

20.6.21 am

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Date: 20 June 2021

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

- [0 : 0 0] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning and especially those who are visiting with us. There's one or two visitors with us today. It's good to have you.
- It's good to be able to gather together in the building here and also a warm welcome to those who are tuning in online. Intimation is just a couple of things to say.
- First of all to remind you that the service this evening will be online and also in person at 6 o'clock and be encouraged to come to that. The YF I think will meet tonight at half past 7 on Zoom and the prayer meeting on Wednesday on Zoom as well at half past 7 the usual time.
- So be encouraged to go to these meetings. I've had a request for volunteers for next Saturday. There's a few wee jobs to be done around the church, some in, some outside.
- So if you're able to help with that, if you could let either David Cameron or Jan Angus or myself know, and if we get a wee squad of people for 10 o'clock next Saturday morning, that would be helpful.
- [1 : 0 8] And next Sunday morning, the hope is that we'll have a family service. We're trying to figure out exactly what that looks like. So that will hopefully become clear over the course of the week.
- But we'll have a family service at the end of the school term. And the boys and girls will want to get their books at the end of the term. So we will have a family service next Sunday at 11 o'clock.
- So these, I think, are all the intimations. And we're going to begin this time of worship now by singing to God's praise. The words of the hymn will be on the screen in just a moment.
- We don't have them in the book. But the hymn we sang last Sunday, and we've sung it a few times in the past, Your Grace That Leads This Sinner Home From Death To Life Forever And Sings The Song Of Righteousness By Blood And Not By Merit So we'll stand to sing in just a moment.
- And we sing to God's praise. God's praise.
- [2 : 3 6] God's praise. God's praise. God's praise. God's praise.
- has brought my heart to enter in the joy of your salvation.
- By grace I am redeemed, by grace I am restored, and now I freely walk into the arms of Christ, my Lord.
- Your grace that I cannot explain, not by my earthly wisdom, the rest of life without a sin was needed for this sinner.
- By grace I am redeemed, by grace I am restored, and now I freely walk into the arms of Christ, my Lord.
- [4 : 3 2] Let grace rise up and overflow, my song resound forever, for grace will see me welcomed home, to walk beside my Saviour.
- By grace I am redeemed, by grace I am restored, and now I freely walk into the arms of Christ, my Lord.

By grace I am redeemed, by grace I am restored, and now I freely walk into the arms of Christ, my Lord.

Let's unite our hearts now in prayer. Let's pray together. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you once more for this, your day.

We thank you that this day is a gift to us, a day where our Creator, the one who knows us best, commands us to stop work and to find rest in you.

[6 : 19] And we pray, Lord, that you would enable us in this day, as we step aside from all that usually preoccupies us, enable us in the time and the space that's being carved out for us, in this order that was laid down by you.

Enable us, Lord, to take time to be in your presence. We know, Lord, in a sense we are in your presence, always, wherever we are, whatever we're doing.

But we know that we have a special calling, a first primary calling, to draw near to you. And we thank you, Lord, that as we seek to draw near to you, as individuals and as a congregation of your people just now, we thank you that you have given us the promise that you will draw near to us.

And as we remember each Lord's day, we remember that the way into your presence came at such great cost. We can enter freely into the presence of God.

We can come freely to the throne of grace. But we know that that grace came at such great cost. Grace is, as we often remember, God's riches at Christ's expense.

[7 : 36] And we thank you, Lord, for the truth of the gospel, that Jesus Christ was expended. He laid down his life on the cross so that our sin could be taken away and so that we, who are sinners, could draw near to the holy God in and through the finished work of Jesus.

So we praise you, Lord, as we have with our lips. We praise from our hearts. We give you thanks for the amazing grace that we have sung of, that grace that leads this sinner home.

We thank you, Lord, that you do not leave us in our lost state, but you are the God who calls out to us in the gospel. You are the God who says to us, as we think of the words of Jesus, come to me, all who are weary, all who are burdened, all who feel the weight of sin.

And I will give you rest. And we thank you that that's a promise that we taste in time. But it's a promise that's perfected in eternity, that place of eternal rest.

So help us, Lord, we pray this day to receive the grace of Jesus. It's a free gift from God that we receive by faith.

