

## 7.3.21 am

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Date: 07 March 2021

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] through the service this morning. Those who are watching online and those who may be listening in, it's good to be able to come together again on the Lord's Day and to worship him. One or two intimations, the service this evening will go out at 6pm and I'll be taking that service myself, God willing.

The prayer meeting on Wednesday will be on Zoom at half past seven. This coming Wednesday, we have Gordon Thompson, Faith Mission, sharing our word at that meeting.

So be encouraged to come along to the prayer meeting this Wednesday at half past seven. And can I say also to the deacons, if the deacons could make a particular effort to be at the meeting and then could stay behind for a few minutes after the meeting, that would be helpful this coming Wednesday.

YF meet online tonight at half past seven as usual and next Sunday services as normal but I want to just highlight that the evening service will be a testimony service and Cammie, who's going to be leading us in the presenting today, will share testimony as well, Chris Alda, his wife.

So we can look forward to that and also be thinking perhaps of asking people who may not usually be inclined to tune in to a service to come and listen to them as they share testimony of what the Lord has done and is doing in their lives.

[ 1 : 29 ] These, I think, are all the intimations. So we'll begin this time of worship and we'll sing to God's praise. We'll sing from Psalm 67 and we'll sing the whole of the Psalm or Cammie will sing.

You're able to sing at home also and we will listen as Cammie presents in the church here. 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.

Let people praise thee, Lord. Let people all thee praise.

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

[ 2 : 56 ] Thou justly people judge on earth rule 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 God shall not bless men shall him fear unto earth's utmost end.

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

we thank you for the psalm that we have heard sung. And we thank you for that reminder, for that cause that you have given us to meditate through your word upon the grace that we find as we come to you.

Lord, you are the God who is holy and we acknowledge that we are those who are not holy. We are sinners. We acknowledge that you are the God who is just.

- [ 4 : 39 ] And if we were to come into your presence in our own name and on account of our own lives, we acknowledge that we would be expectant only of judgment.
- but we thank you that we come in the name of Jesus. We thank you that we come with our faith in Christ. We thank you that we come looking to his finished work.
- And we thank you that in Jesus there is grace. We thank you that even as we say that word, we are taken in our minds and in our hearts to the cross.
- What is grace? It's God's riches at Christ's expense. The forgiveness of sin. The promise of eternal life.
- Peace with God. Purpose for life. The promise of eternity. And Lord, we thank you that all of that is guaranteed in Jesus.
- [ 5 : 47 ] We thank you that he is the one who was expended on the cross in order that we could be saved.
- He is the one who became the propitiation, the one who satisfied divine justice so that we could be shown mercy.
- He is the one who has made it possible for us to be saved. And so we pray that each one of us as we gather wherever it is we may be, we pray that we would know with assurance that we have received the saving grace of Jesus.
- And for any who have not yet received the saving grace of Jesus, we thank you that as we hear even now, we have a given opportunity to simply cry out as we learn in Scripture, that prayer that brings your mercy into our lives.
- Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner. We thank you that we read in Scripture that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. So we pray that if there are any who have still hesitated, who perhaps have plans in later life to come to Christ but are resisting just now, enable each one to know that today is the day of salvation.
- [ 7 : 17 ] Today, if we hear the voice of God, we are not to harden our hearts but we are to receive the gift of your grace. And we thank you that that grace not only saves but it sustains us.
- If we were those who had to find the inner strength to keep on keeping on, we would have given up long ago. We thank you that we are given grace day by day that's sufficient for all our needs, all the troubles, the trials, the difficulties that may come into life and all the good times as well that we would not take our eyes off Jesus but we thank you that we are called to come day by day to receive that grace which sustains us.
- So help us we pray. Those who may have been following you for a long time enable us to not be negligent, enable us not to become complacent or apathetic or lukewarm but to recognise that we are poor, we are needy but you are the God who is great and who is able to meet all our needs in your grace.
- So we thank you for the wonder of that grace and we pray that we may be constantly receiving it. And not only receiving it but sharing it.
- We read in the psalm that that grace is designed to go to the ends of the earth. So we ask that you would help us to have the courage, the opportunity, the desire, the determination to share the good news about Jesus.
- [ 9 : 07 ] With those in our families, with those whom we are friendly with, with those in our community. And to the ends of the earth, may the gospel go forth. We think of places that we have a connection with, even as a congregation.
- We think of Malawi where Nurse Marian has been on so many occasions and we ask Lord that the work that she has been involved with would continue, that your blessing would be upon it.

