sunday school now. If we could turn to Luke chapter 10, please.

Luke chapter 10. And we'll look at verses 1 to 24. This is God's word.

[23 : 14] After this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

He told them, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

Do not take a purse or bag or sandals. Do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first say peace to this house. If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him.

If not, it will return to you, stay in that house eating and drinking whatever they give you. For the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them the kingdom of God is near you. But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet, we wipe off against you.

[24 : 19] Yet be sure of this, the kingdom of God is near. I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Woe to you, Chorazin.

Woe to you, Bethsaida. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment and for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.

He who listens to you listens to me, and he who rejects you rejects me, but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me. The 72 returned with joy and said, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.

He replied, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy.

[25 : 18] Nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. At that time, Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, this was your good pleasure. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, Blessed are the eyes that see what you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We'll pray for a moment. Heavenly Father, once more, we pray that you would help us, that you would give to us that simplicity of outlook, of vision, that we would be humble, like little children, not relying on our own understanding, not seeking to use our own intellect or depend on our own intellect to understand your word.

We acknowledge that we cannot understand, we cannot see, we cannot hear, unless you help us. And so we pray for that help just now. We pray that you would open our eyes to see Jesus.

[26 : 59] We keep on praying that because we know it's so necessary for us to pray that. So help us, Lord, here, help the children in Sunday school.

We pray for the congregations around us, the different denominations that open your word this morning in this place and further afield. And we ask that whatever the gospel is preached, Lord God, that you would be adding your blessing, that you would be building your church, that you would be turning us to look to and to trust in Christ.

We pray these things in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. If you could have your Bibles open, please, at Luke chapter 10.

And I want to begin today by thinking about a word mission. And this word will kind of be the word that we lock onto for this morning.

It's the word mission. I want to think this morning about mission. And it's a word, even if we take it out of the church context, we recognize it that's fairly commonly used in secular life.

[28 : 15] If you search up the word mission and then you go to look at the news stories, I think the first page and a half anyway, just as far as I looked, it was various stories about missions from this world to outer space.

Space missions to Mars and missions to different planets. So we think about mission, we sometimes think about space missions, astronauts, and that kind of thing. But then if we think about businesses and business speak, successful businesses or large organizations or even smaller organizations will be clear on their mission.

They'll have a mission statement that's somewhere up on a wall and they'll pursue that mission with great focus and resolve. So mission is something which we recognize in normal life and secular life in this world.

And mission is a word that we see very clearly in Scripture. We think about Jesus. Jesus came to this world, he came from heaven to this world and he came on a mission.

Not a holiday, not an information gathering exercise, he didn't come on a PR trip from heaven. He came on a mission and it was a mission to save us.

[29 : 47] That was why he came. He came to save us because in our sin we were dying, we were hopeless. So God so loved the world, such was the depth of his love as we thought, that he left heaven, came to this world to save us.

And how would he save us? Well, the amazing truth of the gospel is that God the Son would save us not by flexing his muscles, not by asserting some kind of majestic, otherworldly power, but he would humble himself.

He would look no different to anyone else. There was nothing about his appearance that made him stand out. He wouldn't have been on the front page of these glamorous magazines because of his good looks.

He was ordinary looking, the God-man. and he came to save us. He humbled himself and was obedient all the way to death on a cross.

That was his mission. And we see Jesus, if we flick back just to Luke chapter 9, just to remind ourselves of where we were at, we see Jesus explaining his mission to the disciples.

[31 : 15] Luke 9, 22, he said, the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day rise to life.

That's my mission, said Jesus to his disciples. We're heading to Jerusalem, we're heading to suffer. I'm going to die to save you.

They didn't get it. So he tells them again in Luke chapter 9 verse 44, he says, listen carefully to what I'm about to tell you, the Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.

Jesus is crystal clear on his mission. And even though he knows the suffering that's involved, he is absolutely committed to his mission.

