

New Year Sermon

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[0 : 0 0] Let's for a short time turn back to the chapter we had, 1 Peter chapter 2. I can read again at verses 9 and verse 10. 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 9 and verse 10.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession. You may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. We, of course, find ourselves on this lustrous day again at the start of a brand new year.

I'm sure we may look back over a year that had its ups and its downs, I'm sure for all of us. Perhaps some of us had a more difficult year than others. Perhaps some of us had a great year.

Brothers and sisters, we are here this morning, this afternoon, as living witnesses to the fact that we worship a God who keeps his people, who knows his people, who promises never to leave or forsake his people.

[1 : 1 0] So we want to begin this new year by reminding ourselves as aware of the basics of who we are as Christians. The basics of what it is to know God and to be known by him.

As we begin this new year, we know we'll be faced with challenges, with troubles, with pains. Challenges which will be too much for us.

Situations which will be too dark for us. We know as we begin this new year, we will be faced with attacks from the world. Attacks from within, from our own sin, but also, of course, attacks from the enemy.

And you may think to yourself, well, that's a terribly dark way to start our New Year Day service. That's a bit dark, talking about the enemy, talking about the enemy of our souls, talking about Satan. That's no way to start this great day, this New Year service, this day of joy for us.

But the reality is, whatever else our experience this year might be, we know for certain one thing. The enemy continues on his work.

[2 : 1 6] He does not give up. He doesn't take a New Year's break. He keeps going day after day. And every one of us who know the Lord here, we know that reality. That constant attacking he does at us and around us.

Christian, he will continue seeking his job to rob you of your assurance. He'll continue seeking ways to keep attacking that cold you have over your Savior.

That hold you have even in the confidence of God's Word. He will seek this year to stop you in your prayer life, to stop you in your reading, and so on and so on.

He will keep finding ways to keep you from growing. And those, I know some faces, some faces I still don't know. Of course, there's those perhaps online.

For any who as of yet don't know Jesus as your Savior, who don't know him, you can't say that you love him, you can't say you worship him quite yet. This New Year, the enemy is after you too, looking for ways to keep you away from getting to know Jesus.

[3 : 21] To distract you from worshipping together. To distract you from picking up a Bible. To distract you and keep you away from asking the questions that are on your mind. Anything he will do to keep you away from knowing Jesus for yourself.

So as we look forward to this New Year, let's do so by reminding ourselves of some of the truths we have in God's Word. The truth we have in our text in these two verses. Of course, Peter here takes the assurances in verse 9 and verse 10.

The majority of his assurances come from Exodus. He quotes from Exodus 19. And honestly, please, if you have time after a service this afternoon, go home and read this chapter, chapter 2.

And read yourselves Exodus 19. And see the glorious way the Holy Spirit works through Peter to build these things together. So Peter draws back, all the way back to when God spoke to his people at Mount Sinai.

And we'll cover that more as we go on. He's taking assurances, taking these hopes, these promises, all the way back when God first spoke to his people around that mountain. When God promised to be their God.

[4 : 30] When God promised he would keep a people for himself. So looking at verse 9 for a short time, we can look at it and looking at some of the lies of the enemy.

Some of the lies of the enemy that you and I will be told this year. Some of the lies and some of the issues and some of the doubts that we will face as Christians this year.

And look to what God's word tells us about these lies. How God and his wisdom and his love for us has sought to answer these lies. And to put truth to the enemy only gives falsehoods.

So looking together at verse 9, we can see and look at, there's five main areas given to us in verse 9. So each one of these areas we can look at a certain lie that the enemy could tell us.

These five lies, these false claims. God has no interest in you. God does not listen to you. God does not care what you do.

[5 : 32] God does not love you. God has no purpose for you. First of all, the lie that God has no interest in you.

We can look to the first section, the first phrase we have in verse 9. But you are a chosen race. You are a chosen race.

If we're being honest and for our text today, we have to be honest. Be honest in your mind with the Lord who knows your mind, who knows you. But there are times for all of us when we find ourselves just wondering, does God really still care?

