

Autumn Communion Service - Rev. John Lachie Macleod

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Preacher: Rev. John Lachie Macleod

[0:00] A number of years ago, my wife and I were in a conversation with a man we had met. He was an office bearer in a church, and we spoke at length about things that were happening in church and some of the things that were going on. It was quite an engaging conversation in many ways.

But then my wife, as she has the habit of doing, stopped us talking not just about church, but brought matters back to the Lord. It's a lesson that I need to keep reminding myself. It can be easy to talk about church sometimes when we really need to talk about the Lord and talk about who He is and what He does and what His plans are and His purposes are. And when she brought the conversation back to the realities of the Lord, it suddenly became a very disappointing experience because one of the man's first expressions as we spoke about Jesus was this. He said, yeah, it's great, but I just don't get why it had to be the cross. And in that moment, our hearts sank because without sounding judgmental, the reality is if we haven't grasped why it had to be the cross, we haven't really grasped the gospel.

[1:19] Throughout the Scriptures, there is the running theme of redemption. Central to the whole story of the Bible is what we, the theologians, very grandly call penal substitutionary atonement.

What we understand more biblically in a sense and more clearly and powerfully is that Christ died for sinners. That there is a purpose in the experience of Jesus and Nazareth on the cross of Calvary that is not just making the best out of a bad situation when Christ died for us. We get to see it was the very intention and purpose of God and the whole process that led Him to the cross in the first place. Indeed, isn't it significant that the ordinance that we remember and celebrate today has this focal point of Christ's death at the very heart of it. As Paul corrected and guided the church in Corinth that it was their duty to proclaim the death of Christ until He come. Despite all the other wonderful things in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the ongoing testimony of the church in their gatherings and in their remembrances was to make proclamation of the death of Christ. Not the miraculous incarnation as wonderful as that is. Not the wonder of His teaching or His miracles and His compassion as all these things are important, as all these things are worthy of attention and affection.

But as Paul encourages the church to correctly worship their God, to correctly follow their Savior, he guides them and teaches them by the Holy Spirit that central to true and faithful Christian worship is the constant proclamation of the death of Jesus Christ until He who was dead and is alive returns to this earth again. We're to focus on His death. We're to remind ourselves of its implication. We're to remind ourselves of the testimony of Calvary. Christianity, as many a theologian has said, is a cross-centered faith.

And what's remarkable about that is then when we turn to prophecies like Isaiah is to recognize how wonderfully and indeed miraculously the events of Calvary and the death of Jesus were foretold with such clarity and with such perfect insight. We read the latter part of Isaiah 52 and the whole of 53.

There are some who believe there should be no chapter division whatsoever there simply because what is being spoken of in chapter 52 is then fulfilled by what we read of the suffering servant of God.

[4:25] Chapter 52 is the promise of coming salvation. Isaiah 52 is the promise of restoration. And we know that this had a literal and historical application towards Israel and towards Jerusalem.

But as we read into the promises of chapter 53, we recognize here that there is a far wider implication and a far greater application that as we read of what the servant does, Zion has been called to awake.

And again, in that context, people recognize that in this place, Zion must mean more than Jerusalem, more than the historical city. That as Isaiah prophesies here, we begin to see in prophecy what Paul would speak of in testimony with regard to the Jerusalem from above, where from whom all the elect, Jew and Gentile alike, get the power of their life. The power that is promised in Isaiah 52, a greater life, a better life, a blessed life, a blessed life, being shaped, being freed from the dust, being freed from the bondage, loosed from the captivity. This wonderful promise to those who were enslaved, those who were enslaved because of their own sins and judgment, those who were suffering because of their rebellion against God.

And God comes and says there is salvation coming. There is restoration on the horizon. But then as we move into chapter, well, from verse 13 of chapter 52, we begin to see how is this restoration going to happen? And it's then we begin to see that what Isaiah is talking about is of far greater significance. Although it's all obviously connected in terms of the integrity of God's purpose in the world, but there's a significance that is greater than Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah bringing the people back to Jerusalem.

There's a significance of greater power and of greater value than the restoration of temple worship in Jerusalem, as important and significant as that was in its time and as it is in the integrity of the scriptural record of history. But here we see something being foretold and prophesied that is in a sense an application that is beyond the borders of Israel. That's what we see in verse 15 of Isaiah 52.