And as we see Jesus come close to Jerusalem, in Luke chapter 9 verse 51, we see the focus and the resolve of Christ.

[32 : 23] As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And in that resolve of Jesus, as he sees the cross and yet still advances, presence, in that resolve of Jesus, we see his love for us.

We see the determination of God to make it possible for those who are lost in sin to be saved through him.

J.C. Ryle says this, he says, forever let us bless God that we have such a ready and willing saviour.

Forever let us remember that as he was ready to suffer, so he is always ready to save.

The person that comes to Christ by faith should never doubt Christ's willingness to receive him. The mere fact that the Son of God willingly came to the world to die and willingly suffered should silence such doubts entirely.

[33 : 40] All the unwillingness is on the part of man, not of Christ. It consists in the ignorance and pride and unbelief and half-heartedness of the sinner himself, but there is nothing lacking in Christ.

He came to save us. He calls us today, having completed his mission, he calls us to be saved.

And if we are not saved, it's not because of a lack in him, it's not because of an unwillingness in him, it's because of an unwillingness in us to come with empty hands and ask for that salvation.

So we see the mission of Jesus here. But as we go from Luke chapter 9 to Luke chapter 10, we see that Jesus not only came on a mission, but he sent his people out on a mission.

Jesus sends 70 or 72, depending on your translation, the word is unclear. He sends them out on a mission to every town and place to go ahead of him, to essentially go and introduce the people in these towns and places to Jesus.

[35 : 08] So the mission that Jesus called his disciples to back then and still today, it isn't complicated, it's actually very clear. Jesus says to you and I, he says, your mission is to introduce people to me.

Why? Well, Jesus responds by saying, because I love them and I can save them. So if you and I are scratching our heads this morning, why we're wondering why we're on this earth, then this is why we're on this earth, is to come to know Christ and then to make him known.

Sometimes, you know, the children on the holidays can say, oh, there's nothing to do, I'm bored. And you say to them, there's a million things you can be doing, you just don't want to do them. And sometimes God's people, we Christians, can say, there's nothing for me to do.

I don't want to go to some of the meetings that are on. I want to serve God, but there's nothing for me to do. There's plenty for you and I to do.

We are called day by day, every place that we go, to introduce people to Jesus. So I want to think about this mission in the time that we have.

[36 : 41] I won't tell you how many points I've got. I'll just begin with point number one. Point number one. Jamie looked at his watch when I said that. Point number one. A mission for the committed.

This chapter begins in verse one with these words after this. So as Jesus begins to speak, we're given the sense that what he's saying now is off the back of what he's just said.

And so when we read these words in verse one of chapter 10 after this, we have to ask the question, after what? And if we glance back to Luke chapter nine, we have this section where there's a whole lot of challenge packed into it because we're given a description of what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus.

We're given a description of what it looks like to follow him. You know, sometimes there are these TV shows on where we're given insight into the selection process of, for example, the SES.

So you have these reality shows where 40 contestants are brought onto this training program and they go through all these different tests and trials to see if they can progress.

[37 : 57] It's essentially designed to test the levels of commitment of the contestants. And if we look at Luke chapter nine, that's kind of what Jesus does.

He has a vast crowd of people who are following him around. But he has to shrink them. He's trying to identify those who are truly committed.

So he challenges those who profess to follow him about the pride that they need to repent of. And he challenges them about the poverty that they may have to face if they are going to be his followers.

And he challenges them about the absolute priority that he demands in their lives. And as we just glance back at that chapter and think back on last Sunday's sermon, we can imagine this vast crowd getting smaller and smaller as people listen to Jesus and feel the bite of that challenge.

and say you know this is this following Jesus stuff is just not something I can commit to. You know I have interests, I have hobbies, I have work.

[39 : 23] You know I have other priorities in my life and what Jesus is asking for is too difficult. so I'm walking away. We can imagine many from that big crowd who had been emotionally touched but didn't have gritty persevering faith walking away.