We think of Romania as well. Many of us have been out there in times past and we pray for the work amongst the children in Romania, that you would continue Lord to work and that you would put the people in place that would be able to persevere in that work that has been going on for many years now.

and for other places, far from us, countries that are closed, as we think about our connections with these countries, as we think about students that we see in our mind's eye, we bring them to you in prayer.

And we ask Lord that you would open doors for the gospel to travel to these countries which may be closed in an official sense but we thank you that the gospel cannot be chained.

[ 10 : 28 ] We ask Lord that you would help us in our needs, not only as we think about the world but as we think about the country. We pray for those in authority over us at a time where we see again such turbulence.

We ask that your wisdom would be given to those that you're allowed to be in power. And as we see so much shifting in politics, we pray that your will would be done.

And for our community Lord, we come to you in prayer and we ask that you would meet us at the point of our need. We think of this pandemic which has caused us not to be able to come together in the way that we were in the habit of doing.

And it seemed so distant at one stage and yet we have seen it come closer and closer and now as we hear of cases of the virus even in Harris, we pray for your ongoing protection.

We pray for any who may be struggling, who may be suffering, that you would help them Lord, that you would lay your hand of healing upon them. We pray that you would drive this virus back and we ask Lord that as we see it driven back that we would give you the praise and the glory for what you have done.

[ 11 : 50 ] You are the God who hears and who answers prayer. We pray on for those who are grieving, we pray on for those who struggle with addictions, we pray for those who are anxious, we pray for those who are finding this period, this season, difficult and who may be jaded and discouraged.

Enable them to know the encouragement of the Holy Spirit in this your day and enable us we pray. To use whatever means that you allow us to have access to encourage one another.

To hear our prayers, cleanse us from our sin and enable us to fix our eyes upon Jesus for we pray these things in his name and for his sake. Amen.

Boys and girls, I hope you are well today. Just got one little picture to show you. Stuart will put it up just for a few seconds and then you can tell me what you think this picture is.

Well, do you know what that was? Well, you maybe shouldn't know what it was because it's a Facebook profile that has lots and lots of notifications on it. You've probably seen some of your parents going like that with their phones looking at Facebook.

[ 13 : 20 ] And this particular profile, it's not mine, but I just took a picture of a profile from the internet and it had 96 notifications on it, I think.

so you get notified when something comes to your attention that's to do with you. And so this must have been a very busy person on Facebook to have 96 notifications.

Now, I'm hardly ever on Facebook, I hardly ever put anything on it. And because I hardly ever put anything on Facebook, I hardly ever get any Facebook notifications.

But this week passed, it was on Wednesday, I think. My phone started pinging and I wondered what it was, so I looked and there was a Facebook notification, then another one, and then another one, and then another one, and then another one, and I think there was about six that came very close together, so I thought I better just check to see what this is all about.

So I opened up Facebook, I had a look at it, and there was six comments for Mary and me saying, happy 20th wedding anniversary. And I have to say, for a second, my heart just went, it sank, because I thought, oh no, have I forgotten our 20th wedding anniversary?

[ 14 : 45 ] But that was just for a split second, because I thought, and then I thought back to last October, and I thought, no, no, it was our 20th wedding anniversary last October. I remember it well, we couldn't really do anything.

We were in lockdown then, we're still in lockdown now, so we couldn't even go out for dinner. We probably had beans and toast for our anniversary dinner, but I remembered it last October, and yet I kept getting all these comments saying, happy 20th wedding anniversary, so what was going on?

Well, I checked back to try and figure out what was going on, and what had happened was, somebody must have been looking at Mary's profile, I think, and they'd seen the post from last October for happy 20th wedding anniversary, and they put a comment on the end saying, happy 20th wedding anniversary.

Then their comment went onto somebody else's page, and they thought, oh, wedding anniversary, I'll leave a comment too. And then over the next 12 hours, I think I checked at the end of Wednesday, and there was about 50 or 60 comments all saying happy 20th wedding anniversary, and it was the 5th of March, and our wedding anniversary was last October.

And the point I want to make, boys and girls, is just because people kept saying to us on the 3rd of March, happy wedding anniversary, it didn't make it true, because our wedding anniversary was last October, and I've got a wedding schedule that can show that.