Does God really still look at me, look after me? Is he still with me? Has he kept his promises to me? Is he still the same way towards me as he was at the start?

Does he still, as I were, have an interest in me? I mean, you hope that he does. You really hope that he does. But you look at yourself, and you look perhaps this past year, and you see I've made just a mess of this year.

[6 : 38] I've done this. I've done that. I've made a mess of that situation. I've made a mess of that situation. You think, well, does God still have an interest in a mess like me? Does God truly still care for me?

And you say, I wouldn't be surprised in the slightest if he had given up all interest, all care in me. A lie from the enemy himself.

And that lie is killed in the first phrase here. We are reminded that we are a chosen race. This is the first assurance, of course, that Peter gives in this section to this small church he was writing to.

As Peter writes this letter to encourage these struggling Christians, he reminds them that they are a chosen race. They are people who are known to God, known by God, and not just in a general sense, but in a specific, and as we'll see later, in a loving sense.

You are a chosen race. Brothers and sisters, this applies to you this day. You who know Jesus, who love Jesus, who call him your Lord and Savior, you are part of the chosen race.

[7 : 54] God's precious people. You join in alongside these Christians, Peter wrote to. You join in alongside the Christians, the old saints who once worshipped in this place, who have now gone to glory.

You are part of the church with them. You join them in the eternal worship of God. You are part of the ones God has set his love on. Just, of course, as the believers of Israel, the believers of God's ancient people, were part, of course, of his people, were chosen by him to serve him well.

Just as the people of Israel awaited their Messiah, we who today know and who love that Messiah, who know and who worship Jesus, we can know for certain we are part of his people.

Now, of course, we're here dealing with the reality of election, the reality that God has his own specific plan and his own specific purpose.

We're dealing with things which are, of course, far above our ability to understand, but also we're dealing with things which are glorious. Peter reminds these people, first and foremost, they are part of God's chosen people.

[9 : 12] Unfortunately, of course, when we think of election and predestination, commonly our minds go to the debates and discussions, and there's a place for that.

Of course, there is. But every time we see election used in Scripture, discussed in Scripture, it's not there, of course, for the sake of a debate. It's not there as a bit of theological interest.

Every time we see God inspiring his people to talk and to encourage that they are part of his people, it's only ever there for encouragement. Every time election is mentioned, the fact that God has his own precious, set-apart people who are his, it's only ever for people's encouragement.

Of course, we find ourselves so lost in the mechanics of it, don't we? We get so lost in the background workings. The reality is, the mechanics of election, how it all works, that's nothing to do with us.

That we leave with God. That is his work. We are taken back to verse 9, and we are told that we, if we know Jesus this morning, if we love him, that we are part of his people.

[10 : 20] That's there to encourage us. Not to confuse us, not to worry us. It's there to encourage us. You are a chosen race. Of course, not for a second, because of anything we can do, anything we have done.

Again, we're all so well aware, aren't we, of just how much of a mess we are capable of making of our walks as Christians. Continually, this past year, we have said things and done things that just do not show us at all to be ones who know and who love Jesus.

We failed again and again, and we all confess that, and we all know that. So, our choosing, us being part of a chosen race, it's not to do with our merits. Not to do with anything as to how good we are as Christians, so to speak.

Brothers and sisters, you can know that this new year, that if you know and love and worship your Savior, that you are the ones Peter is talking to here, you are a chosen race.

A chosen race. You can know for certain just now, before the foundations of the world, before creation, before time itself, God knew you, and God had planned to one day come to save you, to send His Son into the world, to take on His shoulders the full wrath of all the sins of all His people, so that at the perfect time, God would intervene in your life, and would bring you to a knowledge of your Savior.

[11 : 53] This day you feel discouraged. You worry as if God, perhaps, has truly lost interest in you. The truth we have here in this first phrase is, the God of all creation.

Before creation itself, He knew you. His interest in you has been there from the start, but not just from the start of your interest in Him. With respect, it's not as if the first time you first came to church, that's when God first noticed you.

The first time you perhaps prayed or thought seriously about Scripture, it's then He says, oh well, there's that person that's showing interest in me. God knew you from the start.