And Jesus doesn't chase them. And so now in Luke chapter 10, Jesus, he isn't speaking to vast crowds anymore. he's speaking to a much reduced number.

He's speaking to a smaller group of committed disciples. And he sends them out on a mission. So first of all, this is a mission for the committed.

The second point to note here is that this is a mission for every believer. Because there's a danger that we could look at this and read into this and say, well, this mission that Jesus is speaking about, it's not for me.

This is for the super holy. This is for the SES of the Christian faith. This is for the Christian elites. But it isn't.

[40 : 44] Jesus is speaking to all the disciples that were gathered before him. The crowd had dispersed. The non-disciples had gone home. Now he's speaking to a smaller group of disciples.

And what we see here is that this mission that Jesus calls his people to, yes, it's for the committed, dying to self, cross-carrying disciples, but the truth is, that's a description of every disciple.

You can't be a disciple and not deny self and pick up the cross. That's the definition of discipleship.

Somebody said, I couldn't find who said it, it costs nothing to become a Christian, but it costs everything to be a Christian. J.C.

Ryle said, a religion that costs nothing is worth nothing. A cheap Christianity without a cross will prove in the end a useless Christianity without a crime.

[42 : 01] And so Jesus, he's sending every believer out on this mission. We have in verse 1, the Lord Jesus appointing 72, it says in the NIV, it says 70 in other translations, and he sends them everything.

And there's a whole lot of theories that you can read about in commentaries about the number and the significance of the number that's used, and it's fairly unclear in my opinion, but I think what's clear is that this number that Jesus uses, that Luke gives us, it represents the whole company of God's people.

Seven in the Bible is that number of completion, it's entirety. humanity. And so Jesus, he's sending out the whole company of those who profess to follow him.

He sends them out on mission. Wilcock, the commentator, says the twelve symbolizes the patriarchs of Israel, while the seventy may symbolize the people of Israel, all the people.

So this is a mission for every believer. It's a mission for the committed, yes, but every believer must be committed. Can't be a believer and not be committed.

[43 : 23] So this is a mission for every believer. The third point here is this is a mission by the Lord's appointment. It says in verse one, after this, the Lord appointed the seventy-two others and he sent them.

and just note in that verse the authority that there is. The Lord appointed them and he sent them out on this mission.

Ina and Adrian, who I'm seeing over there, it was their 60th wedding anniversary, a few weeks, maybe a month or two back, and they showed me a card that they got from the queen.

and the card had nice things in it, but one of the interesting things was the envelope. Because the envelope that the card was in had very firm instructions to James Maclean, who was delivering the post.

When the letter came from the palace, there was very clear, strong instructions about how it would be delivered and when it would be delivered and what would happen if it wasn't delivered.

[44 : 36] You know, this delivery was by a royal appointment. There was authority in it. That's the kind of royal force that's coming through here. Jesus is king of kings, and in that capacity, he sends his people out on his mission.

Remember the Mission Impossible films? Every film would begin with that line. the special agent would hear the words on the tape, your mission should you choose to accept it is whatever.

Jesus' agents in this world don't hear that line. Our mission is not optional. This mission that Jesus calls us to is not simply for those who feel like it, it's not for those who choose to accept it.

This mission is by the Lord's appointment. And that should give those of us who are actually engaged and active on the mission, it should give us courage.

Sometimes we go out and we think, who am I to speak? What can I say? That should give us courage. We are appointed by God to go out and introduce people to Jesus.

[46 : 08] So we should be given courage as we think about that. We're sent out by Jesus. And this perhaps should give a word of rebuke to those who are off mission, who are living just for whatever pursuits that we have in our diaries.

This is a call of rebuke that we are reminded here by Jesus what we've been appointed to. This is a mission by the Lord's appointment. Fourth point, this is a mission where there's no lone rangers.