[ 16 : 22 ] And what I want to say to you boys and girls about not just our wedding, that's not very important for you, but just for life, and for truth.

Just because lots of people say something, doesn't mean that it's true. Today there's lots of people, you don't have to go far, to hear lots of people saying, there's no such thing as God.

But just because lots of people say it, doesn't make it true. It's not true. There is such a thing as God. He is real. And lots of people will say, you know, God didn't make the world, and he didn't make you.

The world just came out of some big random bang, and you're just some DNA and cells and bits and pieces of medical stuff. And lots of people say that.

But just because lots of people say that, doesn't make it true. It's not true. And lots of people say, you know, when you die, there's no heaven, there's no hell, it's just the end.

[ 17 : 36 ] But just because they say it, doesn't make it true. That too is not true. And lots of people on lots of different areas say that good things are bad, and bad things are good.

But just because they say it, doesn't make it true. See, this world can be very confusing. But if you and I want to know the truth about this world, and about who God is, and about who we are, and about how we can be saved from our sin, and given everlasting life, if we want to know the truth about these things, then we don't listen to what everybody says.

We listen to what Jesus says in the Bible. See, Jesus is the truth. That's what he said in John 14, 6. He said, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life.

He is our maker. We didn't come from nothing, we came from something, we came from him. He is the one who loves us, he is the one who loved us enough to die for us on the cross.

And he is the one who promises that if we trust him, he will take us when we die through death and into heaven forever.

[ 19 : 13 ] So what we have to do is make sure that we know the truth. This is where we find the truth. What we have to do, boys and girls, is make sure that we are listening to and trusting in Jesus, because he is the one who saves us.

So let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for the fact that you tell us the truth and you are the truth.

We thank you that in a confusing world, where sometimes we are not sure what to think, we can come back to your word, the Bible, which never changes.

It stands firm forever. And we pray that the boys and girls and all of us, we be those who are reading our Bibles and believe in what we read in the Bible.

We pray that we would know that we are truly your children, that we are saved from sin, that we are saved from hell, that we have a place in heaven. Because of Jesus, who he is and what he has done.

[ 20 : 24 ] To hear our prayers and help us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Okay, boys and girls, I think you are able to go through now to have your Sunday school lesson.

And anyone who did wish us a happy anniversary, thank you very much. It was very kind, but it was last October. We're going to turn to our Bibles now, and we will read just a short passage today, but we're going to read more within the sermon.

So, we read from Luke chapter 5, and we'll read from verses 36 to 38.

Luke chapter 5, and verses 36 to 38. This parable, this short parable that Jesus tells. That kind of leads us into the next chapter, and it makes sense also of what was going on in the previous verses.

So, this is God's word. This is Jesus telling this parable. It says in verse 36, Jesus told them this parable. No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one.

[ 21 : 41 ] If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the old one, the patch from the new patch will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins.

If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out, and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.

Amen, and may God bless that reading of his word to us. We're now going to listen to the hymn 674 in Mission Praise being sung.

There is a green hill far away without a city wall where the dear Lord was crucified who died to save us all. where the green hill far away with our dust and ye woe.

where the dear Lord was crucified who died to save us all.

[ 23 : 10 ] We may not know, we cannot tell what pains he had to bear, but we be believe it was for us.

He hung and suffered there. There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin.

He only could unlock the gates of heaven and let us in.

Oh dearly, dearly has he loved and we must love him too.

And trust in his redeeming blood and try his words to do.

[ 24 : 33 ] Well just as we turn back to that passage, let's pray once more.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. your word. We pray that we would now know the help of the Holy Spirit and speaking and listening and responding.

That the light of the Spirit would shine into our minds, that our minds would be cleared of all that would distract us. And we pray that we would sense your presence.

We think of the encounter that the two had in the Emmaus Road as Jesus spoke with them. Their hearts burned within them. And we pray that we would know something of that.

That you would touch our hearts as we study your word. So help us, Lord, we pray, and bless this time as we meditate upon the scriptures. And what we pray for ourselves here, we pray for the young ones in the Sunday school as they do their online lesson.

[ 25 : 50 ] That you would help them to understand and help them to trust. And for the churches around us here and elsewhere. Whatever Christ crucified is preached, we pray that you would add your blessing.