[7:04] He shall sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because they will they will see what they have not been told and they will understand what they have not heard.

In Isaiah 52 verses to 13, 13 to 15, in many ways it's almost like we get the trailer for what is about to come in the main feature in Isaiah 53. That in Isaiah 52, in that last section, we get this snapshot of the suffering servant of God and what he is going to accomplish. And as we get the taster in these verses, we get the full meal in all the verses of Isaiah 53. Here we get the invitation to behold my servant, to recognize that the exalted, pre-existent, powerful person that is the Son of God, who will be the Savior of the world. Behold my servant shall act wisely. He shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted. So Isaiah's first description in this particular servant song, drawing our attention to the Son of God and the saving power he brings to the world. He doesn't begin at the cross, but he begins in the reality of the eternal person of the Son of God, as Paul does in his Philippian hymn, reminding us of where Jesus came from, reminding us of the person who has invested in our lives and reminding us of the person whose worth and value is at stake when the Word of God is brought into this world and when the Son of God is pursued to the cross. We are speaking, he says here, I want you to behold my servant. As the elements will go round today, we will encourage one another with the physical enactment of the supper to think of Jesus, to look to Jesus. And as we behold Jesus today, we are so thankful for his brokenness, but we cannot afford to neglect his glory and to be humbled at the realization that it was from heaven he came. And it was from the place of unsullied worship and adoration that the Son of God would come into the world and be treated so grotesquely, as again we read in verse 14 with regards to this snapshot of what's to come. What a condescension.

My servant is full of eternal wisdom. My servant is full of prosperity. He is high and lifted up. He's exalted.

But the next thing we read of him, as many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of the children of mankind.

[10:10] So we go from such glorious heights to such grotesque depths. The damage we believe any historian will tell you of just how cruel that the process of crucifixion was, even just to have been nailed to a cross and left to die would be pain enough. But the reality is that those who went to the cross, and it would seem from what we read in the gospel records, that Jesus was subject to particularly harsh experiences of the scourging and the whipping that would break the skin, and in some cases even broke the bones before they got to the cross, as the leather cords with their inserts of glass and stone and iron would rip the body of the person apart. And the crown of thorns deeply plunged into his skull.

Any of us who've ever had a head wound knows how quickly the skull bleeds. And so the artistic representations that we sometimes see of Jesus just bathed, as it were, in his own blood are so hard to bear in the human eye, but they are so consistent with what was told of him 700 years before it would come to pass. That he was beyond human recognition. And yet remarkably, the closing aspect of the snapshot is that he will be globally powerful. That he will be globally powerful. That he will be globally powerful.

That he will be so shall he sprinkle many nations. And sprinkling in temple worship and right back to the tabernacle was always associated with the sanctifying of the objects of worship and sanctifying for the furniture in the temple, the setting apart for God. And so we have a remarkable movement in these verses alone to go from the glory of the pre-incarnate Son of God in the highest heavens to go down to the depths of what this world would do to him.

And yet, rather than that being seen as some abject failure, we recognize that he will still extend a realm of glory and of power so that 2,000 years later, in a village that nobody in Jerusalem could ever have named 2,000 years ago, the name of Jesus is declared. The death of Jesus is proclaimed.

It's remarkable how powerfully these verses are fulfilled. And as he then leads us in this prophecy into the detail of all that's been indicated in these few verses, where we recognize the humility of the life of the Savior. There's a challenge here with regards to believing what has been revealed.

[13:14] That that's, we'll come back to that hopefully. But then as you move into verses 2 and 3, we get that description of Jesus that reminds us of the astonishing ordinariness and normality of the life the Son of God chose to live. That here we see that there was nothing that was naturally attractive about him in one sense.

That he wasn't that kind of figure who just appears on the pages of history with a natural charisma and people are always drawn to the way that politics went some time ago and more so on the other side of the Atlantic, but increasingly on this side, where people are just drawn to some kind of personal persona and don't pay any attention to detail at times. Just there's something that captivates and we get caught up in the ideal.