We've all seen the westerns, you know, where the mysterious picture of the lone ranger is in our screen. And the lone ranger, you know, he does his own thing.

He goes his own way. He needs no one. He's accountable to no one. This enigmatic kind of figure who just wanders around. Well, there's no lone rangers in the mission that Jesus sends us on.

He sent them out, verse 1, two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. So that when he got there, people would be looking for and expecting and looking forward to hearing Jesus.

[47 : 28] there's great wisdom in this. No lone rangers. You know, when we're isolated, we very quickly get discouraged.

We give up. Or when we're isolated, doing our own thing, we can sometimes get proud, end up doing damage.

or we could lose focus and end up somewhere we shouldn't be. You're much more vulnerable to go off track and get into difficulty when we're on our own.

Remember, Jesus wasn't on his own. He called the twelve to be with him. And at certain points in his ministry, he called three of the twelve to come very close to him. He needed fellowship with them.

Think about Paul. Paul never goes out on his own on a mission. We did about Paul and Barnabas. We did about Paul and Silas. Paul in Philippians 1, verse 5, he's quick to give thanks for the partnerships in the gospel that he so much values, but he never goes out on his own as a lone ranger doing his own thing.

[48 : 45] So this is a mission that we're sent out on, but it's two by two. No lone rangers. You might hear my voice more than most voices here, but I'm just one of a team of elders.

Not above them, I'm not below them. I'm with them. When I go off track, they're quick to tell me. It's the way it should be. And the gospel work that you and I are called to engage in at the personal level involve each other.

Tell each other what you're doing, who you're speaking to, who you're praying for, how it's going, when you're encouraged, when you're discouraged.

This is partnership. No lone rangers. Fifth point, fifth point, sorry, this is a mission with promise. promise. Sometimes we can be asked to do a job, and we just know from the beginning that the job we've been asked to do is just never going to work.

When that's the case, it just makes it really hard to be enthusiastic about the task. I remember planting potatoes in Loch Caron one year, spent a day and a half turning the ground and then planting the seed, etc.

[50 : 14] And when it came to harvest time, there was nothing. It was a few shawls, but the potatoes that came out of the ground looked smaller than the ones that were put under the ground.

So when it came to the next year, at potato planting time, I had no enthusiasm to go back out and do it again. But if I had the promise of a plentiful harvest, I'd have been out with the seed.

Or for the business person, if they had the guarantee of profit in return, they'd be out doing the job. And this mission that Jesus calls us to, it comes with the promise, not the possibility, but with the promise of a plentiful harvest.

Jesus said in verse one, still we're in, the harvest is plentiful. Not it might be, but it is plentiful.

Wiersbe, the commentator, says these men were to be harvesters in a field that was ready but neglected. Is that a description of Tarbert? A field that is ready but neglected.

[51 : 36] I don't know. Are we speaking to people about Jesus? The harvest is plentiful, says Jesus. So we're giving great encouragement here.

Lots of work you can give yourself to that may yield nothing very much. but this work that Jesus calls us to comes with a guaranteed, a promised return.

There will be a harvest. Isaiah 55, 11, my word that goes out from my mouth, it will not return to me empty.

1 Corinthians 15, 58, always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

So be encouraged, this is a mission with a promise. Sixth point, this is a mission driven by prayer. He told them, verse 2, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

[52 : 44] ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers into his harvest field. And we see here that mission begins and mission is driven forward by prayer.

You know the biggest issue that there is in the church in the UK at the moment, not talking about the free church but across the board, the biggest issue that there is, the biggest problem that there is in the church at the moment is a shortage of ministers.

There is hundreds of empty pulpits. There are so many communities where we can see where a church could and should be planted.

But there's no ministers to go. So what do we do? Well, Jesus says pray. That's where to start.

Be aware that when you pray, you may feel a tap on the shoulder as I did years ago, saying I've heard your prayer, now are you willing to go? But when we think about the harvest here, Jesus says the harvest is plentiful.