We say the start, that's even incorrect. He knew you from before the start. In time, eternity, past, He knew you as His precious child, dear Christian.

His interest in you stretches back to all eternity. So don't for a second believe a lie that somehow His interest in you, His care for you, has stopped now. It has not.

[12 : 55] You were a part and you are a part of His perfect plan to bring about salvation for His people. Again, you were known from before time of the only true and living God.

Christian, God has an interest in you. And that interest is an eternal interest. You have been known from all eternity and you will be known and kept for all eternity.

The first lie that God has no interest in you, it's a falsehood from the devil himself. God cares for His people and has an eternal interest in them. And the question is never, am I one of His people?

The question is never, am I one of the elect? The question is, do I know Jesus? Do I love Jesus? Do I trust in Him as my Savior? If you can say yes to that, if you can say, yes, I know Jesus, I love Him, I serve Him, I want to know Him better, I want to love Him better, I want to serve Him better.

If as you just know, you can know that you're part of the chosen race, part of His precious people. Then we have a second phrase here, a royal priesthood.

[14 : 16] The second lie we face as Christians is, God does not listen to me. You feel as if perhaps your prayers have gone unanswered, perhaps your prayers of weeks, of months, your prayers of years.

Perhaps even you feel as if your voice isn't even leaving the room. You close your eyes, and you try and pray, perhaps even pray out loud and you just feel your voice just bouncing back off the walls towards you.

Perhaps even worse than that, you just can't even pray at all. You can't get the words into your mind, you can't get the words out. You think, well, God doesn't listen to me.

I have no access to God. I've got no place to come before Him. I don't deserve His place. I can't be here. God does not listen to me. My sinful words are not being heard by Him.

Peter reminds these Christians, and he reminds us, that we are a royal priesthood. A royal priesthood. Again, drawing back the words from Exodus 19, Exodus 19, verse 6, where God tells His people, You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

[15 : 34] A kingdom of priests and a holy nation. That's the promise God gave His people. If they would follow Him and serve Him faithfully, they would be to Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Of course, we know that priests had many roles and many privileges came with being a priest. Many duties, of course, too. We could argue that the foremost, the greatest privilege that all the priests had, in a sense, was closeness to the presence of God.

Of course, we know only the high priest could ever approach the true presence where God made Himself known in the Holy of Holies. Of course, only on that one day a year.

And only then, when incense was so thick, the priests couldn't even see, as it were, the presence of God. But the priests, in general, had access. They could go one court further into the temple than the normal Israelites could.

Priests of God have access to God. Because the priests have access, they can see Him, they can see His working, they can know more of Him.

[16 : 42] And we are called here a royal priesthood. We, of course, don't come to a temple once a year. We don't burn incense as we approach with the worry of being consumed by the presence of God.

Brothers and sisters, we have the great privilege of having access to the presence of God. Not just this special day, not just special days of the week, not just through some special ritual.

We have access to the throne of God this very moment, this very second. Brothers and sisters, you are a royal priesthood.

You have access to God that our believers of old, our brothers and sisters of old, could never dream of having. All those faithful Israelites who loved the Lord, who served the Lord, who looked forward to the coming Messiah, the prophets of old, we have greater access than even they had.

Because we can know for certain that we have Him, our Savior. He has made His home in us. He has promised not to leave or forsake us.

[17 : 53] Brothers and sisters, this very moment in time, you have access to the throne of grace. It's there for you. We've been together before a few months ago now and we looked at Hebrews, we discussed this, of course Hebrews 4, verse 14, where we see the reality we have a high priest.

A high priest who has made and who has done all that's necessary for salvation, who makes constant intercession for us. We've covered that before. But the lie that we, that God does not listen to His people, it is truly a lie.

We have the sure hope because we are royal priesthood that God hears His people. This day you have access to the throne of God, not through the efforts of a fallen high priest, of a simple man, but we have access to the throne of grace through the perfect man, fully man and fully God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who was truly the greatest high priest, the final high priest, the one, of course, who also was the final sacrifice.