He says, Jesus wasn't like that. He won't be like that. There's nothing that's going to make the ordinary person stand back and think, isn't this guy amazing? They eventually get drawn and intrigued by his miracles and his teaching.

But in the nature that he chose, in the life that he chose, it's a remarkable ordinariness. No majesty that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire.

You know, it's amazing that in coming, even as coming as a human being, Jesus shows the flaws of humanity. I would imagine that the highest percentage of human beings, if they were asked before they were born to pick a life for themselves, very few would choose obscurity. Now, I know some of those who go on to fame and fortune then wish they had obscurity. But the reality is there's something about us that wants to be noticed. There's something about us that would choose to be born into a wealthy home rather than a poor one. There's something about us that would always want to be different, that to fit some kind of norm of society, we might feel more a part of it.

[15:36] Our Savior came, and there was nothing remarkable. And not only that, but he was despised and rejected of men. He comes to humanity and is rejected. You know, the opening of John's gospel conveys that to us, the absolute tragedy of how Jesus Christ is treated by humanity throughout his ministry.

The one for whom and through whom all things are made came to the things that he made, and the things that he made told him to go away. And not only in terms of the natural, but also in terms of the spiritual.

He came to his own, to Israel, to fulfill every promise given to Israel. And Israel said, no, thank you. Jesus.

Jesus invested his life in his disciples for three and a bit years, and they followed him. Yet, what is the sum of his experience of human relationship, rejection and abandonment?

One of his friends betraying him, choosing to get rich rather than to stay faithful to Jesus. Another friend, one of his closest friends, Peter, denying that he ever knew him.

[17:01] The majority all running away and abandoning him. One of the greatest sufferings emotionally in the human race is the reality of rejection.

People who suffer, being rejected by peer groups, rejected by family, rejected by friends, rejected by church. Here today, in this place, there is a name proclaimed to you who realizes the reality of

rejection. And you know what? He suffered rejection from God in order that you would know today with certainty how greatly and how gladly you're accepted in the Father's presence through faith in Jesus Christ. He was despised and we esteemed him not.

We esteemed him not. We thought nothing of him. Someone said Jesus is one of the, well, not one of, he is the great, most underestimated person in human history. And friends, he continues to be. He continues to be the most underestimated person in human history in the sense that so many fail to see what he has to offer. So many fail to see what he has accomplished. So many fail to see what he will yet do when he comes in his glory and comes in his power. And so as Isaiah starts unpacking what he's already given us in a short version, we begin to see all these realities about the Savior. And it's humbling when we recognize the reality of who he is. And then we see in verses 4 to 6 what is at the heart of the gospel, at the heart of the cross, the reality of this substitutionary atonement. Now, many of us may be familiar with the language of substitute. Those who follow football will remember a day that there had to be a serious reason for a substitute. Now, half the team comes off for one reason or another. But there was a day when a substitute was only put on, either because somebody was incapacitated in some way, or somebody was failing to fulfill their form and their contribution.

It was in the light of failing that somebody else went on. That's how the whole process was introduced to the sporting world, where somebody had failed, that they could be replaced in order that there wouldn't be a disadvantage. Someone else standing in the place to make things better, to make things great. It was something that the process of substitution is something that's at the heart of Old Testament understand. Even before there was a completely formulated form of religion, before they had their tabernacle and they had the law, Abram's experience on the mountain with his son taught him the reality of the power of substitution, where his son escapes death and Aram is slaughtered instead.

[20 : 14] And here in verses 4 to 6, we begin to see the reality of this substitution, the brokenness and sinfulness of humanity. And someone else steps in to transform the situation. Without his intervention, without his substitution, we remain in our griefs. We remain in our sorrows. We remain in our transgressions. We are still bound by our iniquities. We can't do anything about this. We need help. We need to get out of our brokenness.

We need to get out. We're failing in what we were made to do. We were made to know God. We were made to enjoy God. We were made to obey God. We were made to find life in God. And we've lost all that. We've lost all our form, all our ability. And we're losing badly. And into this scenario, the Savior comes. And through these verses, we see all the contrasts between what we were doing and how he transforms the situations. We're the one who are full of grief and sorrow. He comes and he carries these away.