That you would be building your church. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Sometimes when you're doing a clean-out, I had a clean-out to do yesterday.

There's some work going to be done in the house on plumbing. And so we're cleaning out bits of the house just to make space for the workmen to be able to get access.

And sometimes when you're doing a clean-out, whether it's a garage or even if you're open up an old drawer, we find all kinds of junk. But you might find a key. I found a key yesterday in a drawer.

I have no idea what it does or what it's for. Where it opens. What it gives me access to. And look chapter 5, verses 34 through to 38.

[ 26 : 58 ] The passage that we read. Or verse 36 to 38. It's a bit like a key. A key that gave those who would listen to Jesus and those who would follow Jesus access to a whole new world of grace.

See, Jesus came onto a religious scene. When he came into this world, he stepped into a religious scene that was so saturated with law and formality.

It was enforced. It was policed by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. And they had distorted the word of God really by adding so many of their rules to it.

And they were very deliberately clashing with Jesus. Time after time we read that in the gospel messages. We've seen it on a number of occasions in the last few weeks.

These clashes of the religious leaders with Jesus. They were trying to get Jesus to work within the parameters of their old religious code.

[ 28 : 11 ] But Jesus made clear through this parable that he had come to do something quite new. Look at verse 36. He told them this parable. No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one.

If he does, he will have torn the new garment and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out, and the wineskins will be ruined.

No new wine must be poured into new wineskins. So Jesus is saying, I haven't come, Mr. Pharisee, Mr. Scribe, to patch up the old religion.

Jesus says, I haven't come to patch up the old religion that the teachers of the law preach. He says, I haven't come to pour my message, my gospel message, into the old wineskins that the Pharisees use.

He says, I've come to burst that. I've come to do something quite new. And that's what I want to consider today. The new world of grace that Jesus was unlocking for those who would follow him.

[ 29 : 28 ] Really, we're just taking a very quick glance over the whole of chapter 6. The first thing that we see in chapter 6, we looked at this a bit last Sunday, so I'm not going to read all the verses.

But if you look at verses 1 to 11 of chapter 6, we see a new day. Jesus, he opens access into what we could say is a new day.

I remember, I think probably I would have been about 8 or 9, and it was one Saturday evening. It was about half past 9. And much of the day was coming on TV.

I was desperate to watch much of the day. And all of a sudden, in this house that I was staying in, one of the older people stood up and just leant forward and switched off the television.

Much of the day was, the news was just finishing, much of the day was just coming on, and the television was switched off. I was outraged. What's happening, I thought.

[ 30 : 33 ] And then I was told, my face obviously expressed my protest, I was told, it's almost Sunday. Now, where did it say in the Bible that the football had to be switched off at half past nine on Saturday night?

Well, I'll tell you, it said it nowhere. It was just a tradition that governed some households, and it happened to govern the household that I was staying in on that particular evening.

It wasn't my own home, but it was somewhere else. And that kind of thing was happening, but in far greater measure than Jesus' day. There was all kinds of rules.

And these rules, which governed the Sabbath day and the use of the Sabbath day, you wouldn't find them in the Bible, but these rules that were man-made rules became religious traditions, and they stifled the whole Sabbath day.

So getting through the Sabbath day without breaking the rules was a bit like tiptoeing through a field through of landmines. And what we see in verses 1 to 11 of chapter 6 is Jesus and his disciples breaking the rules.

[ 31 : 50 ] Not God's rules, but the Pharisees' rules. And we see that Jesus, he makes no secret of that. He breaks their rules quite openly.

And so we ask the question, why? Why did Jesus, knowing that this was going to cause conflict, why did he break their rules? And the reason was he wanted to teach the people that the old distorted ideas of what the Sabbath day was for was not something that he designed and not something that he approved of as the Lord of the Sabbath.

Gee, the Sabbath was not designed to be a burden. It wasn't designed to cause the heart of every boy and girl when they woke up on the Sabbath morning to sink, when they thought about all the rules that they had to keep and all the things they couldn't do.

Rather, the Sabbath was a gift. It was God's gift. It was one day in seven where they and we are to stop work and recharge and find rest and refreshment in being with Jesus.

And that's what we see the disciples do. They're with Jesus. They're walking through the fields. And as they walk through the fields, Jesus, physically and spiritually, he feeds them.