He has done the work for you, dear brother, dear sister. Don't neglect that work. Don't neglect the great privilege you have of access. And we all confess at times we feel so far away.

We feel, of course, we do feel as if our word, don't leave the room, we feel as if God is not hearing us. But the reality is not our feelings in that situation. The reality is what we have here.

[19 : 28] We are royal priesthood. We have access because we know that we are worshipping the one, we know the one, we serve the one who is at the right hand of the Father, who continually, continually makes intercession for His people, who carries us aware our names and our prayers to our Father.

You have access. A royal priesthood. What a great privilege it is to be called a priest of God. That is what we are called in these verses, in this verse. We are those who have access to the throne of God, access to His presence.

God does not close His ears to His people. Brothers and sisters, if you know the Lord this day, if you can say you love the Lord this day, you have access to the Lord this day.

Not because of your great faith, not because of your great service this year, but because of the one who has gone before us, who is our high priest and who gives us access through His finished, perfect work.

The lie that we have no access is a lie again from the enemy. God hears the prayers of His people because we are a royal priesthood.

[20 : 41] The next phrase we have then is a reminder that we are a holy nation. Again, taking from Exodus 19, we are a holy nation because we are, of course, a kingdom of priests.

We are royal priesthood. Our lives must be lived separately. We must, in our conduct, in our thoughts, in our words, in our actions, we must show ourselves to be part of His royal priesthood.

We must live lives, of course, that are separate from the world in many ways. The lie of the enemy in this situation is often that, as Christians, we're saved and that's it.

You're saved and go and crack on and enjoy your life and don't worry about it. Of course, we know that's not the case. We know that's not the gospel truth.

The truth is we are called to be a holy nation. Again, Exodus 19, we see God's presence descending on Mount Sinai. As His presence descends, of course, He calls Moses and Moses and Aaron up to the mountain, but no one else can come near the mountain.

[21 : 54] God's presence, God's holiness is such if anyone touches a mountain, they must be put to death, man or animal. No one can approach His holy, perfect nature.

He is so other. He must not be seen by sinful man. Or draw close to by sinful man. The holiness, the perfection of our God, that's the God we are serving and seek to serve.

And we are called, are we not, to be holy as He is holy. We say, well, that's a calling that's too big for us, it's too great for us. And it is. Of course it is. And this is not a calling.

The calling to be a holy nation, it's not a calling to just act like a Christian. If we're all being honest, it's so easy, isn't it, to look the part, to dress the part, to do the actions of a good Christian, to come to the services, to do our perhaps morning or evening readings, to do our family worships, of course all good and God glorifying things.

But if we just do them for the sake of doing them, we are not doing them well. We're just acting like a Christian. We're just acting like we're set apart. The truth is, to be a holy nation, to be truly set apart people, it must be a heart change first.

[23 : 16] If we're just acting like Christians, just to look the part and to sound the part, then we're being nothing more than hypocrites. We're not serving God well by doing that. The calling to be a holy nation is to be a people who serve our Saviour well and they serve Him so well that we desire to be more like Him.

And the more like Him we become, the more different we become to those who are still in the world. Brothers and sisters, we are called, of course, to be salt and to be light.

To be salt and to be light. What does the Lord tell us? He tells us if that salt, as it were, loses its saltiness, if it loses its effect, then it has no purpose anymore.

We're called to be different. Now, we can be different and still be functioning, kind, members of our community. Different, but still those who seek the good and the benefit of where the Lord has placed us.

And at times in the past, we have, as a people and perhaps even as a culture, we've seen this calling to be a holy nation, we've perhaps gone too far to ever away. We've almost become, to our shame, like the monks of old.

[24 : 30] We've thrown ourselves away from the world. We've thrown in a way we no longer think we need to be involved in it. We're in the world, yes, not of it, of course, definitely not of it, but we're still in the world.

God has placed us where he's placed us. He's placed us in our homes, in our families, our villages, our places of work. We were to be missionaries. Every one of us were called to serve our Saviour, to proclaim his glorious name, and we'll see that in a second.