[54 : 04] Now, are we seeing plentiful fruit at present? Are we seeing multiple conversions, many, many people turning to Jesus and giving their lives to him?

We're not really seeing that. We're seeing ones and twos and we're thankful for that, but we're not seeing plentifulness. so what should we do? Well, we should pray.

And I don't want to use this point as a point to hammer us down with because we know, me first, we all need to pray more than we do. But on reflection, thinking about past months of lockdown, the most encouraging thing for me about lockdown is that almost every member of this church, almost every office bearer is at the prayer meeting every single week.

We have double, treble probably the number of people who were at the prayer meeting in the room before, now week by week coming to the place of prayer, and if we are engaged in prayer at heart level and asking God to convert people, we can have huge optimism as we look forward.

The harvest is plentiful. Jesus says pray. If we go out with a seed on the mission that we're sent to, we can believe that we will see a harvest in God's time.

[55 : 44] point seven, this is a mission that's dangerous. Jesus says in verse three, go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

wolves. We're not going out on this mission like lions.

We're going out like lambs among wolves. Now what chance, what chance do lambs have against wolves? Well, no chance.

Lambs are eaten by wolves. wolves. Unless the shepherd comes between them and the wolves. And so on this mission that we're called out to, we need the constant protection of Jesus, the good shepherd.

We need to stay close to him. We can't do this on our own. We have no strength to do this on our own. We're totally vulnerable. We will fall and fail.

[56 : 53] We'll be savaged on our own. because we will be attacked. But we're to go out anyway. Staying close to the shepherd.

Morning by morning, Ephesians 6 being clothed with the armor of God. But there's a reality about this. If you're going to respond to this call, this command, this appointment of the Lord Jesus, we're not going out into a life of tranquility and peace and constant ease.

We're going out on a mission that's dangerous. We won't always be welcomed. Verses 10 and 16 make that clear. We will on occasions face rejection and opposition, so we need to expect that.

We're going into spiritual warfare. It's dangerous. Jesus makes no bones about that. He's sending us out on a mission that is spiritually dangerous.

Point eight. This is a mission that requires focus and contentment. Scan down from verses four to verse seven. Jesus makes clear that on this mission that he's sending us out on, we're not to go carting suitcases full of stuff.

[58 : 33] Because the stuff will hold us back when we're supposed to be doing the job. We're not to bring a purse and a bag and sandals, verse four, water, because the Lord will provide what we need.

We're not to be dithering along the road, yarning all day about the weather and whatever else, because there's an urgency about the work we're called to. We're to get there. We're not to be looking for the nicest house with the finest food, the best accommodation.

mission. We're to be content with what the Lord gives us and focus on the job that he calls us to. This is a mission that requires focus and contentment, a single-mindedness.

I was reminded of a guy that I knew in Kishorn days. His name was Alec McInnes. I'm sure he wouldn't mind me saying, I'm sure he's not listening, but if he was, I don't think you'd object to this, but Alec is a nice guy and when he spoke to him, within five minutes of any conversation at any point, he would get the conversation to where it was, round to fish farming.

He was absolutely fixated with fish farming. That was his work and he loved his work and he was so thrilled in his work, he was so contented in his work, whatever you spoke about, five minutes later you were talking about fish farming.

[60 : 02] there was that focus, there was that contentment and we need something of that in a far greater measure.

We need that focus, we need that contentment in our walk with God and in the work, in the mission that Jesus calls us to, to be fishers or men. A mission that requires focus and contentment.

point nine, they're almost done. This is a mission that requires practice and preaching. Verse nine, Jesus says, heal the sick who are there and tell them the kingdom of God is near you.

And see the balance in that verse. He sends out these people, these missionaries of Jesus, they will care for those who are sick. They won't walk past them and they will care not only for the bodies of those who are sick, but they will care for the souls of those who are lost.