[ 33 : 20 ] And as we look at the man with the shriveled hand, we see that as he is with Jesus, as he comes under the word of Jesus, he receives healing for his hand and perhaps for his heart.

And that's a model that's presented here for us still. This day where we stop at this time to open God's word and to come together in this virtual way.

This day, the Lord's day. It's a day that is designed for us to walk with Jesus. As the disciples did.

It's a day that's been gifted to us whereby we can receive the healing and satisfying word of Jesus for our souls.

It's not a day that is stifled by rules.

- [ 34 : 35 ] It's a day where we are encouraged to enjoy the relationship we have with God. Take time to be holy, the hymn says. We've been given a day where we are commanded to take time to be holy, to be with the Lord.

So there's a new day. That's the first thing. The second point is a new Israel. You can also see a new people. And that's verses 12 to 16.

Again, we read this last week, so you can scan the verses yourselves as your Bibles are open before you. A new Israel is the second point. I think I mentioned before a conversation I was told about that happened after a funeral one day in Tarbert.

And at this particular funeral, words were read from Isaiah, Isaiah 43. Words of great comfort. We're familiar with them, but now this is what the Lord says.

He who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have summoned you by name. You are mine when you pass through the waters. I will be with you.

- [ 35 : 44 ] When you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned. The flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

These were the words that were read at this particular funeral. And on the way out of the church, one person said to another person, these are beautiful words, but they're beautiful words for Israel.

What's it got to do with us in Haras? And it wasn't a funny comment. It was a genuine question. What does this have to do with us in Haras?

So what's the answer? As we think about the broad sweep of the Bible, we see that in the Old Testament, God revealed himself to the nation of Israel.

He chose this small, cantankerous nation. And he chose to reveal himself to them, to relate to this nation. And we see that nation grow through the 12 tribes of Israel.

- [ 36 : 54 ] And God showed love. He showed mercy. He showed grace to that nation. He promised them a Savior would come through their own line.

And we see that Jesus came as was promised from that line. In John chapter 4 and verse 22, Jesus speaking of himself said, salvation is from the Jews.

The salvation was never designed to be exclusive to the Jews. We sang that in Psalm 67. That nations all may know thy saving grace.

That was way back in the Old Testament. God's design, his plan was that nations all, not just Israel, would know the saving grace of God.

And so here we see Jesus and he calls the disciples to him. How many disciples does he call to him? Well, he calls 12.

- [ 37 : 57 ] Why does he call 12? It's a question that we have to ask because there was more than 12 people following Jesus at this point. So why does he pick out 12?

And not 13 and not 11 and not 20 and not 30, but 12. And the answer is because at 12, that number mirrored the 12 tribes of Israel.

Milne, the commentator, says Jesus chose 12 men as the core group of his disciples. Obviously, their number was meant to parallel the 12 fathers of Israel. These men will be the new Israel, the Christian church.



So looking back to the Old Testament, God related to, he showed grace to, he offered salvation to, he worked within the one nation of Israel.

But looking forward from this point into the New Testament and beyond, we see that God would relate to, he would show grace to, he would offer salvation to, he would work within the many nations that would make up the church of Jesus Christ, the new Israel.

[ 39 : 16 ] And as Jesus calls the 12 to him, we see the beginning of what Dale Ralph Davis calls that long-term project that Jesus called the church, the new Israel.

So these promises, Isaiah 43, yes, they were for Israel, but we can say if we're trusting in Christ, they're for us, the new Israel.

So can I ask a thing for you? Are you part of the church of Christ? Have we received the grace and salvation offered in and through Jesus, the King of the Jews, the Saviour of sinners?

Do we have a God-given passports that we receive by faith as we trust in Christ, showing that we are part of the new Israel?

So we see a new day. We see the new Israel, as Jesus calls the 12 to him. We see this new Israel, this new people, that would be called the church of Christ.

[ 40 : 37 ] The third thing here we see is a new way of salvation. And that's from verses 17 through to verse 19.

I should perhaps say it's a new way of salvation to the people as they listen to Jesus. It was actually the only way, God's only design of salvation. And we see that as we look back.

But a new way of salvation, verse 17. He, Jesus, went down with them and stood in a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there, and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon.

So in verse 17, we see the crowds gathering to listen to Jesus preach. And the sermon that Jesus preaches, which is the shortened version, Luke's version, of the Sermon on the Mount, is probably one of the most misunderstood sermons of all time.