We bring grief to this situation. We bring sorrow. We bring transgressions. We bring iniquities and rebellions. He comes and he carries our sorrows away. He is pierced for our transgressions. He is crushed for our iniquities. And the punishment that should have fallen on us is laid on him. He bears our sins away. One writer, as he was commenting on the fact that Jesus has borne our griefs, says that it conjured up in his mind as he thought of Jesus walking to Calvary, imagining Samson, that time when he bore the gates of Gaza on his shoulders. There's this massive, massive weight. And somehow, miraculously, he carries it upon him. And so we see this with Jesus. This is powerful.

He says, I want you to know the nature of the one who has come to rescue you. And I want you to know that what he has done for you. He took my sins and my sorrows. He made them his very own.

[22 : 42] He bore the burden to Calvary and suffered and died alone. This is the power of substitution.

Our wounds get healed. And I know many people, you'll hear many people if you ever watch some of the stuff on religious channels and televisions, and they say that because Jesus was crushed here and his wounds were made at Calvary, we are healed. And they then encouraged people to seek physical healing.

Today, there is no doubt that God can and does often heal people miraculously, but that's not what's being mentioned here. Because we're dealing with the depths of the human soul, our transgressions, our iniquities, our iniquities, the chastisement that we deserve, the peace that we don't have. And he's saying, Jesus is bringing us a permanent and eternal peace. You know, every single person that Jesus healed physically in this world died. But those he heals spiritually never

die. Those he heals spiritually receive a healing from God that is forever and that is powerful. And as we remember him today, what joy there is in remembering this, in remembering the reality of what this cross represents, what this bread represents. He gave his body. He became human for our sakes, and he suffered in a place.

And ultimately, the spiritual suffering is ultimately what delivers us and saves us. But God so worked in such a time that in one of the most graphic moments in human history, where humanity had invented such a cruel form of torture, God enters into history at that point, so that we get to see in the physical that which is true in the spiritual. Just as in the physical of the communion elements, we are being guided into the spiritual to behold Christ, to draw near to Christ, and to commune with Christ. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. And then we move to verses 7 to 9, where we are reminded in great accuracy of the nature of the historical truthfulness of what would happen to Jesus 700 years before it happen. This is one of the most miraculous chapters in the Bible, when we consider the way that it is fulfilled all these years later. But it also reveals to us, as it shows us the history, it reveals to us also the willingness of Jesus to die for us.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. Again, what a wonderful nature our Savior demonstrates. We see today people will call the slightest thing oppression and moan about being afflicted in all kinds of ways. And if they feel it in any way, you're guaranteed there's some kind of protest. Yet here is one, if not the only time in history, where somebody who is completely innocent and someone who is completely guilt-free, yet in the face of those who genuinely oppress and afflict him, remain silent, remained obedient. The previous verse 6 reminds us of the fact that we're like sheep who have gone astray. And we never need to emphasize that kind of illustration too strongly in a crofting community. We know exactly the reality of the nature that is being revealed in these verses.

[26:38] That's what sheep do. They wander. They look for the pasture. They go their own way. But there was one sheep that did not go its own way. There was the Lamb of God who came into the world and only went the shepherd's way. He only followed the Lord, his Father, the shepherd. And he walked in obedience and he remained silent in the face of suffering. And he went into the reality of death and into the reality of pain and into the reality of judgment in order that God would ultimately be glorified and God's people be truly saved by oppression and judgment taken away. He was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgressions of my people. And this is one of the verses, verse 9, that is so powerful. They made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death.

How could both things happen? Would be the natural thought many a Jewish person would have. How can you be with the wicked in your death and yet be with a rich man? Because rich men in Jewish thought and theology represented righteousness and being right with God because God blesses you, because you're right with God. So how can two things be true, that he dies with the wicked and yet is buried with the rich? Well, when he dies with two thieves on the cross, and then Joseph of Arimathea, in acts of kindness and testimony to a growing belief in Jesus, offers his own tomb to lay the body there.

The accuracy of these details are astonishing. But so long before these things came to pass, under the rule of the Roman Empire, we are shown here these details of the experience of Calvary, and more amazingly, of the willingness of Jesus to submit himself to the horrors of humanity, that we might be saved. I have a friend who's involved in a work in the south side of Glasgow, working in an area with lots of immigrants. And one of the first people he met as he began his work there was a Ukrainian Jew. There's a lot going on in his life. And my friend met with him and started sharing with him and discussing. He was intrigued because he was committed to his Jewish faith.