[9 : 00] And even the faith that enables us to grasp it is a gift from God. So be at work, Lord, we pray, in each of our hearts, giving to us that faith, enabling us not only to hear with our ears the truth of your word, but to respond in our hearts with the faith that you give us.

We pray for anyone here or who listens or watches at a distance who has not yet received that grace. Anyone who is still in the far country, as it says in the word of God, who has not yet come home to the Father.

And we pray that you would be working in the hearts of those who are lost to show them their lostness in order that each one would turn and find the salvation that's in Christ.

And we pray for any who may be drifting at this time or have drifted over past days, perhaps because of a sin that we have yielded to, perhaps because of the busyness of life and the stresses and the pressures.

We thank you, Lord, that we are able to come to you wherever we are. And we are able to simply cry out and ask that you would save us and help us. And you give to us, Lord, once more that forgiveness.

[10 : 22] You give to us that rest, that peace that is not earned by our merit, but is received in and through Jesus. So help us, Lord, we pray.

Meet with us in the passage of Scripture. Meet with us in this service this morning. And do us good in our souls, we pray. We pray for those who are struggling this morning, for those who are grieving.

We remember this is Father's Day, a day which brings great joy to some, but brings difficult memories to others. And so we ask, Lord, for your hand to be upon each family.

You know our situations, Lord. You know our hearts. And for those who struggle with tensions, with difficulties, with grief, we pray for your comfort.

We pray for your peace. We pray on for those who are ill, those known to us, and those who are in our community, those who may be in our minds, who are far from here too.

[11 : 25] And we thank you that we can carry them to you as they come to our mind's eye in prayer. And we ask, Lord, that you would heal them. And we pray for those who are far from us, those whom we hear news reports of and see pictures about.

We think of the country of Nepal this morning, especially, as we hear news of flooding and landslides and death and devastation. We pray for a country that is close to the heart of the congregation here, a country that we have prayed for for many years.

And we ask, Lord, that you would have mercy upon them. We pray that where there is suffering, that you would bring relief. And we pray that your people, Lord, that you would use them, Lord, that you would uphold them, that they would be light in the darkness of the circumstance.

To hear our prayers and continue with us in the service and in the state, go before us, we ask, and cleanse us from sin. And we pray all this in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. Boys and girls, good to see some of you today. There's some more as well. I'm going to show you something that I was given this week.

[12 : 43] Somebody gave me one of these things this week. So, can anyone tell me, what is this? Do you want to know? I think your hand was up first.

Do you put these things in senses?

You put these things in senses, or, you know, there can't, well, give me another word for it. What do you think? What is this stuff? If I open up this and let you see this white hard stuff that's inside, what actually is it?

Lois? Wax. Wax. So it's a little thing of wax. And tell me, what's it for? Ideas?

John, already your hand went up. To put it in, like, this candle kind of thing. To put it in sort of candle-y type thing. What were you going to say, Emily? To make the place smell nice.

[13 : 46] To make the place smell nice. Are you saying that there's smelly people in here? No, you're not. I know. But this is wax.

And if you, if you smell it, it does smell nice. And what you do with it is you, you break a bit off. Oops. And then you get one of these things.

This is one of these melty things that Jonah was trying to describe. Hard thing to describe. So, you get this, you plug this into the wall or the socket and then you switch it on.

So, there's a switch. I'll put that in there. And hopefully, oh, there's a wee light as well. And that will, over the next wee while, it'll start to give out a smell.

And if there's any smelly smells in here, then that nice smell will make the smell of the room all, all the more nice. So, when this goes in here, that thing at the bottom, I think, gets hot and the wax starts to melt.

[14 : 59] And then as the wax melts, we get this amazing fragrance. This aroma that starts to fill the room.

And if anyone starts sneezing, I'll know you're allergic and I'll switch you off. So, don't worry. Now, why am I telling you this? Listen to this verse. This is Paul, the apostle, and it's in chapter 2 of the second letter to the Corinthians.

And listen to this. what he says. You listening? Boys and girls, hands up if you're listening. So, listen for this. Paul says this.

He says, God uses us. You got that? God uses us to spread the aroma, the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ. among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. Have you ever thought about that?