Because so many people think that if we try to live the way that Jesus taught in the sermon, if we try to live lives which are aligned with the sermon on the Mount, and do a decent enough job of it, then God might save us.

[ 41 : 50 ] That's how many people think. That's why when you ask some people, are you saved? Are you a Christian? They reply by saying, well, I hope so.

I'm trying to be. No, that's what the Pharisees said. They worked hard at keeping all the rules. They worked hard at being more religious than other people.

Because they hoped that one day, God would save them on account of what they were doing. But through Jesus, through what he would do on the cross, a new and living way, as it says in Hebrews 10.20, would be opened up.

Whereby salvation would be gifted to all who would come in faith to Jesus. And as I said, this is not a new way in one sense.

It's the only way. It's always been the way. But the people then had lost sight of that. And even if we think about David and Abraham and Moses and those believers of the Old Testament asked the question, how were they saved?

[ 43 : 04 ] The way they were saved was through Christ. They were saved because of what Jesus would go on to do. Whereas we, in New Testament times, this side of the cross, are saved on account of what Jesus has already done.

But we're saved by coming to Jesus. And that's what we see in verses 18 and 19. You can scan it as we're talking about this.

We see the sick. We see those troubled by evil spirits. And they're coming to Jesus. And through hearing the word of Jesus and through feeling the touch of Jesus, they are healed.

They are saved. And it's a picture for us. of how we're saved spiritually. We simply come to Jesus, acknowledging our need, confessing our sin, and asking that he will have mercy on us.

That's how we're saved. James Denny, a theologian of a long time back, said, we do not enter the kingdom by trying to keep the precepts of the sermon, but by receiving salvation from the preacher.

[ 44 : 28 ] We're not saved by keeping the sermon in the mind. We can't do it. We're saved by coming to the one who preached the sermon, asking that he'll have mercy on us. See, our good works, our religious disciplines, they are not the keys to heaven.

Jesus, he is the key to heaven. And salvation is promised to all who simply come to him.

So we heard sung just a moment ago. He died that we might be forgiven. He died to make us good. That we might go at last to heaven saved by his precious blood.

There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.

So there's a new way of salvation. It's simply coming to Jesus. It's what the Pharisees would not do. Simply coming to Jesus, admitting our sin, acknowledging our need and calling upon the name of the Lord.

[ 45 : 51 ] And fourthly, finally, there's a new way of life. And that takes us from verse 20 right through to the end of the chapter.

look at verse 20. Jesus, looking at his disciples, he said, and then he goes on to say a lot of things.

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. There's a whole sermon that follows on, but it begins in verse 20. Looking at his disciples, he said. And that's an important thing for us to note.

The order of things here. This is a word for the disciples of Jesus. He's looking at his disciples. He's not saying to the crowd, you live this way and you can become my disciples.

No, he's looking at his disciples. And he says, because you are my disciples, because you have come to me, you're to live this way.

[ 46 : 49 ] You're called to a new way of life. And it's a new way of life that affects our ambitions, our attitude, and our actions. There's three things under this point. First of all, ambitions.

We have new ambitions when we are those who are in Christ. And ambitions are an interesting thing to think about. We can ask people what their ambitions are, and we may get answers about what their ambitions are.

But in order to really know what somebody's ambitions are, we just have to watch the things that they chase. But if anybody wants to know what our ambitions are, they just have to watch the things that we chase.

It might be riches, cash, it might be promotion in our workplace, it might be popularity, people's approval, people's acceptance, it might be sort of personal satisfaction.

These are things that this world craves and chases. these are common this world ambitions, and the advertising executives will tell us, if we get these things, if we get money, if we get popularity, if we get status, if we get power, whatever, then we'll be happy.

[ 48 : 11 ] And yet we know that the people who have these things in greatest measure are often the most miserable. And what Jesus teaches here, what he teaches his disciples, is that we're to have new ambition.

And without digging into the details of this, that could perhaps be a series another time, we can see that Jesus teaches positively in verses 20 to 23, and then negatively in verses 24 to 26, that the ambitions his disciples are the opposite of the ambitions that this world would have.

Get verse 20 and following. Jesus says, Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you, and insult you, and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man.

Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven, for that is how their fathers treated the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

[ 49 : 26 ] Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, it's the idea of gloating, derisory laughing, for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets. These are strange ambitions that Jesus is teaching us to have.