We were called to live lives that somehow look different, feel different, in a genuine way. That only comes from knowing our Saviour, from seeking to be closer to him.

Again, the more Christ-like we are, the more it's apparent that we're different to those around us. And we all know that, those saints who have gone into eternity, I think of some even, of course, down from my own way, brothers and sisters of the Lord, who would never call themselves holy, who would, who would call themselves many things, who wouldn't call themselves holy, who wouldn't think of themselves as holy, but they knew their Saviour, and they sought to know him better every day, and indeed, every new year.

They grew, and they grew, and they grew, and they loved their Saviour. They were humble. They were genuine. They were part of the community at large. But it was clear that they were set apart.

[25 : 55] It was clear that they were holy in the sense that they had their mind and their heart focused on worshipping and serving their Saviour. We are called to be a holy nation.

But note, it's in the plural, in a very clear sense in the plural, a holy nation, a holy gathering, quite literally, a holy group, as the word tells us.

We're called to be a gathering of holy people. See, no Christian, of course, we don't serve on our own. We saw that in the past year or two as we found ourselves missing from gathering together.

Perhaps the first while the novelty was there, very soon, of course, the novelty wears off, and we realise we must worship together. We are made to worship together. That is how the Lord has made us.

We are made for community. We are made to serve together. And the same is true for us here in our holiness. We are made to grow together, to be accountable to one another, to be honest to one another, to share our burdens and to ask for prayers for our failures together with one another.

[27 : 01] It's not easy. It's not easy in the slightest, but it's our calling. We are called to be a holy nation. It's not a burden to hang around our necks.

This is a glorious truth we aspire to. Because to be a holy nation, as we said, to be set apart, to seek more of Jesus, to want to be more like Jesus, and for every one of us who know him and who love him, that is our goal, isn't it?

To know him more, to love him more, to be more like him. God does expect something from us. He expects us to be a holy nation.

We do that by trying harder, by sounding smarter, by looking better. We do that by loving, serving, and seeking after our Savior more and more.

The fourth lie we have, the fourth truth we have here, and the fourth lie we'll get to, the fourth truth we have here, we're a people for his own possession. A people for his own possession.

[28 : 04] Of course, the lie here is that God doesn't love you. God doesn't love me. I mean, I believe in him.

I believe he has saved me, yes, but I just don't feel it anymore. I just don't feel as if he truly still loves me, truly still cares for me. Again, brothers and sisters, if we're being honest, perhaps not even this year, but perhaps it has been this year, and in some sense, in some way, we can say that for ourselves.

We have felt that worry creeping up, that lie creeping in, that God somehow has forgotten us, somehow has removed his love from us. We see that's not the case.

A people for his own possession. So we said at the start we're a chosen race. Our salvation is not something as it were mechanical.

mechanical. It's not something that God had to do. It's something he chose to do. In eternity past, God chose to set his heart as it were, set his love on you, to include you in his perfect plan, to bring you into the kingdom.

[29 : 20] That was something he chose to do. It was part of his plan, part of his will to do that. Dear friends, God is not just as it were put up with us as his people.

He didn't just put up with us and get on with it. No, he chooses to have us as his people. A people who are his. A people for his own possession.

Again, in the Greek, the wording is so strong there. The imagery, the wording is of real closeness. A people who he holds close. A people who he calls mine.

We are a people who God calls his own. His own precious people. His own possession. Chosen for all time.

Loved by the Father. We've covered this before. But to briefly say, to ask that glorious question again, how much does the Father love his precious children?

[30 : 18] How much does God love the ones whom he has set his heart on? How much, Christian, does God love you? We covered this before. We found the answer, did we not, in John 17.

John 17, verse 22 and verse 23. John 17, verse 22. Of course, this is the high priestly prayer, where Jesus prays in John 17, the glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they might be one even as we are one.

I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

You loved them even as you loved me. Christian, how much does God love you? How precious are you to the one who you serve? The words of your Savior himself, he tells us that in him, that through him, we are loved even as God loved Jesus.