[16 : 08] That your life and mine, if we're Christians, if we're trusting in Jesus, if we're staying close to Jesus, if we're trying to obey Jesus in the way that we live, God can take our lives and he can use our lives to be like a sweet smell.

You know, sometimes you'll hear people say, they might be in a room or something and someone will walk past and they'll say, oh, what's that? What's that? What's that perfume you're wearing?

You smell beautiful. What is that perfume that you're wearing, Jonathan? And you'll say, it's Lynx Africa. It's the perfume of every football changing room. Now, wouldn't it be good?

Wouldn't it be good if people said about our lives, you know, there's something different about her. There's something different about her.

There's a kind of nice smell in a way about their lives. You know, you're different. You don't use swears like everyone else in the playground uses swear words.

[17 : 18] you're different. Or you're kinder to me than some of the other boys and girls are. You're a bit different. What is it that makes you different?

And then you can say, John Rory, being with Jesus. We hope that if we are close to Jesus, if we're being with Jesus, something of the fragrance of Jesus will stick to us.

And people will say, something different about your life. What is it? And we get the chance, hopefully, to speak about Jesus.

One more thing, just before we go to Sunday school. do you notice that although this wax smells very nice when it's in the box, it smells strongest and nicest when things get hot and when it starts to melt.

And that's true for Christians too. Sometimes life gets a bit difficult. Sometimes we start to struggle. sometimes things happen that we wish wouldn't happen.

[18 : 41] Sometimes things get hot in life. But often it's in these times that people can most clearly see and smell something of Jesus about us.

So boys and girls, young and old ones, if we're finding things difficult just now, keep on trusting in Jesus.

Keep on asking for his help. Keep on, as John Rory said, being with Jesus. And something of his fragrance will be about our lives.

So let's pray about that. Lord God, we thank you for your word and we thank you for the pictures that you use to help us to understand the truth of your word.

We pray that you would help us to stay close to you, Lord Jesus. And we pray that as we stay close to you, something of the fragrance, the aroma of Jesus would be noticed in our lives by the people that you put around us.

[19 : 54] So hear our prayers and help us, we pray, whether we're in the school playground, whether we're in the office, whether we're in the classroom, whether we're out on the hill, whatever it is, with whichever people you put around us, help us, we pray, to be those who are like Jesus.

And we pray this in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We're going to sing now and we're going to sing Mission Praise 760.

It's a hymn that talks to us about trusting Jesus and walking close with Jesus. 760 in Mission Praise, when we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds in our way.

While we do his goodwill, he abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey. Trust and obey. There's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

We'll stand to sing just a moment. When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way.

[21 : 20] While we do his goodwill, he abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies, but a smile quickly drives it away.

Not a doubt, not a fear, not a sigh or a tear, can abide by we trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

[22 : 26] Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, but a joy he doth richly repay.

Not a grief, not a loss, not a crown or a cross, but it's blessed if we trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

But we never can do the delights of his love, until on the altar we lay.

For the favor he shows and the joy he bestows, a friend who will trust and obey.

[23 : 28] Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus love. But we trust and obey.

Then fellowships wait, we will sit at his feet, or we'll walk by his side in the way.

What he says we will do, where he sends we will go, never fear, only trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Okay, boys and girls, if you head through to Sunday school now, please. Okay, boys and girls, if you head through to and we'll turn in our Bibles to Luke chapter 11, please.

[25 : 01] Luke chapter 11, and we'll read from verse 14. This is God's word. Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute.

When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke and the crowd were amazed. But some of them said, by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.

Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined and a house divided against itself will fall.

If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. Now, if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out?

So then they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. When a strong man fully armed guards his own house, his possessions are safe.

[26 : 09] But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted in divides up the spoils. He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

When an evil spirit comes out of a man it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, I will return to the house I left. When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order.

Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there, and the final condition of the man is worse than the first. As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.

He replied, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it. As the crowds increased, Jesus said, This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.

For as Jonah was assigned to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them.

[27 : 20] For she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it.

For they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a place where it will be hidden, or under a bow, where it, or under a bow.

Instead he puts it on a stand so that those who come in may see the light. your eyes are the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body is also full of light.

But when they are bad, your body is full of darkness. See to it then that the light within you is not darkness. Therefore if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it is dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We're going to sing now from Psalm 43. Psalm 43, a psalm, really a prayer that God will allow his light to shine forth into our lives.