And it's not that we should want in some kind of sadistic way to be hungry and poor and hated and excluded and insulted and rejected. It's not as if these things are the access codes to heaven.

But what Jesus is teaching here is if he experienced all these things as he did and he is Lord then we as his disciples, as his followers, have to expect a portion of that.

And yet in spite of suffering all these things and different measures in this world, we experience blessing, which simply means happiness, deep soul happiness, when we make it our absolute ambition to follow Jesus.

[ 50 : 44 ] See, it doesn't profit a person, but it rather brings them to a woeful place if they gain the whole world's riches and popularity and reputation, etc., and yet lose their soul.

True happiness, real blessing, is known by those whose ambition is to follow Jesus.

to the disciple, it's called to a new life, to new ambitions. And I think what we have to do now is just hold the mirror of God's word up to our own hearts and ask the question, do we see any evidence of this in our lives?

Do we see marks of grace in our lives as we think through our ambitions, as we think through the things that we chase, the things we pursue, the things that we value?

Are they aligned with what Jesus teaches in these verses? So a new way of life, new ambitions. Secondly here, a new attitude.

[ 51 : 57 ] Now in order for us to see what somebody's attitude is like, we have to watch how they act and react. in order to know what someone's attitude is to another person, we watch how they relate to that other person, the way they treat that other person.

That gives a fair indication of the attitude towards that other person. And so Jesus' challenge here is a challenge in the area of our attitude.

And it's a biting challenge because it's worked out in the realm of personal relationships. relationships. And Jesus teaches us here not just in terms of the people that we are personally related to that we like but also those who we find hard to like.

Jesus actually focuses on those who we could even call our enemies. And Jesus says here the new life should be seen in your attitude not just towards your friends.

It's easy to have a good attitude towards friends but your enemies. So verse 27. Jesus says I tell you who hear me love your enemies do good to those who hate you bless those who curse you pray for those who mistreat you.

- [ 53 : 22 ] If someone strikes you on one cheek turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you and if anyone takes what belongs to you do not demand it back.

Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you what credit is that to you?

Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies.

Do good to them and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

Be merciful just as your Father is merciful. And the central message there the key attitude that's underlined there is that we're to love our enemies.

- [ 54 : 34 ] And Jesus gives various examples in the course of that section to expound that, to illustrate that. We're to love our enemies. But the love that Jesus speaks of is not a kind of conditional feelings driven love that this world knows.

It's God's love. It's agape love. And that's what makes all the difference. Eric Alexander says, Love in the New Testament is an attitude of heart issuing in words and deeds which is neither aroused nor quenched by anything in the person to whom we are showing it.

Love in the New Testament is an attitude of heart issuing in words and deeds which is neither aroused nor quenched by anything in the person to whom we are showing it.

So love is not a reaction to the person and something attractive that we find in that person. The love that we're being commanded to hear is a response to God and who God is.

this is what we're called to. You know, we can't be commanded to feel love towards someone, but we can be commanded to change our attitude and act in this way.

- [ 56 : 05 ] That's what we're called to here. And this attitude that Jesus calls us to, it also instructs and affects the way that we determine not to be judgmental and bitterly critical towards people that we struggle with.

Jesus says, do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned.

Forgive and you will be forgiven. Given it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured onto your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

He also told them this parable, can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, brother let me take the speck out of your eye when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?

- [ 57 : 17 ] You hypocrite. First take the plank out of your eye and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

And Jesus hardly really needs to say anything about this because the Pharisees were a walking, talking illustration of the point in hand.

The Pharisees were full of religious zeal. They were industrious in terms of religious activity. But their attitude was all wrong.

There was no love for the people around them. There was no love for God. But there was just a bitter judgment of those who were not with them.

They had a fixation on the failures that they saw in the lives of other people, but they had an absolute spiritual blindness and a willful determination not to consider the problem of their own heart and their own inner attitude.

[ 58 : 26 ] attitude. And Jesus teaches that his disciples are not to be like that. The disciple of Christ is called to a new life, a new attitude.

And again, we have to take the mirror of God's word and hold it up to our hearts and ask the question, do we see evidence of this? do we see the marks of grace in our lives as we think through our attitudes?