You loved them even as you loved me. Because when the Father sees you and sees I, when he sees us as his precious people, how does he view you, Christian?

[31 : 33] Dear brother, dear sister, how does God view you? Does he view you through the failures of the last year? Does he fail you through the many burdens and stresses and worries you have facing you this year?

He views you through the finished work of your Savior. He views you as his precious child. He views you and he loves you and he calls you his own possession as much as he loves the Son, because he loves you in and through the Son.

You say, well, I don't feel that good. I don't feel like I deserve that. And you're right. You don't. And I don't. That's the very point. The point is he shows us that level of love which is so far beyond our deserving.

But God pours out his mercy. He pours out his love onto us. He tells us here that we are his precious people. We're a people for his own possession. A people that he calls his.

As the lie creeps in that the Lord has no love for you, but he somehow lost his care for you, know that that is truly a lie from the devil himself. God's word tells you quite something different.

[32 : 50] God does love you, Christian. He does. You who know Jesus, who love Jesus, who call Jesus your Savior, you, because you trust in his finished work.

And his father looks at you, he sees you as completed, as perfected, as covered in the righteousness of his son. Come to the final, very briefly come to the final lie we have in this section.

God has no purpose for you. God has no purpose for you. Peter tells these Christians that they were saved for a reason.

Known and loved and saved and given a purpose, given a job to do, as it were. The last phrase of our verse. All this is done so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

The lie, of course, tells us that we have no reason, we have no purpose, we feel useless, and Christians are honest to every one of us at times, we do feel useless in the service of our Lord. I say this carefully, but don't think for a second that whoever stands up here, whoever leads the services, don't think for a second that that same feeling is not known by those up here too.

[34 : 09] Every one of us, we have these doubts, these worries that our service is useless, that we have no real purpose in the kingdom, no real use in the kingdom. But this verse reassures us that we do.

Again, this is in the plural, that you, that you being used as a plural word Peter is speaking to all those listening, that you all may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

This is the Christians' glorious duty. This is our job as it were, this new year. This new year is a new chance for us to again go out into the world and to tell and to show and with love and with grace and with kindness and gentleness with real zeal to tell those around us they must come to know Jesus.

Those we love and those we care for who are dying this very moment, who are this very moment heading to lost eternity, this very moment are heading to hell, those who we love so dearly, those who come to mind first.

It's our solemn duty but also our great privilege to share with them the great glorious good news of the gospel, to share the reality of we know the one who has given us life, to proclaim his excellencies, to proclaim all his goodness towards us, the one who has called us out of darkness into light.

[35 : 33] What a privilege, what a great job we've been given as Christians. Again note this is to the whole church, this is everyone's duty, not for a second does this duty just belong to the minister or just to the elders or to the older Christians, to the more bold Christians, to the more forward Christians.

We all have different talents, different callings, yes, but every one of us as the Lord's people we are called to serve him in this way and we know that of course throughout scripture we're called to be salt, called to be light, we're called to proclaim his excellencies in our words, in our conduct, in all that we do and all that we say to show that we are known and that we know the Lord Jesus Christ, to show that we love and are loved by him.

It's our prayer, isn't it? It's our prayer this new year that those who we love and those who we care for, that God would use us to point them towards Jesus. Of course we know that we can't save anyone.

We know that and we feel that and we understand that and we praise God that's not the case. That privilege and that burden isn't on our minds. But we must again and again, day by day, proclaim the good news, proclaim the gospel, proclaim the reality that we are kept unknown and loved by the Savior.

And our prayer is as we proclaim that good news, the Lord would use our small words, at times our embarrassed words, our muddle-up words, that God would use these small things for his incredible, glorious name.

[37 : 19] The truth is, God does use his people. We said, of course, that God doesn't need us. We know that God doesn't need us to accomplish his plans. But in his wisdom, God uses means.

God uses means to accomplish his perfect plan. And God uses his people. He uses his people, his perfect way to accomplish his plan. And you feel small.

And you feel useless. And you feel as if it can't be done. As if it's not just for you. As if I can't tell that person the gospel. I always say the wrong thing.