[28 : 32] Psalm 43, verses 3 to 5, We'll send thy light forth, and thy truth. Let them be guides to me, and bring me to thine holy hill, even where thy dwellings be.

Verses 3 to the end of the psalm. We'll stand to sing to God's praise. O send thy light forth, and thy truth, let them be guides to me, and bring me to thy holy hill, in where thy dwelling be.

Then will I to God's altar go, to God, my chiefest joy.

yea, yea, God, my God, thy name to praise, my heart by will employ.

Why art thou then, cast down my soul, what should discourage thee, and why with blessing thoughts are thou disquited in me, still trust in God for him to praise, good cause I yet shall have, he of my kindness is a help, my God that doth me sale.

[31 : 15] Let's pray just for a moment as we turn back to God's word. Heavenly Father, we pray as we have sung that you would send forth your light into our lives, that as we read your word and as we meditate upon it, that you would speak to us and meet with us.

What we pray for ourselves in here, we pray on for the children, we thank you for them, Lord, we ask that you would minister to them, that they would hear and understand and believe the simple message of the gospel in their early years.

We pray on for the churches around us in this community, the different denominations, wherever Christ crucified is preached. We pray, Lord, that you would continue to add your blessing and build your church here in this place across the nation, and across all nations.

Be at work, Lord, we pray, on this your day. And we ask all this in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Amen. if only God would send me a sign, then I'd believe.

Or if he did a miracle, not on a page in the Bible, but in my life, then I'd believe. Or if he appeared in front of me and spoke to me in such a way that I could hear him in my ears, then I'd believe.

[32 : 44] Or if he broke in in some supernatural way into my life, and I was a witness to that, then I'd believe.

These are the kind of things that have been said many times over the course of many years. And I'd be surprised if somebody here hadn't quietly said them in their hearts at some point.

It's almost like a spoken out challenge to God. If you do what I ask God, if you reveal yourself to me in one of the ways that I prescribe, then I'll believe.

But not until then. But what we see in the Gospels is that in all likelihood, these people don't believe.

And in the passage that we read this morning in Luke chapter 11, we see that such people as this, they didn't believe. until today I want to think through the nature and the recognizable symptoms of unbelief in order that we will see ourselves, and if we see this in ourselves, we will repent and ask Jesus to help us overcome unbelief.

[34 : 19] Remember John 3.16? In John 3.16 it says that those who believe in Jesus will have eternal life, but the dark side of that text is that those who don't believe in Jesus, no matter how many good works they do, no matter how good a reputation they might have in the community, they won't be saved.

They'll perish. There's eternal death. So we need to know where we stand today in order that we'll be ready to stand before God on the final day.

before I get to the first point, maybe we could just push a few windows a bit more. I'm feeling the heat and I can see from the state of a coma that a few people are in that they're feeling the heat too.

so now we're awake. Point number one, unbelief will not be overcome by proof.

believe. Sometimes we see people or we meet people and they say things like, I'm a scientist. I have a scientific mind and I don't take wild leaps of faith.

[35 : 43] You might be asking me to believe in your God but I need proof, I need a case study to be persuaded of anything. And what we see here in the text before us is we see we have a medical scientific case study, a presentation of proof of the power of Jesus.

Verse 14 says Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke. So we have a miracle. And this didn't happen in some side war where the door closed.

This happens in the open place with multiple witnesses and we see this man who up until now had no power to speak. And all of a sudden he speaks and he's able to bear witness with his own tongue, his loose tongue now, to the power of Jesus.

And so this is a proof, it's a case, it's a miracle that happens in the open forum. There's nothing ambiguous about this. And remember, the person who's recording this for us is Dr.

Luke. He presents this as a compelling proof that Jesus was and is who he said he was, the Messiah, the Son of God.

[37 : 10] So what was the reaction of the crowds to this? Well, we read in verse 14, and the crowds were amazed. And that's a good first reaction. But the question we must ask is what happened next?

Because it's one thing to be amazed, but where did it lead to? Did it lead to them having faith? Did it lead to them bowing before Jesus and believing in and worshipping Jesus?

Well, we can see from what follows that that's not what happened. And we see two things here. We see some who were amazed.