And they started studying the Bible together. And at one stage, my friend read Isaiah 53 with him. And it's amazing. The man said to him, he says, that can't be in our Bible.

He said, oh, it is in your Bible. It's your prophet Isaiah, our prophet Isaiah. And the man said, that can't be in our Bible. Because if that's in our Bible, every Jew would know Jesus is the Messiah. But thankfully, that Jew did come to trust Jesus as Messiah and Lord, and now works, sharing the gospel in Glasgow. This is how amazing it is that that Jewish mind hearing that chapter, that one of the first times in his life immediately recognized, Jesus is the Messiah. And then we come to this mystery of the agony.

[30:02] The mystery of the agony. And this is where many contemporary sensitivities do want to turn away from the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. It was the Lord's will to crush him.

We wrestle with that. Any father in here will wrestle with that. A father being so personally involved in the pain and the reality of his suffering. We do everything to avoid our children's suffering. And yet the gospel presents to us the reality of a father who is so personally involved in the reality of this suffering. And that might cause the modern heart to shirk and the modern emotion to shy away from. But the reality is, friends, that in this, in this, all the spiritual realities come to focus for us. There was no other way whereby a holy God could bring sinful people into his eternal presence and remain just and remain righteous and remain truthful if these people were to carry sin into his presence. Everything in the Old Testament worship points to the fact that that sin cannot be born into God's presence. This is the way, the only way, the only way in which a holy God can justify rebellious sinners and still be just.

But as we look at it, we see the horrors of it. And we can never minimize this. We can never minimize the pain and sorrow that God endures for our salvation. But what we see prophesied here is in many ways what we see spelled out for us regarding the Son in the letter to the Hebrews, where we are told that it was for the joy that was set before him that Jesus endured the cross. The pain was real. The suffering was true. The judgment was excruciating. But somewhere in the midst of it all, even when our Savior, for our sakes, senses his abandonment from God, somewhere in the midst of it all is this realization that through this darkness, eternal light will shine.

And so we may say to ourselves, how could a father ever crush his own son? And surely the only answer is for the sake of the other children, for the sake of the rest of the family, for the sake of lost souls being brought into an eternal kingdom.

[33:04] No wonder the whole of creation gets plunged into darkness, when the God who twice declared in the three and a bit years ministry that this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased, yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him so that he could make many to be counted righteous.

There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. Only Jesus could unlock the gate of heaven and welcome us in.

He bears our sins and our sorrows. And he intercedes for those who sin he bore. That's what we read at the very end.

He poured his soul to death. He was numbered with transgressors. Yet he bore the sin of many. And he makes intercession for the transgressors. You know, that's the great difference, isn't it? With every sacrifice that ever went before, whatever was sacrificed, when it died, it was finished. But when Christ died, he wasn't finished.

[34:24] When Christ breathed his last, it wasn't over. And so whilst we use the term, we proclaim the death, we know that that term conveys to us the reality of the knowledge that the sacrifice made was accepted by God.

He rose again, triumphant, on the third day that we might know he lives and therefore we can live. The Savior now intercedes for those whose sin he bore.

He took our sins and our sorrows. Living, he loved me. Dying, he saved me. Buried, he carried me. My sins far away. Rising, he justified freely forever.

One day, he's coming. Oh, glorious day. At the table today, we remember our Savior. And I would say for those who are not at the table today, that as the person of Christ has once again been revealed through the Scriptures, do you believe what you've heard?

As the arm of the Lord is revealed today in the Word and in the elements of the ordinance, do you believe the power of Christ to save your soul?

[35:43] Do you believe in Christ and none other to forgive you, to rescue you, and to take you into God's presence eternally?

Let us pray. My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought.

my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, oh, my soul. And so, God, we truly praise and thank you that you would send your son into this cruel and dark world knowing what this world would do to him.

You gave so willingly. He came so willingly. Help us to remember gladly and thankfully.

[37:00] bless the table with your presence, Lord. May your word find deep acceptance in our hearts and may your name be glorified through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. we're going to sing in Psalm 40. Again, we sang earlier from there, this time singing from verse 6 to 10.