And not just our attitude towards those who we find it easy to love, but as Jesus teaches here, our attitude in particular towards those who make it their business to be our enemies.

disciples are called to a new way of life, new ambitions, new attitude, and finally it's a call to action.

It's kind of hard to draw the line, to be honest, between attitude and action. There's a lot of crossover in these verses. But Jesus teaches on towards the end of the chapter here.

[ 59 : 45 ] He says in verse 43, no good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit.

People do not pick figs from thorn bushes or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.

For out of the overflow of his heart, his mouth speaks. Warren Weersley, the commentator, says the illustrations of the tree in verse 43 and 44 and the treasury in verse 45 remind us of the importance of character.

If the tree is not sound, the fruit will not be sound. If the heart is filled with evil, the mouth will speak evil.

build your character and you will be able to help others when they have spiritual needs, says Weersley. And Jesus goes on in that final section to talk about building.

[ 60 : 57 ] He says, Why do you call me Lord, Lord, verse 46, and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and put them into practice.

He is like a man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house, but it could not shake it because it was well built.

But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the rock, on the ground, without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.

And that's the point that Jesus finishes on. We finish with that image in our minds of a house with no foundations, struck by a torrent, collapsed and destroyed.

and he puts a full stop at the end of the sermon. It's a difficult word to finish on. But so often Jesus does this.

[ 62 : 19 ] He doesn't do what the PR people tell him, which is to deal quickly with the negative and always finish on the positive. Now Jesus finishes on a note of warning here.

He's pointing us to a day of destruction. He's pointing us to a day of judgment and he's warning that we need to be ready for that day.

So how can we be ready? Do we need to take ourselves in hand now? Having looked in the mirror, seen our shortfalls, do we need to take ourselves by the lapels and perform some kind of an overhaul of our ambitions and our attitudes and our action, you know, through some kind of intensive self-help courses?

No, that's just not the way this works. See, if we're hearing the words of Jesus and looking at ourselves just now, we know that we have not and we cannot live this way.

So we simply confess it. We confess that we fall far short as we look at ourselves in comparison to the teaching that Jesus gives us here.

[ 63 : 48 ] But to quote Murray McShane, for every look you take itself, take ten looks at Jesus. And as we look at him and his life, what we see as we finish is that he did live this way and he lived for us.

Not only did he die for us, but he lived for us. Jesus did not chase the riches of this world. No, he who was rich became poor for for us.

He didn't even have a place to lay his head. He lived that way for us. And Jesus didn't seek popularity and reputation and status.

No, he came to this world knowing that he would be despised and rejected, but he still came. And he suffered all that for us.

And what Jesus preached about loving our enemies, he practiced to the max. How much did Jesus love his enemies?

[ 65 : 08 ] Well, he loved them enough to go to a cross for them, to go to a cross for us who are his enemies because of our sin. And even as the nails were driven into Jesus' hands and feet by his enemies, he said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they're doing.

See, this new life, Jesus lived it out perfectly for us. And as we trust him, as we receive salvation, as we receive new life from him, and as we stay close to him, he lives his new life out, even through us.

So the closing application is not take a look at yourself and try harder to be good. The closing word is take a look at Jesus.

Fix your eyes upon Jesus and trust him more. We'll pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your son, Jesus.

We thank you for all that we see as we look at his life. death. And we thank you that he lived for us. We thank you for all that we see as we look at his death, where he suffered and died for us.

[ 66 : 55 ] And we thank you that death could not hold him, but he rose and promises eternal life to all those who will trust him. So as we see our sin, as we see our shortfalls, we confess our sin, we say Lord, have mercy on us, and we pray that you would help us to trust the Lord Jesus more, that we may know more of his life in us, and we pray that people as they look at our lives may see something of his life through us.

we pray this in Jesus' name, and for his sake, Amen. We'll finish by hearing the last hymn sung, Mission Praise 473, My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

righteousness. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

No merit of my own, I claim, but holy trust in Jesus' name.

on Christ's solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

[ 68 : 43 ] When weary in this earthly race, I rest on his unchanging grace, in every wild and stormy gill, my anchor holds and will not fail.

On Christ's solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

ground his vow, his covenant and blood are my defense against the flood.

When earthly hopes are swept away, he will uphold me on that day.

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

[ 70 : 04 ] When the last trumpet's voice shall sound, O I then in him be found, clothed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before his throne, on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

sand. 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.