This is the majority of the crowd, but as we track through the gospel of Luke, we see that the majority of the crowd never get around to believe it. One moment they're listening to Jesus, they're amazed by what they're seeing from Jesus, but then something happens, their phone buzzes in their pocket.

They take it out, it's a text message, it's a notification, and before you know it, they're off into Facebook or Instagram or whatever, and their minds are away. They've lost sight of Jesus.

[38 : 22] Or they check their watches, they remember it's time to go home and make lunch, it's time to go and pick up the kids from school. The pressing demands of life for the majority of the crowd caused them to forget quickly what Jesus did.

So for most of the crowds, their amazement didn't ever lead to belief, didn't lead to faith, because the vast majority of these crowds, who were amazed at one time, were shouting, crucify Jesus, just a wee while down the line.

So we can imagine these crowds amazed, walking away, saying, you know, I must give some more thought to this on another day, but just not today, because I've got things to do.

And there were others who were amazed, but it's not that they didn't get around to believing, they didn't want to believe. They determinedly didn't want to believe.

Verse 15, but some of them said, by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons. So for these people, when they're confronted with the power of Jesus, the evidence of the power of Jesus, rather than worship Jesus, they said, he's in league with the devil.

[39 : 50] They brazenly, they diabolically slander the name of Jesus. So who were these people? Well, these were the people that were in church.

These were the religious people. These were actually the religious leaders. So what was their problem? Why would they not accept Christ?

Why would they take all this evidence and sweep it away? Well, the reason becomes apparent over the course of the Gospels, but essentially the Jesus they saw was not the Jesus they wanted.

They were looking for the Messiah, they were looking for a Savior, but not this one. Not this Jesus. They wanted a Jesus who would give approval to the way that they were living their lives and the way that they were doing their religion.

They wanted a Jesus who would do what they said, who would fit into their box, who would fit into their schedule and when it became apparent that Jesus was not going to do that, but he was going to disrupt their lives, they weren't rid of him.

[41 : 09] So even though they saw miracle after miracle, even in the face of so many compelling proofs, things, they would not believe. They hardened their hearts to the extent that they called Jesus a devil.

And Matthew, in his parallel account of this passage, he makes clear that they were so fixed in their unbelief that they were now in the territory of unforgivable sin, there was no way back.

So we have a sliding scale of unbelief here. We look at the amazed crowds, amazed but they didn't believe. belief. And we look at the antagonistic religious leaders.

And in both categories, what we see, different levels, but what we see that's common in both is unbelief. In the face of such compelling proofs, unbelief.

And that's there as a warning to us. You know, we might be like the crowds, some of us. We might have experienced the supernatural touch of Jesus in our lives at some point.

[42 : 30] We may have on occasions been amazed by him, picked up the Bible, and all of a sudden a text flies into our lives and our experiences as if God is speaking directly to us, because he is.

And we're amazed. But we didn't believe. then the moment passed, and life got busy, and you continue on as an unbeliever.

Maybe that's where we're at this morning. Or it might be that we're a step on from that. We might be like the religious leaders and have a considerable Bible knowledge.

church. We might have heard the sermons of Jesus preached by different preachers on many occasions in different places. But find today that our hearts are harder than they ever have been.

And we are determined in our unbelief. belief. I can think of various people who flash often before my eyes.

[43 : 49] And at one point, they were so close to Jesus. So close to believing. So receptive to preaching.

So keen to open up the Bible and listen to what God is saying. But today if I speak to them about Jesus, they'll bristle.

And today they won't open the Bible, they will close the Bible and they will take any chance to trash the Bible as unreliable, inconsistent, full of inaccuracies, etc.

Now that's a dangerous, dangerous place to be in. It shows a hardness of heart that sometimes there's no way back from.

So today if there's someone who's listening or watching or present in that category, still able to hear, only just but still able to hear, let me give you Psalm 95 again.

[44 : 55] Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. because tomorrow your ears may be so closed over by unbelief that you'll never have the opportunity to believe again.

Unbelief will not be overcome by proof. It's the first thing we see here. The second thing we see is that unbelief will always ask for more science. And there's a dark kind of comedy, there's a dark irony here, as we look at this scene.

We have this man who has been mute for this period, this long period, by demonic possession. And all of a sudden through the touch of Jesus he speaks.