Practice and preaching. You know, if people hear about Jesus from us through our preaching, but they see nothing different about our lives through our practice, they won't believe.

[61 : 26] Why should they? Ralph Waldo Emerson was famous for this quote, who you are speaks so loudly, I can't hear what you're saying.

If our lives speak loudly in terms of unbelief and disconnect from Christ, then what we say about Jesus, will never be listened to.

On the other hand, if people see something different in us, I like hope, but we never tell them that Jesus is the reason for the hope that's in us, they'll never look to Jesus.

Because they won't know where this hope comes from that's in us. St. Francis of Assisi said, preach the gospel at all times, when necessary use words, the reality is it is necessary to use words.

It's necessary to use words in the mission that Jesus calls us to, but our lives should back up and not drown out our words. This is a mission that requires practice and preaching.

[62 : 42] And finally, point ten, this is a mission that concerns eternal realities. Harris played point on Monday, I think it was, of last week at football.

And I understand they played well. Somebody's shaking their head. I was told they played well, but they lost. I think it was five or six-one.

But it was just a friendly game. Pre-season, friendly, no cup, no league, no points. There's nothing at stake. Now, what we see here as we finish is how much is at stake when it comes to this mission.

The kingdom of God, heaven, could be gained by those who believed in this message that the disciples brought out and met with and trusted Jesus.

Those who believed and met Jesus, they would be saved eternally through the work, the mission the disciples were called to. And those who rejected the message, rejected the disciples, and rejected the Christ the disciples spoke of.

[64 : 24] We're told in verses 12 to 16, that eternal woe, hell, would await them. That was the situation back then.

These were the stakes the disciples were dealing in. And you know, nothing's changed. That was the situation, that remains the situation today.

The message hasn't changed. Your mission and mine is we are to point people to Jesus, we are to introduce people to Jesus.

We are to tell them about the one who lived for them and died for them and rose so that they could be saved, so that they could have their names written in the book in heaven.

And yet the truth is, the truth remains, that we are to tell people that those who reject Jesus, they die eternally.

[65 : 34] There is a warning here. that those who reject Christ on the final day, they will be cast into hell.

It's stark truth that we're dealing with here. Believe in Jesus, be saved eternally, rejoice in the assurance that your name is in heaven.

Or reject Jesus, die eternally, and be warned that on the final day, you'll be cast into hell.

These are the eternal realities that face all of us. And if we see that today, it's because God has revealed it, verse 22.

He has blessed us, verse 23, in opening our eyes to see this. And he is giving us today the opportunity to believe in Jesus and be saved.

[66 : 52] So if you're not a Christian, and you're sitting here today, or you're sitting at home today, hear the call of Christ. listen to the warning that is starkly communicated through these words, believe in Jesus, and be saved.

And if you and I are people who are saved, whose names are written in the kingdom of heaven, remember the challenge of these words today. You and I are here not to make money, not to make a comfortable little lives for ourselves, Christians.

Christian, you and I are here to tell people about Jesus. We have been sent out on mission by the Lord's appointment, and we are to tell people in every town and place about him.

God's so may God enable us to do that. We'll sing to conclude the service and we'll sing from Psalm 67, Psalm 67, the first version of the psalm and the whole of the psalm.

Lord, bless and pity us, shine on us with thy face, that the earth thy way and nations all may know thy saving grace. Lord, bless and pity us, shine on us with thy face, that the earth thy way and nations all may know thy saving grace.

[68 : 47] Let people praise thee, Lord, let people all thee praise.

O let the nations be glad in songs their voices raise.

thou justly people judge on earth through nations all.

Let people praise thee, Lord, let them praise thee, both great and small.

The earth her fruit shall yield, our God shall blessings send.

[69 : 54] God shall us bless, men shall him fear unto earth utmost end.

we'll stand now for the benediction. And now 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. SAM waING OhhhONG oh