I mess up. I get too embarrassed. I get too scared. And so on and so on. And believe you me, we all feel and face the exact same anxieties and worries.

But it's a privilege. A duty, yes. A requirement, yes. A duty for us as Christians to share the good news. But also it's a great privilege. We can share the truth. We can share that there is life to a dying world.

[38 : 16] We can share that there is one who has done all things for the salvation of his people. But we can share with those around us who are perishing that there is life for them that only would come to trust and to know Jesus.

What's the conclusion of verse 9? We find it in verse 10. That wonderful reality. What is the glorious conclusion, the glorious summary, if you like for us as Christians?

Verse 10. Here Peter actually draws from Hosea. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Once you were not a people, now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. that is the testimony, isn't it, to every one of us here today who know and love our Saviour.

Once we were lost, but now we're found. That's the glorious hope we have, isn't it, for those around us and those who we love. And that's our hope for any here today who may be listening in who as of yet don't know Jesus for yourself.

[39 : 21] Our hope is that you would find yourself in verse 10. That this new year, indeed, at the start of this new year, you may be able to say that, yes, last year I wasn't one of his people.

Last year I didn't know him, I didn't serve him, but now I do know him, now I do serve him. Last year I still was under his wrath, I still felt his wrath hanging over me, but now I have received mercy.

That's our prayer, that's our hope. That's our hope for this community, isn't it? That's our hope for all our communities. For this new year we would see God work in people's lives to bring them to a saving knowledge, of himself.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Lord of God, we ask you to bless these words to us, bless your holy word to our souls, encourage us as we gather around your word.

Lord, you would forgive and correct anything incorrect that was said. We give you praise that the power is not in the jar of clay, Lord who stands here, the power is in you and in your living and holy word.

[40 : 26] Help us this new year to serve you well. Help us this new year not to listen to the lies of the enemy, but to find ourselves grounded and rooted and growing in and through your word and your word alone.

Help us this new year, Lord, to find ourselves seeking after you. But encourage your people in this congregation, those who know and who love their saviour. Help them to grow in that knowledge, to grow in that love, to find themselves this year more and more glorifying his name, more and more praising Lord the work he has done for them.

and more and more as these things take place, witnessing, proclaiming the excellencies of the one who has saved them. We again pray for any who as of yet don't know Jesus as their own saviour.

We ask that this new year would truly be the first year for the rest of their eternal lives, that this year they would come to know and come to love, come to worship and come to serve Jesus as their own.

Help us even as we come to sing our final item of praise, to do so of hearts and minds set on you, set looking forward to that glorious future, we will join with you for all time.

[41 : 35] Let's go these things in and through and for Christ's precious name's name. Amen. We can conclude by singing to God's praise from Psalm 72, these verses of course we know so well.

Psalm 72, we can sing verse 16 down to the end, of course a psalm looking forward to that great glorious reality of joining for our saviour for all time, being in his presence forever.

Psalm 72, verse 6, of corn and handful in the earth, on tops of mountains high, with prosperous fruit shall shake like trees on Lebanon that be. The city shall be flourishing, her citizens abound, and number shall like to the grass that grows upon the ground.

Psalm 72, verses 16 to the end. To God's glory. O corn and handful in the earth, on tops of mountains high, when cross-transferred shall take thy face on Lebanon of the king.

The city shall be purrishing, our citizens heaven.

[43 : 16] ek the earth, thecharge, the cabin, our signatures in the Shop-ing and our child endure lots like a sun and child men shall be blessed in him the rest all nations shall employ now blessed be the

Lord the Lord the Lord of Israel for the of the wondrous works in glory God himself and blessed be his glorious name to all eternity the whole and let his glory fill come in his all and it came close in prayer

Lord God before us we ask for the rest of this day and the start of this new year help us to serve you well Lord we ask you to walk with you humbly in all our days ahead as many days as you grant us help us to serve you Lord in our words and our actions publicly and privately help us to be glorious witnesses as to the love and the mercy that we have been shown bless your people here and encourage every one of us all these things for our risen saviour the Lord Jesus Christ Amen