Because Jesus casts out the demon and the crowds are amazed. Because they know Jesus did it. But the response of some was not only not to believe, but they, in verse 16, they tested Jesus by asking him for a sign from heaven.

Which is ridiculous. Because what was this thing that they were just responding to but a sign from heaven? And if we were to rewind through the last three chapters even, we see a whole catalogue of signs from heaven.

[46 : 22] Luke 9, there's the healing of a boy with an evil spirit. There's the feeding of the 5,000. Luke chapter 8, there's a little girl who had died and who's brought back to life. There's the severe case of demonic possession who's healed.

There's a storm that's still with a word from Jesus. Luke 7, we have another resurrection. There's sign after sign. The place is buzzing with news about what Jesus has done.

But some here ask for more. More signs, please, they say. They're not willing to trust Jesus.

But they're very willing to test Jesus. So how does Jesus respond to this? Well, to cut a longer story short, Jesus says, no more signs.

If you scan down from verse 29 to verse 32, Jesus says, this is a wicked generation.

[47 : 30] It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was assigned to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them.

For she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it.

For they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and one greater than Jonah is here. So what does Jesus say?

He says, no more signs. You have one last sign. And it's the sign of Jonah. And what's the sign of Jonah? Well, it's that the word of God is preached.

Christ is preached. Jonah was a prophet of God who went to Nineveh, which was a wicked city. He preached judgment to them. No hope, no grace, just judgment.

[48 : 39] And the whole place repented and believed and were saved. But these people that are standing before Jesus, they're asking for more signs, but they're hearing the word of God.

They're hearing the wisdom of heaven preached on earth. And who was the preacher? Not Jonah, the bad tempered prophet. Not Solomon. But one far greater than Solomon.

Jesus, God's own son. He was preaching. He was the sign and the word of God that he shared with them. That was the sign that they were being left with. And it was all the sign that they needed.

And that's all the sign that we need. It's a sobering thing to think, but none of you heard the word of God preached once. And they believed.

How many times have you and I heard the word of God preached faithfully by different preachers through the years in this place in Harris?

[49 : 54] How many chances have we had to believe? And if on the final day we haven't believed, how many thousands of people could be called up to the witness stand to say they had the chance?

But they didn't take it. See, to keep delaying, to keep asking God for more signs, to keep holding out for some Damascus road spiritual dramatic experience, to keep asking God for a miracle.

When we have the word of God in our hand, it's to test God. We have the Bible.

It's all we need. Verse 27, as Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd said, Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.

Jesus replied, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it. Unbelief will always ask for more signs.

[51 : 16] It will set the word of God aside and ask for more signs, please. More drama, more miracles, more spooky stuff, more signs.

unbelief will not be persuaded by proof. It won't be persuaded by signs. Thirdly, it won't be persuaded by logic.

Unbelief will not be persuaded by logic. And we see that in verses 17 and verse 18. Jesus just takes a moment and so swiftly, he just dismantles all their argument against them with very simple logic.

Jesus knew their thoughts and he said to them, Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined and a house divided against itself will fall. Remember, they've said, Jesus is using the power of Satan against Satan.

And Jesus says in verse 18, If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim I drive out demons by Beelzebub.

[52 : 21] And this is a very brief but powerful lesson in logic. Jesus says if Satan is against Satan, there's not a building up of his kingdom, but there's a breaking down of his kingdom.

It's a bit like a country in civil war. When a country starts to turn on itself, it doesn't prosper and find that it's built up. It's ruined. And then Jesus takes their argument and he turns it on themselves and he says in verse 19 and 20, You know, you have specialists, don't you, that cast out demons?

That's what you say. So what power do they use? If I drive out demons by Beelzebub, verse 19, by whom do your followers drive them out?

So then they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe.

But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils. He who is not with me is against me. He who does not gather with me scatters.

[53 : 39] And Jesus is telling them about himself. He is the stronger man who is able to drive out demons. He is the stronger man who is able to overcome the devil.

He is the stronger man who is able to overturn the kingdom of Satan. And so looking at this whole section, in just a few words, Jesus shows how illogical, how insensible, all their arguments were against him.