Psalm 40 at verse 6, no sacrifice, no offering didst thou at all desire mine ears their boards in offering thou and burnst didst not require.
and we'll sing down to the end of verse 10, thy kindness which most loving is concealed have not I nor from the congregation great have hid thy verity.
We sing to God's praise from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm number 40 at verse 6. Thank you. may may may may CHOIR SINGING Then to the Lord resair my words, I come beyond thee.
[38 : 59] Within the glory of heaven is the Son of me.

To do thy will I take delight, O thou my God, I.
In the Lord's soul, in love of life, I have withered my heart.
Within the glory of heaven is the great, I rise as blessed rich.
Lord, O thou thou, O Lord, that I refrain from my sea.
[40 : 29] I never did with him, my heart, Conceal thy righteousness.

I cry, salvation, love declare, And show thy faithfulness.
Thy kindness with sole sovereignnness Concealeth our Lord.
Lord, from the congregation great, Have it thy verity?

As we prepare to come to the Lord's table, I want to read some verses from Acts chapter 2.
[41 : 56] It is a remarkable thing that what we do today is something that has spread through the realms of history and geography as the Word of God has gone out into all the world, and as the church of God has been brought into life by the Spirit of God, and as his people have faithfully remembered him.

And so as we come to communion today and we think about our privilege of sitting at the Lord's table, I want us to think about the very first generation of Christians and what characterized their faithfulness and the ability to be faithfulness and the ability to identify them as the children of God and those who remembered Jesus together.

In Acts chapter 2 at verse 37, we read at the end of Peter's sermon that when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, What shall we do?
And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promises for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. So those who received his word were baptized and were added that day about 3,000 souls.

[43 : 33] And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayer. And all came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles, and all who believed were together and had all things in common.

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. In these verses, we have a snapshot of the early church, the church immediately born on the day of Pentecost. And as we think today about who should join us at the Lord's table and who should be in the celebration of communion, we recognize that God's word encourages all to repent of their sin, to come to Jesus for forgiveness, and to recognize the ministry of the Holy Spirit in these acts, and therefore to testify publicly of their faith in Jesus and to align themselves with the body of God's people.

We may often say to ourselves, who is it that is worthy? Where we know that ultimately no one is worthy. But the ones who should come are those who recognize these spiritual behaviors we've just mentioned, the repentance, the belief, the trust, the commitment of soul to Christ for safekeeping.
[45 : 25] And the following on from that, the reality of that faith being expressed in the apostles' teaching, in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.

A lifestyle that was dedicated to knowing God. Who should come? Who should be at the table? Well, those who are willing to submit their lives to the teaching of God's truth and to be a teachable people for all their days.

Those who are willing to share life with fellow believers and to serve together in the name of our God, providing for God's work and the servants of God's kingdom throughout the world as they did at the very beginning.

A life that is reflective upon the wonders of God's grace towards us. We're teachable because of the apostles' teaching.

We're servant-hearted because we come to the fellowship. We're reflective and thankful for salvation in the breaking of bread and remembering what Jesus has done.

[46 : 32] And we express our dependence on God continually by being a people devoted to prayer. And any one of us would look at maybe one or even all these areas and think that we fail or fall short.

But any element of these that marks our lives and is recognized as an expression of our faith in Jesus is warranted to come and to be with fellow broken sinners to remember the one who makes us whole.

And so as we move towards the table, let's sing as the elements are brought in and if you are a member of the church and not yet sitting at the table or a member of Christ's church in full communion with his people, then come, identify with the fellowship, be devoted to the fellowship and take your place at the Lord's table at his invitation.

And we'll sing from Psalm 118 from the Scottish Psalter. It's page 398. 398.