It was nonsense. So how do Jesus' opponents take that? As they just think through this argument with them? Do they say, you know, you're right, we hadn't thought this through, we can see the folly of our argument, we're sorry, we believe.

No, they won't listen to logic. They're not interested in logic. They walk away furious with their fingers in their ears.

No proof, no signs, no logic will persuade them to believe in Jesus because they don't want to believe in Jesus. They are determinedly against him.

[54 : 57] You know, Christians often will be told that we need to be more open-minded in terms of our beliefs. I don't know how many times I've been challenged over the years and folks will say, oh, you need to be more open-minded.

All this stuff about Jesus being the only way, all this clarity about sin and salvation and heaven and hell, open your mind up. You need to be open-minded to other points of view, but I have to say that the most closed-minded, prejudiced, intolerant people I've ever come across are those who have decided that they will not, on any account, believe in Jesus.

They don't want to talk, they don't want to think, they don't want to listen because they have determined, unbelief. I will not believe.

Unbelief will not be persuaded by logic. Fourth point, unbelief is not a neutral state. It's grave danger.

Unbelief is not some neutral state. It's a dangerous position to be in. Remember when we used to play games of catch, you know, tag and tag and that when you were younger and everybody would be charging around the playground trying to catch each other and there would always be a den, so we used to call it anyway and that was a safe place.

- [56 : 28] So you could be charging around trying to catch each other or trying not to be caught but then if you got to den no one could touch you. It was a kind of neutral, no man's zone. You know, some people think spiritually that such a place exists.

It's a neutral place. It's a place where you're neither a believer or a Christian nor an unbeliever, a non-Christian. You're kind of in the in-between state, you're on the fence.

But the problem is there is no fence. There is no neutral option. You're either in or you're out. You're either saved or you're lost.

You either believe and are in Christ or you don't believe and you're outside of Christ. And Jesus makes that very clear first through a statement in verse 23 and then through a story that he tells in verses 24 to verse 26.

So look at the statement in verse 23. It's very clear. I don't need to explain it because it's so stark. Jesus says, he who is not with me is against me. He who does not gather with me scatters.

- [57 : 42] William Barclay says, there is no room for neutrality in the Christian life. The person who stands aloof from the good cause automatically helps the evil one.

A man is either on the way or in the way. That's what Jesus is saying. If you're not with me, you're against me.

gathering with me, you're scattering. You're making a mess. Then he illustrates this through the story in verses 24 to 26.

We have this account of the evil spirit. When it comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, I will return to the house I left. When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order.

Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself and they go and live there and the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That's the story Jesus tells.

- [58 : 46] It's not a hypothetical story. Remember, he's telling their story and standing in front of them is a man who has just had a demon cast out.

This man, having had this demon cast out, he now has a decision to make. will he put his faith in Jesus?

Or will he not? If he believes, this mute man will have a story to tell about Jesus. He'll have a new song to sing as it says in Psalm 40.

But if he does not believe, Jesus is making clear that the void where this evil spirit lived will not remain empty. his heart will not be a place of spiritual neutrality.

And if this man does not ask Jesus to come into his heart, the evil spirit will be back. His heart will become a darker place than it ever was before.

- [59 : 54] Weerspey, the commentator, says, verses 24 to 26 illustrate the danger of neutrality. the empty life is only an opportunity for Satan to do more damage.

See, Satan has a whole box of tricks. And he may fill our lives with drinking and drugs and he may kind of capture us through drinking drugs.

And we might think if I could only get rid of that, then I'll be okay. But if we manage to shake the drinking drugs, if we don't ask Christ then, Satan is ready to feed us with pride and self-righteousness.

These are the sins that then will take control and all these sins are equally dangerous because they all lead us and keep us on the road to hell. So what are we to do?

we don't simply throw once and out because very quickly seven more sins will move in. We don't have the power to throw sin out anyway.

[61 : 14] What we must do is ask Jesus, the Savior, to come into our lives or to believe in him. the only way to escape eternal danger is to believe in him.

The only safe place to be is in Christ, trusting in his grace. point five, we're almost done.

Unbelief prefers darkness to light. You know when you lift the big stone and you see in a split second 5,000 beasties who are living happily under the darkness of the stone and they scatter because the sunlight comes in and they hate it.

Well, that's what's going on here. Jesus has come into the world as the light of the world. Jesus has come into the world with the light of the gospel. What we see here is that the people prefer the darkness to the light.

John 3, 19 says this is the verdict. Light has come into the world but people love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. And we have an illustration of that here in these verses.

[62 : 46] Jesus gives a commentary on that in verses 33 to 36. My time's gone so I can't go there. Unbelief prefers the darkness to the light.

And as Jesus stood amongst them, the light of the world, they hated him. They wanted rid of him. Now we don't have Jesus physically here with us today.

But we have the word of God where we meet with Jesus. And I think the clearest indication of whether or not we believe is shown in how we view the Bible.

Psalms 119 verse 105 says your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.

So do we want the word of God? Do we want the light of God's word in our lives? Do we open it? Do we read it?

[63 : 57] Do we meditate upon it? Do we pray over it? Or would we prefer the darkness? Would we be inclined to leave God's word on a shelf somewhere far away, closed for one end of the week to the other, whilst we flick open another magazine and scroll through another few hours of social media?

The measure of our unbelief will be determined by the extent to which we prefer darkness to light. And the final point I had to get there is unbelief is overcome by asking Jesus to come into our lives.

And that's where this section finishes with a very straightforward simple call to trust Christ and to ask him into our lives.

there's a word of warning but it's also a word of invitation in verses 35 and 36. Jesus says see to it that the light within you is not darkness.

Therefore if your whole body is full of light and no part of it dark it will be completely lighted as when the light of a lamp shines on you. So what's Jesus saying here?

[65 : 23] Well he's saying simply ask me into your life. don't be filled with the darkness of unbelief. Ask me in and I'll chase the darkness away and flood your life with my light.

That's what Jesus is saying here and it's so simple. You know as we look at the darkness of unbelief it's complicated.

We see how complicated how complex how difficult it is even to define but if we want to be well it's simple.

We're to look to Jesus. We're to trust in Jesus. We're to ask him to come into our lives. So let me ask you the question as we finish.

Have you done that yet? Are you a Christian? Nobody should say I don't know because all of us should be able to say well yes I remember the day when I asked Jesus to come into my life.

[66 : 44] Those who are married I can ask you the question are you married? And you'll say either yes or no. You won't say well I think so. I can't remember. I'm trying to be.

No you go back to a day and you say no I remember the day that I stood here or somewhere else and said I do. I ask you to come into my life. So have you asked Jesus to come into your life?

We can wrestle with unbelief unbelief all our days and delve into science and journey into world religions and think and think and think and read and read and read.

It's not the answer. the answer is simply to ask Jesus to come into our lives. It's to look to him.

so will you do it? Will you become a Christian even today? And for any Christians who are here who have gone off the boil, who are drifting just now, whose hearts are cold, what do we do?

[68 : 04] We come to Jesus again and we ask him to flood our hearts with the light of his faith, because faith is a gift.

Remember Thomas? Comes to Jesus. My Lord and my God, he says. The doubts are swept aside and faith rushes in.

And the man who has a son who's demon possessed and he's not sure what he believes, he says to Jesus, if you can help, please. Jesus says, if anything's possible for the one who believes, and what does he say?

Lord, I believe, help me overcome my unbelief. unbelief is chased out. Faith moves in. Or Peter, a million miles away from Christ for a period.

His faith is on the rocks. How is it resolved? It's resolved as he comes to Jesus, or Jesus comes to him.

[69 : 16] he confesses his sin. He repents. And the light of Christ rushes back in.

Unbelief is overcome by asking Jesus to come in to your life. Let's be encouraged to do that as we finish. We'll sing the final hymn, Mission Praise 275.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. Sorry, I went on for longer than I meant to. 275 on Mission Praise. I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. lay down the way.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest.

[70 : 25] Lay down thou thou weary one lay down, thy head upon my rest.

I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad.

I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, behold, I freely give.

The living water, thirsty one, took down and drink and live.

[71 : 25] I came to Jesus and I drank of that life-giving stream.

My thirst was washed, my soul revived, and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus sing, I am this dark world's light.

Who come to me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be right.

I look to Jesus and thy birth, in him my star, my sun, and in the light of life I walk till traveling days are done.

[72 : 37] 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 both now and forever more. Amen.