At verse 15, In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly. in dwellings of the righteous this end of melody O joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly hear the right hand the right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high the right hand

[48 : 43] O the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly I shall not die but live and shall the words of God discover the Lord doth be just I set soar but not to death O set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness then will I enter into them and I the

Lord will bless this is the gate of God by it the just shall enter in thee will I grace for thou be her and has my safety been the stone is made head for her stone which filters it despise this is the doing of the

Lord and wondrous in our eyes well we turn to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians where we read there in the 11th chapter what we recognize as our warrant to do what we do today that this is not an invention of the church that whilst the practice of breaking bread has been in the life of the church from the very beginning the life of communion and sharing and remembering Jesus together we recognize that left to our own devices the church made a mess of these celebrations in Corinth and yet out of that mess the Holy Spirit gave the directives to Paul in order that the church in Corinth and in every place thereafter would know how we might rightly remember our God and Savior Jesus Christ and his sacrificial death for at verse 23 in the 11th chapter of 1st Corinthians we read for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way also he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the

Lord let a person examine himself then and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup for anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself that is why many are weak and ill and some have died but if we judged ourselves truly we would not be judged but when we are judged by the Lord we are disciplined so we come to do as Christ commanded us and as we follow his command we also faithfully follow his example in that while it was on the night he was betrayed that Jesus took bread and he gave thanks for it and then after supper took the cup and in the same manner that is also with thanksgiving to his heavenly father he took and shared the cup so we do the same today as we take these elements and recognize that in these moments they serve no earthly purpose but they serve a spiritual purpose to direct our thoughts our hearts our minds our emotions towards our

[54 : 23] God and Saviour Jesus Christ that we might take and eat and take and drink with sincere and profound thankfulness that he should come for us and rescue us let us pray eternal father our creator and redeemer how blessed we are to bow in your presence remembering that as we take

this bread and take this cup we are following in processes that have been with the church ever since your Saviour your son our Saviour took these elements from that Passover meal and gave them such a powerful distinction and such a powerful purpose causing us not just to look to the past at a redemption once accomplished which we're thankful for but to look in the present at the reality that we follow the one who gave himself for us and in his giving said lo I am with you to the very end of the age and we thank you that in communion we are reminded of the ever present nature of salvation we thank you that you have saved us from every sin in our past you are a

God who forgives rescues and preserves us in the present and we thank you our God that as we take and eat and drink we recognize that there is a day when this will come to an end when our God and Saviour returns again and your people will be saved eternally from every impact and every influence of sin's existence oh God how thankful we are how thankful we are for Jesus how thankful we are for our Saviour how thankful we are for forgiveness how thankful we are that you cleanse how thankful for the hope how thankful we are for the life and for the love that the name of Jesus brings to sinners to this very day and so now Lord as we give thanks for these things we pray your blessing on our eating and drinking together that it truly may be to the glory of your name Amen having given thanks to the father he said take and eat this is my body which is given for you and then pointing to the truth that this cup was the new covenant in his blood

Jesus encouraged his followers to drink from it in remembrance of him and so through the grace of Jesus and at the invitation of Christ take and eat in remembrance of him take and drink and remember him for whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes may the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all and as God's people as we rise from this table may we rise with that spirit we saw exemplified in the first wave of believers in Jesus that they were devoted devoted to learning and understanding the ways of God devoted to one another in their shared commitment to faith devoted to their fellowship devoted to prayers devoted to serving devoted to all that

Jesus would do and devoted to all they had seen him perform for his people may God's grace lead us to be such a faithful and devoted people let's pray father we thank you that in the communion we are brought back to the very basics of our faith that we are lost sinners whom Jesus found that we are those soiled in unrighteousness whom he has cleansed that we are the broken whom he makes whole that we are the lost whom he has found that we are the orphans and strangers whom he has brought home so Lord will you bless each one of us and indeed all within this building today may the revelation and fragrance of Christ remain with us this day and forever Amen let's sing our closing item of praise from

Psalm 103 in the Scottish Psalter page 369 we'll sing verses 1 to 5 page 369 Psalm 103 O thou thou my soul bless God the Lord and all that in me is O thou my soul blessed may God bless you. [60:19] God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. Thou satisfy thy mouth.

So that in thy seed of seed renew it is thy youth.

[62:34] And so may God, from his glorious abundance, bless you today in the knowledge of the love that he pours into human hearts by the Holy Spirit. May he bless you in the knowledge of the acceptance that is found in the Father heart of God through the mercy and glory of the gospel. And may he bless you in the knowledge of the forgiveness that is freely granted and given to those who come and trust in his most precious Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

And to our God be all the glory this day and forever. Amen.